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Estonian Yearbook of Military History

EESTI SÕJAAJALOO AASTARAAMAT

INVENTING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE

EASTERN EUROPE BETWEEN THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL AND ACCESSION TO NATO

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Cover photo: Estonian Single Guard Battalion soldiers on lunch (1996). Estonian Defence Forces

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Preface

2014 marks ten years since Estonia's accession to NATO and the European Union. The Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum celebrated these events a year earlier with the international conference 'Inventing the National Defence 1990–2004', which was held on the 25th & 26th of April 2013 in Tallinn, Estonia. The first and most substantial peer-reviewed part of this yearbook comprises papers written on the basis of the presentations delivered at the conference.

The end of the Cold War affected many nations and Estonia was not the only country to become a new member of NATO during the enlargement. This is why experts from other countries – from Latvia to the United States, and from Finland to the Czech Republic – were also invited to the conference. The years that have already passed since these events allow us to draw parallels and find differences. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were the only countries in Europe whose independence was not restored after World War II and who remained occupied by the Soviet Union. This is why the Baltic States had to build their armed forces from scratch, 'inventing' its national defence.

Nothing appears from nowhere. Traditions, or rather memories of traditions, were still there. There were officers and experts who had served in the armed forces of different countries, some of them on opposite sides during the Cold War. Their diverse experience had to form a harmonious whole, which did happen in the end, but was by no means easy to achieve.

The other countries that became NATO members during the enlargement of the alliance used to belong to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and had to reorganise their armies. The only exception was the German Democratic Republic, whose army was merged with the Bundeswehr and freed from any unnecessary burdens in the course thereof. The question of whether building a new army from scratch is easier or more difficult than the reorganisation of the army of an authoritarian regime into the one of a democratic country subjected to civilian control will not be

answered in this yearbook. It's likely that there is no single answer to such a question at all.

None of the stories presented to the public as a success or failure are ever fully either one or the other. One of the tasks of the science of history is to highlight all significant facts and arrive at a generalisation that explains why everything went the way it did. History is a discipline that in the ideal case uses all relevant sources, from documents and legislation to old press, opinions expressed later and the personal memories of the people involved. Events that occurred 20 years ago, especially if they concern national defence and issues of military security, are not an ideal case. Not even all of the documents related to the history of World War II, which happened 70 years ago, are accessible to researchers today, let alone the events that occurred just a quarter of a century ago. Many of the people who were involved in these events are still in civil or military service, or in politics. Their memoirs are obviously influenced by their current position as well as their experience of the last 25 years. Also, memories are nothing but a story, which is never completely objective despite the best intentions of the person telling it.

Although we're living at a time when the *Erinnerungskultur* or national memory are fighting the academic science of history for the position of the one that tells the story of our past, the purpose of this yearbook is to stick to the latter. This is why the texts that fall into the category of memoirs or memory-based research can be found in the second, non-peer-reviewed part of the yearbook.

In 2014, seventy-five years will pass from the day Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union made the non-aggression treaty and signed its secret protocol. This secret protocol determined the fate of many Eastern European countries and nations for the next fifty years – sometimes even longer. This event is remembered in the last article in the yearbook, which describes the approach to the history of World War II in the Soviet Union and Russia, and the actions of and decisions made by the high military command of the Soviet Union at the start of the war.

Toomas Hiio
Editor-in-Chief

PART I

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY HISTORY. CONFERENCE "INVENTING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE 1990–2004", 25th–26th OF APRIL 2013, VIIMSI AND TALLINN, ESTONIA

INTRODUCTION

Restoration of the National Defence in Estonia – from Scrambled Eggs Back into the Shell

Trivimi Velliste

I compare the three Baltic States to three eggs. Colourful metaphors are sometimes necessary to gain a better understanding of historical events. It is easy to make scrambled eggs from an egg, but it's a lot more difficult, seemingly impossible, to unscramble the eggs and put them back into a living egg inside a protective shell. But that's exactly what happened with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the 20th century.

The three small Eastern European countries born – or reborn in the case of Lithuania – from the ashes of the First World War found themselves in a hopeless situation at the threshold of the Second World War, just like an egg before it hits the frying pan. Hindsight is of no help here at all: what someone should have done or what they shouldn't have done. We could still demand today: why were Stalin, Hitler or Chamberlain born at all? Or if they had to be born, why did the three societies concerned let them grab power the way they were? Whose fault is this? These are the questions we keep wanting to ask.

As we now know, history treated the three countries by the Baltic Sea without mercy but didn't destroy them altogether – not as nations and not even as states. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania came out of a seemingly impossible situation. You can destroy a country's government and the entire political and other elite, and you can execute large numbers of the country's citizens, but you cannot destroy the state itself – not so long as the majority of the citizens are still alive, so long as the country is internationally recognised within its legitimate borders, so long as it has its diplomatic representations and even a constitutional government, even if

it is in exile. Most importantly, however, not so long as the majority of the state's citizens remember who they are.

Even before the Berlin Wall came down in autumn 1989, the people of Estonia were facing a difficult choice. The challenge seemed next to impossible – we had to transform ourselves from scrambled eggs into eggs that were alive again. Many fast and contradictory changes were taking place in the soul and consciousness of Estonians from 1988–1991. Society was deeply split between two attitudes, two understandings, two mutually exclusive paradigms. Everyone wanted freedom! But what kind of freedom? And how?

Many said: half an egg is better than an empty shell. By saying this, they declared: let's make the Soviet Union more democratic, let's recognise the Soviet Constitution and let's act within the scope of Soviet laws. Let's demand more and more rights and freedoms for ourselves, let's demand more self-economy – the kind of autonomy that Finland had in the Russian Empire in the 19th century. And later, who knows, we might get the chance to secede from the Soviet Union.

But there were others who said: how is it possible to secede from something when you never joined it in the first place? Many listened to the Voice of America, and the annual greetings of Consul General and Ambassador Ernst Jaakson on the 24th of February were ringing in their ears. Neither Jaakson nor the US President or Secretary of State, who often joined him, greeted us as citizens of the Soviet Union, but always as citizens of the occupied Republic of Estonia.

Of course, not everyone listened to the Voice of America or Radio Liberty. Also, a lot of time had passed since the start of the occupation. And time, as we know, is merciless. Everyone carried the red Soviet passport in their pockets or handbags. The fight in the souls of the Estonian people was between 'truth and justice' on one side, and the knowledge that 'beauty is skin deep' on the other. Back then it was unclear which of these would prevail. The question we have sometimes asked ourselves is: when was Estonia facing bigger difficulties, from 1917–1920 or from 1988–1991? There is no clear and simple answer.

Every beginning is difficult. The start of independence is usually no exception. Back then, we really had to break away from an empire –

and we needed war for it. But there was civil society. There were farms and businesses, there was a market economy. And on top of all this, we received a peace treaty, which promised to respect our independence and freedom always and forever.

However, civil society had been destroyed by the time of perestroika and the Singing Revolution. The more aware and stronger part of the population had either been murdered, killed in war or forced to flee to the West. We needed an effort like Münchhausen's to drag ourselves out of the swamp. On the other hand, we didn't have to start a new state – it had always existed, even if it had been dormant. We didn't need to separate or secede from anything. What we had to do was to get the troops of the conquerors to leave our country. Things were in our favour: the conqueror itself was tired and our Western supporters took advantage of this and forced it to leave faster by offering it the carrot of the perestroika days.

So, our first start more than 95 years ago was more difficult in the sense that we had no previous experience of our own state. The autonomy in the Russian republic that had preceded it had been very brief. There was no understanding of our own state or faith in it. At the start of the War of Independence, wise old Estonian men even shook their heads: "Only stupid boys would go to war against the great Russia! This will never end well!"

On the other hand, however, we had approximately one hundred thousand men who'd had a sniff of gunpowder, who'd fought for the emperor and crawled through the trenches of the world war. These men knew how to fight in a war – all they needed was the faith declared by poet Juhan Liiv a long time ago: "One day, Estonia will be a state!"

Our second start a quarter of a century later was easier in the sense that it was the second. We didn't have to create a new state, we had to carry on from where we left off in 1940. But it proved to be very difficult, because the fabric of society had been torn to pieces; there was a lack of skills and sometimes of attitude.

Speaking of the military defence of our country, we had a lot of luck. This time we didn't have to fight a war. In fact, our armed forces were non-existent. The Defence League was restored slowly and with much

difficulty. Restoring the Defence Forces was paradoxically even more difficult than the creation of the people's army in the War of Independence. When our state was born, we had many well-educated and trained officers. There was no shame in serving in the Tsar's army. The attitude toward Soviet officers who were Estonians by nationality, however, was rather ambivalent. As there were very few of them, they were often regarded as some strange creatures – look, they even speak Estonian! But they were also seen as the representatives of the Soviet occupation. The latter circumstance offers an at least partial explanation of why so few Estonians decided to become professional military servicemen. Also, Estonians were not so welcome among Soviet officers anyway, as there was more than enough reason to not trust them.

However, when the time for the restoration of the armed forces of the Republic of Estonia arrived, we found ourselves facing a number of difficulties, some of them practical, others ideological. The Estonians who had served in the Swedish, US or Canadian forces helped a lot. But their burden back at home was not easy to bear – they had to adapt to entirely unknown circumstances and a distrustful culture and mentality. The officer culture of many countries, incl. the former Soviet Union, had to be blended into a new whole – the culture of the Estonian Defence Forces, which today has achieved a very high level.

We often use the expression "we restored the state of Estonia". This is actually confusing. How can you restore something that never ceased to exist? Distinguishing different levels helps here – are we speaking about the Republic of Estonia *de iure* or only *de facto.* Distinguishing between the two guarantees both clarity of expression and content. But spicing up your language with Latin loans is of course a little clumsy. However, we still have to admit that the restoration of the state of Estonia a generation ago is a metaphor and figurative. We are a European state preparing for our 100th birthday.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was a breakthrough in world history and its meaning will intrigue us for many generations. When a piece of this wall will be brought to Toompea in autumn 2014, by the 25th anniversary of the fall, its influence will be permanently binding.

Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy

Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army

James S. Corum

ABSTRACT

After the reunification of Germany, the Bundeswehr had to take over the former East-German army (Nationale Volksarmee, NVA). The reduction in the numbers of military staff throughout Eastern Europe after the Cold War also made the task more difficult.

Researchers from the Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences interviewed East-German soldiers immediately after reunification. They found that most of them were obedient followers whose professional skills were good, but who had no initiative. The strong influence of dogmatic communist ideology was also a problem. Many former East-German officers thought that West Germany also had one book of truth that taught them the new, correct understanding of history, politics and society. The East-German army was not popular among the population. The status of an officer in society was privileged and there were many of them – similar to the Soviet army, junior officers in the East-German army served in positions that in western armies are covered by non-commissioned officers. Conscripts were almost fully at the mercy of the officers.

There were ca 42,000 officers in the NVA at the end of 1989. More than 99% of East-German officers were members of the Socialist Union Party of Germany. Approximately 10,000 political officers served in the NVA. Approximately 50,000 active servicemen, incl. 23,000 officers, were to be transferred according to the takeover plan. These servicemen were put on probation for two years, and once it was completed the 28-member Independent Committee selected those who were to be offered the opportunity to join the Bundeswehr career system.

All political officers were the first to be let go, but generals, colonels (with a couple of exceptions) and all officers over 55 years ago were also released from

duty. As for the remaining officers, everyone who was known to have cooperated with the secret services of East Germany was immediately fired. 30,000 of the 50,000 officers and non-commissioned officers transferred by the Bundeswehr soon resigned.

Introduction

From 1990–1993 the German armed forces, the Bundeswehr, faced the daunting task of absorbing the old East German armed forces (NVA – National People's Army) and retraining and re-educating thousands of officers and NCOs who had served the East German regime and bringing them into the Bundeswehr as career soldiers. This study[1] will focus on a recent example of how the officer and NCO corps of a corrupt, brutal

[1] **Origin of the Study**. This paper is a period piece. It was written as an academic research study in early 2003 with the intent of helping the US forces then engaged in toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq by providing a model of how to deal with the Iraqi armed forces after the fall of Saddam Hussein. This research was supported by the US Army War College and at the time was intended to support the efforts of the US Army War College Iraq planning group that had in late 2002 and early 2003 published an outline plan for the occupation of Iraq (see: Conrad Crane and Andrew Terrill eds., *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges and Missions for Military forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*, Carlisle PA: US Army War College, Feb. 2003). The outline plan for the occupation of Iraq strongly recommended that the US military NOT disband the Iraqi army after the defeat of Saddam Hussein, but rather take over the force and remould it over time. Needless to say, as this paper was completed in the spring of 2003 the US leadership, acting against the advice of the pre-war Army planners, decided to disband the Iraqi Armed Forces that had during the war largely demobilised themselves and gone home to await events. The disbanding of the Iraqi Armed Forces was the key event that triggered the start of the insurgency in Iraq and led to eight years of American and Coalition counterinsurgency operations in that country (see: James Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2007). In light of that strategically disastrous decision by the Bush administration, this paper shows that there were other alternatives to disbanding the Iraqi Armed Forces and that the following bloody internal conflict in Iraq might have been mitigated or largely avoided if other paths had been taken. The following text is from the study this author wrote for the US Army in 2003 and argues that the Iraqi Armed Forces might have been successfully remodelled and reformed if the Bundeswehr's model for absorbing the East German Armed Forces had been followed. (Author's note.)

Parts about and comparison with Iraq have been omitted for this version of the study, newly edited for publication in the Estonian Yearbook of Military History. (Editor's note.)

and totalitarian state was vetted, retrained and re-educated to serve as the officers of a democracy. The paper explores the first steps of building a new army, that is the process of selecting the officers and NCOs from the old regime who were capable of meeting basic standards of professional competence (after additional training) for Bundeswehr service and who had the willingness to be re-educated and to serve in the armed forces of a democratic state – with all the cultural changes that such a step entailed.

Understanding the problem: getting a comprehensive picture of the former East German soldiers

In absorbing officers and NCOs of the old East German armed forces, one of the first things the Bundeswehr did was to build a picture of the mentality of the East German soldiers, their culture, their political and social understanding and their current beliefs about their future in a democratic state. The Bundeswehr possesses a first-rate institute for military sociology, the Socialwissenschaftliche Institut der Bundeswehr, and employs a group of highly qualified civilian academic experts who regularly produce studies on the demographics and social attitudes of the Bundeswehr. In late 1990, as the NVA was taken over by the Bundeswehr, the Bundeswehr's top sociologists went to work administering a wide variety of opinion polls and interviews (responder's identity was anonymous) to build up some accurate data about the background, education, worldview, etc., of the NVA officer and NCO corps. With the data provided by the Bundeswehr sociologists, the Bundeswehr commanders, Defence Ministry and Military Personnel Office had a good basis to develop personnel policies appropriate for the selection of East German officers and NCOs.

The process is described in detail in Frithjof Knabe, *Unter der Flagge des Gegners* (*Under the Flag of the Enemy*).[2] Knabe describes the

[2] Frithjof Knabe, *Unter der Flagge des Gegners* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994). Due to the nature of the paper being originally a report, there are only a few footnotes, but the list of the most important literature is given in the endnotes. (Editor's note.)

methodology, the questions and the results of extensive surveys of the East Germans. As well as information describing the education and social background of the East German soldiers, the West German sociologists developed a series of questions to explore such issues as: the strength of commitment to the communist ideology, the view East Germans had of West Germans, the expectations for a reunited Germany, and the motivation for former East German officers to apply to join the Bundeswehr (devotion to the military profession, fear of unemployment, hope for a better future, etc.). Another series of questions developed the theme of how much trust the East Germans had in the German government and what their political views were. The questions were analysed in terms of rank and age as well as their education level.

To make a long story shorter, much of the data that the Bundeswehr's sociology experts developed came as a big surprise to the West German professional officers. In a generation and a half of totalitarian rule, the East Germans had become a notably different kind of German – culturally and socially very different from their West German counterparts. For most of the officers under the rank of lieutenant colonel, the East German government had long lost its credibility. However, the NVA officers also tended to have relatively low expectations from the West German government or gave it little credibility. Most of the officers had received an education that was so military in nature that they had no civilian diploma or qualifications to fall back on. Many, if not most, had applied to the Bundeswehr more out of a feeling of desperation and a desire for personal and family security than for love of the military profession. The older officers, as might be expected, had been part of the power structure and ideology of communism for so long and saw the West so strongly as the enemy, it was clear that they would not wish to have any part of the Bundeswehr. Having been raised in a communist dictatorship, there was a relatively immature understanding of democracy and politics among the officers. When asked which political party they preferred, the largest number, 11.2%, preferred the left-oriented SPD. A surprising 9.9% preferred the free market FDP. 7.4% preferred the neo-communist PDS and 6.7% populist groups (often extreme). Only 6.3% preferred the conserva-

Soldiers of two units of the National People's Army on demonstration at the Albert Zimmermann Barracks in Cottbus demanding an immediate military reform with a reduction of military service to 12 months (12 January 1990). Rainer Weisflog/Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst – Zentralbild / German Federal Archives

tive CDU and almost as many, 5.4%, would vote for the rightist–radical Republikaner Partei. 26.9% had not yet decided upon any political orientation and 17.5 % said that they had no interest in voting.[3] In short, the East German soldiers were all over the map politically and demonstrated little understanding of how democratic societies function.

The senior German officers who ran the process of absorbing the East German armed forces all remarked on just how sovietised the East German armed forces had become in their mentality. One might have expected that some remnant of the traditional German military virtues

[3] Knabe, *Unter der Flagge*, 165.

such as decisiveness, initiative and willingness to take authority might have survived in the East German military culture. Yet this was not so. While the East Germans were well educated and had a solid grounding in their military specialties, they were used to obeying orders to the letter, doing only what they were told and no more. It was a highly regulated and risk adverse army where authority was never questioned, where the party line was strictly adhered to and where officers could advance best if they showed no initiative or non-conformity at any time. Indeed, many West German military professionals remarked that one could spot former East German officers by these traits for years after they were absorbed into the Bundeswehr. For example, in courses taught by the Bundeswehr immediately after German reunification the East Germans out of habit would seek out the one "correct" book on a political or historical theme. They would generally try to ascertain what the "correct" party line was on any political or social issue. While their technical skills were often good, few were able of expressing any kind of critical thought – whether it was about tactics, politics, defence policy and so on.[4]

Indeed, the Bundeswehr quickly discovered that it faced a far larger cultural divide than it had anticipated. Re-education of officers and NCOs in the basics of democracy, German history, constitutional law and so on would be required for all the former East German officers and NCOs who applied for the Bundeswehr.

Noteworthy aspects of the East German armed forces

The East German armed forces were built upon the Soviet model and, as a result, had all the strengths and weaknesses of that model. The first issue was loyalty to the state – and this, in practice meant proven loyalty to the Communist Party (called the SED or Socialist Unity Party in East Germany). About 99.5% of the officer corps of the East German armed

[4] Interview with LTC Luftwaffe ret. Michael Burkhardt 11 May 2003. Burkhart ran courses in German history for former East German officers in the early 1990s. (Author's note.)

forces were party members. The only exceptions seem to have been some of the medical officers and staff doctors of the Army Medical Corps who were not pushed to join the SED if they were competent professionals. The officer aspirants, the officers and their families were carefully vetted to ensure that they or their immediate families were known to be solid supporters of the regime. Since many, if not most, families in East Germany had relatives in West Germany one could have cousins in the West and still serve in the armed forces – just as long as the East German officer had no regular or close contacts with them.

As party members, the officer corps was completely indoctrinated in the communist worldview. Indeed, the party ideology and education was entrusted to a large corps of 10,000 political officers who were distributed throughout the armed forces at every level and who supervised the constant program of political education for all soldiers as well as acting as the eyes and ears of the Stasi (Ministry for State Security – i.e. Secret Police). The West German officers who ran education courses for the East German officers and NCOs in 1991–1993 noted that the East Germans understood history, politics, law, social concepts, etc., almost completely through the eyes of the properly educated communist. Indeed, the whole political/social vocabulary for those educated under a communist state is different.

The East German Air Force was even more oriented towards party loyalty than the Army. In contrast to the Western air forces where the physical and mental standards required for flying the airplane play the paramount role in selecting people for pilot training, the criteria in East Germany was: 1. Politics 2. Politics 3. Politics. The East Germans were apparently afraid that their jet pilots might defect to the West so they were thoroughly vetted for loyalty to the regime. If one even had a cousin living in West Germany, this ruled out being accepted for flight training. East German pilots always flew under rigid control from the ground and were granted no opportunities whatsoever for independent flight manoeuvring.

The East German Army was an officer-heavy army – just as one finds in the Soviet model. There was a corps of professional NCOs in the East German Army, but virtually all of these were technical specialists (signals,

supply, mechanics, administration, radar operators, etc.) NCOs were expected to carry out a specialised function – but had very little authority to lead. Nor were NCOs expected to or trained to lead soldiers. This meant that in the East German officer corps junior officers performed tasks normally done by NCOs in the Western armies. In the East German army, promotion was accelerated much faster than in the Bundeswehr, but majors normally did the same jobs as captains and so on.

While there were a few officers in the East German Army who received a normal civilian education and then served as "time contract officers" (army service for 2–3 years and then to reserve status), the vast majority had gone to the officer academy and had received a purely military education and expected to serve the whole term of a 30-year career as officer on active duty.

The officer corps of the East German state were something of pampered darlings of the state. They got good housing – at least good by East German standards. They had access to special Communist Party stores and could buy little delicacies, clothes, etc., that the average East German couldn't buy. If an officer did not have a car, he and his family could at least be driven to social functions or shopping by a soldier in a military vehicle. In short, as loyal Party members they had many special privileges.

Many aspects of the East German military culture followed the totalitarian Soviet model and made for poor troop morale and further alienated the officer class from civil society. The East German Army was kept at an 85% readiness level around the clock. This meant that enlisted soldiers were not granted much leave and were confined to the military installations most of the time. Discipline was very strict on the Soviet model and the one place for initiative that the officers had was in punishing the soldiers. Enlisted soldiers had no real rights and officers were fairly free to tyrannise the troops. Enlisted men could be fined and confined to jail for a week simply on the say of the company commander. Relations between enlisted soldiers and officers were strictly regulated and anything but absolute obedience was punished.

While the special privileges and good pay for officers made the East German army a fairly attractive career, it also put the officers apart from

the average East German. The general population generally viewed the professional officers as something very separate from civilian society – as a group that belonged more to the Communist Party than the general population. In short, only a small percentage of East Germans found a military career attractive. Most of the army conscripts were called up, served their time at low pay and in barracks and facilities that would be unacceptable to any Western recruits, and left the army at the end of their service with the hope of having nothing more to do with the military for the rest of their lives. The military had a type of prestige, but in the eyes of the average person, it was not an institution that was popular or something they would recommend to their children. One might note that a large part of the West German population is either anti-military or ambivalent about service in the armed forces. This tendency was even more notable in East Germany. The army wasn't hated, but it was not liked very much.

A special command set up to absorb the East German army

After the East German dictatorship under Erich Honecker dramatically collapsed in November 1989, the East German Defence Ministry quickly reduced its forces and planned for the unification of the two Germanys. In the early stages, it was unclear as to how the East and West German armies would be merged. The date for merging the two Germanys was set for 3rd of October 1990. The West German Defence Ministry determined that the Bundeswehr would simply take over command of the East German army and work out a process of allowing thousands of the career officers and NCOs the chance to retrain and formally become regular Bundeswehr officers and NCOs. It would be a difficult process as the Bundeswehr planned to reduce the total force to 370,000 men by 1994 (from about 470,000) as part of the post Cold War force reductions.

The Bundeswehr quickly came up with a plan. On 3rd of October it would take over the 90,000 solders of the NVA (Nationale Volksarmee – National People's Army), which would include 23,000 officers, 27,000

NCOs and 40,000 draftee enlisted men.[5] The NVA had already drastically reduced its force in early 1990. At the time of the Berlin Wall falling, the NVA had approximately 42,000 officers. During early 1990, the approximately 10,000 political officers of the NVA were released from service as the Bundeswehr had made clear that there was no place for the political officers of the East German regime in the Bundeswehr. Indeed, the large number of political officers indicates just how much the NVA was an instrument of the Communist Party. All officers over the age of 55 were retired and very few officers over the age of 50 were kept on. The Bundeswehr staff had made it clear from the start that it felt that officers who had served the Communist regime for decades would be unlikely to adapt to a democratic army. Indeed, thousands of East German officers asked to be released from service as they still adhered to the Communist worldview and could not bring themselves to serve in democratic armed forces. Thousands more NVA officers also resigned from the military in the hope that they could make it in the capitalist world as managers, technicians and businessmen. There was considerable hope that a reunited and capitalist Germany would provide great opportunities to bright and ambitious men and some today say that it was the best educated and brightest younger officers who got out and moved into the civilian sector and it was the less educated officers with few marketable civilian skills and with less ambition who remained and applied to serve in the Bundeswehr. There are no studies of what happened to the old NVA officer corps available but many Bundeswehr officers suspect that there's some truth to the idea that the best men did not join the Bundeswehr. There are many successful individual examples of former NVA officers that did make it in the business world. One group of NVA doctors left the service together and opened up a private medical practice in the Eastern suburbs of Berlin. They're quite rich now.

On the day of unification the Bundeswehr established a special joint command, Territorial Command East. It was headed by two highly expe-

[5] The following information comes from the Draft Plan of Territorial Command East in the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg im Breisgau, January–March 1991. The information throughout the article comes from that document.

National People's Army soldiers in Bad Salzungen (in former East German motorised infantry barracks) receive new uniforms "Made by Bundeswehr", but they are allowed to start wearing them only from October 3rd onwards (20th of September 1990). Ralph Hirschberger/ Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst – Zentralbild/German Federal Archives

rienced senior officers, commanded by General Joerg Schoenbohm with Lt. General Werner von Scheven as chief of staff. The Territorial Command East was a new kind of command for the Bundeswehr.[6] It included approximately 90,000 officers, NCOs and soldiers of the East German army who would remain as part of this special command for two years as the Bundeswehr sorted them all out. All of the senior command positions were taken over by officers from the West, mostly men carefully chosen for success in command and staff positions. 821 officers and NCOs were brought in from the West to fill major command and staff positions. On the day the East German Army was dissolved, 100 Bundeswehr officers

[6] All the following material on Territorial Command East comes from an interview by the author with Lt. Gen. Werner von Scheven, ret., April 2003.

and NCOs organised into training teams arrived in the East to supervise the training of junior military leaders (company officers, platoon leaders and squad leaders) in the Bundeswehr system. Of the 51,000 civilian employees of the East German Defence Ministry, 48,300 were taken on under short-term contracts mostly to provide basic services and to serve in the dismantling of most of East Germany's formidable military infrastructure. It was helpful to have some experienced civilian administrators but several hundred West German defense civilians were brought in to serve in leadership roles.[7]

The Territorial Command East had the unusual job of carrying on standard military duties and training to include accepting and training draftees from East Germany in the training centres and conducting normal military training and exercises. The job also included closing down much of the East German military infrastructure, securing thousands of Soviet-type tanks, guns, APCs, etc., that were superfluous to the Bundeswehr's needs. An additional task was retraining all 90,000 of the East German soldiers in the culture and laws of a democratic system. At the same time, the Bundeswehr had to carefully examine the officers and NCOs who wished to remain as career solders in the Bundeswehr and select those best suited for retention.

The Bundeswehr decided to put all the former East German career officers and NCOs into a special conscription category. Those who wished could sign a two-year contract to serve in the Bundeswehr and at the end of that period the Bundeswehr would determine who would be offered permanent career status. Essentially, the whole officer and NCO corps of the NVA were placed on probationary status. Immediately after the Bundeswehr took over, the former NVA officers and NCOs who had remained had a three-month period to apply for the two-year contract. If they did not apply, they would be released from service – albeit with unemployment benefits, a job training program and so on. Several

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[7] An excellent overview of the handling of personnel issues in absorbing the East German armed forces is found in Edgar Trost, "Probleme der Personalauswahl," – *Ein Staat – Eine Armee: von der NVA zu Bundeswehr*, Hrsg. Dieter Farwick (Frankfurt am Main: Report Verlag, 1992), 170–205.

thousand more officers and NCOs decided not to go through with the application process – especially as it became known that long service as an informer for the Stasi (Ministry for State Security) would ensure the applicant's rejection. In any case, the Bundeswehr decided on a firm two-year transition period. At the end of 1992 the former NVA personnel would be fully absorbed into the Bundeswehr or become civilians and the Territorial Command East would be abolished.

When Territorial Command East was set up, the Bundeswehr decided that it would not consider keeping any former East German generals on active duty. Despite lobbying pressure by the East German politicians, no colonels were to be kept on duty or considered for transition to career status in the Bundeswehr. The only exception to the rule was military doctors of the NVA. However, 5–6 generals of the old regime were hired on short-term contracts as civilians to serve as advisors to the new command as well as some former colonels who worked as civilian specialists for a short period to assist with tasks such as cataloguing the munitions and material of the NVA that were now Bundeswehr property. In the same manner many staff officers of the NVA served in staff functions for Territorial Command East. The Bundeswehr was adamant on the point that the older officers were so deeply indoctrinated in the communist system and were probably so morally compromised by their long service in the East German dictatorship, that they would not be acceptable members of a democratic army. The Bundeswehr decided that the younger officers and NCOs offered the best hope to be retrained and re-educated to serve in a democratic armed forces. Many officers and NCOs with relatively high rank and who wished to continue in the Bundeswehr were demoted one or two ranks. Promotion had been accelerated in the NVA and this would bring the officers and senior NCOs more into line with the Bundeswehr rank, responsibility and promotions system.

Selecting an officer and NCO corps – the application process

The application process started with the normal Bundeswehr application questionnaire that reads much like an application for US Army enlistment. It includes personal data, medical data, educational data, and a preference list for the branch of the military and occupational specialty desired and so on. Like the US enlistment applications, there are also questions about any arrest and conviction records as well as membership in subversive organisations.

All former East German soldiers also had to fill out a special appendix questionnaire detailing their record of Communist Party membership and activity in Party-linked or controlled organisations. They also had to account for contacts and membership in communist organisations for members of their household and family. Most importantly, they had to describe in detail their contacts and relationship with the Secret Police (Stasi) and whether they had agreed verbally or in writing to become a regular informer for the Secret Police. This was especially important because the East German Secret Police kept 100,000 East Germans from all walks of life (teachers, government officials, soldiers, tradesmen, etc.) on a secret payroll to regularly and secretly inform on their neighbours, bosses and subordinates. Indeed, this was part of the pervasive repression of East German communism. When taking the figure of 100,000 secret informers spread through a population of about 18 million, one can understand the totalitarian nature of the state.

Virtually all East Germans, especially those in the armed forces, had to play along with the communist regime. Party membership and activity was unavoidable. However, service as a Stasi informer or too close links to the internal and external intelligence services of East Germany disqualified applicants from enlisting in the Bundeswehr. All of the former East Germans who applied to join the Bundeswehr had their detailed and signed questionnaires carefully checked against the records of the Stasi and of the Communist Party and its organisations by the Bundeswehr Personnel office and the Bundeswehr Counterintelligence

Corps. If the applicant clearly lied about his relationship with the Communist Party and its security organs, his application was immediately rejected.

Even if the application was accepted and the former East German soldier entered service on a short-term contract his application and background information was constantly reviewed and checked against the vast database of Communist Party and Stasi documents. If, at a later time, the former East German soldier was found to have lied in his application, he was immediately removed from the military for cause, usually within three days. In any case, several hundred of the more than 11,000 officers who signed short service contracts and joined the Bundeswehr were summarily removed when information later surfaced concerning their relationship to the Communist party and State Security. There were also many cases where the Bundeswehr Counterintelligence Corps could not prove that the applicant had lied, but still recommended removal from the service on the judgment of the Counterintelligence officials that a soldier was still committed to the Communist worldview and had been more involved with the Communist Party than his special application questionnaire had indicated. There were several dozen cases of this nature, perhaps over 100. I know of no cases in which the Independent Committee or the Bundeswehr Personnel Office overrode the judgment of the Counterintelligence Corps and tried to retain an officer or NCO after a negative judgment. The rule was apparently that if the officer or NCO's commitment to democracy was doubtful or that his involvement in the old Communist regime had been too extensive or enthusiastic, he would be removed from the service. Period. The Bundeswehr was more than ready to remove qualified and technically competent officers and NCOs simply on the belief that these men could not fit into armed forces with Western ethics and a democratic ethos.

Part of the application process consisted of a long interview with Bundeswehr officers and officials, often lasting 1–1.5 hours. The applicant's background and motivations and views were examined in detail. These interviews were usually taped and transcripts made for the use of the Personnel Office of Territorial Command East and of the Indepen-

dent Committee that had the final say on accepting officers into the regular career track of the Bundeswehr.

The application process, beyond the special background checks, also included examinations, checking educational background, a medical exam and so on. Many who applied for the two-year contract were not approved due to a weak education, poor exam scores or medical problems. A few thousand of those who applied were quickly weeded out and released from military service.

Of the 50,000 officers and NCOs taken into the Bundeswehr in October 1990, 30,000 were soon released per their own wish. Of the 23,000 officers, 11,700 opted to sign the two-year contract with the Bundeswehr in early 1991. 12,300 of the 27,000 East German NCOs signed contracts and only 1,000 of the 40,000 lower enlisted men opted for the two-year contract. Of the applicants, 6,000 officers were approved for the two-year contract, 11,200 NCOs were approved and 800 lower enlisted.[8]

A timeline was set up for absorbing, reorganising and dissolving the old NVA forces and the integration of selected personnel into the Bundeswehr. In 1991, former NVA soldiers of all ranks were allowed a three-month window (1st of October to the 31st of December) to move beyond their two-year contracts and apply for career status in the Bundeswehr or to serve another period of contract service. The Bundeswehr personnel office promised that a clear decision would be made on each application by the 31st of August 1992. Between November 1992 and June 1993 the officers who had signed two-year contracts with the Bundeswehr would be released and those accepted brought into full career status. In 1993 Territorial Command East would complete its mission and shut down. The timeline plan allowed for a systematic reorganisation of the Bundeswehr and enough time to properly assess all of the personnel applications and proved to be quite successful.

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[8] For statistical details of the NVA see: *Das Ende der NVA und die deutsche Einheit. Zeitzeugenberichte und Dokumente*. 2. Aufl., Hrsg. Hans Ehlert (Hamburg: Christopher Links Verlag, 2002).

Re-educating an army

One of the first steps of the Bundeswehr in taking over the former East German soldiers was to send 2,000 officers and NCOs to special eight week courses in West Germany where they were taught German history, political science from a democratic perspective, the German constitution, military law and tradition, and a large dose of the *Innere Fuehrung* (Inner Leadership) curriculum that has been part of the Bundeswehr training and tradition since the Bundeswehr was established in 1955. The concept of Inner Leadership is essentially a Western-style political education program for the military that emphasises the place of the military in serving a democratic state, the rights that all soldiers have in a democracy, the role of an officer and NCO in a democratic and civilian-run armed forces, the proper values that an officer and NCO and common soldier need to personalise in their daily lives as soldiers and servants of the state. Through the whole two-year absorption process, former East German soldiers were sent to special courses set up in West Germany.

The urgent requirement of the Bundeswehr was not simply to educate the former East German soldiers in the laws, regulations and mores or the Bundeswehr but also to begin to change their entire mind-set and to positively accept democracy and democratic values. The Bundeswehr ensured that experienced, well-qualified and well-educated officers and NCOs ran the courses. Usually the officers who taught the East Germans had completed the General Staff course and had a civilian liberal arts education as well as experience in teaching. Officers who were active in the special courses for the East Germans in 1991–93 remarked that it was very difficult at first for the thoroughly indoctrinated East Germans to grasp the concept of openly discussing issues or critically reading texts or even asking a superior questions or disagreeing with the teacher on any point. Typically, the sharpest of the East German officers would ask the course teachers for the one "proper" book on a subject – one that explained the party line and which the officer could be expected to memorise and regurgitate to pass the course or win approval. This was the pervasive mentality in East Germany; one found the correct party line as

quickly as possible and followed it. It has been quite a chore to re-educate East Germans to think critically or question their superiors in the last decade. One German military historian commented that the East German military historians now working with the Bundeswehr were highly educated under the old regime and had a mastery of the basics of the historian's craft. However, the East Germans still are notably lacking in critical skills such as the ability to criticise historical works or to compare several books against each other.

On the purely military side, the job of training soldiers in military skills appears not to have been difficult. The East German officers and NCOs were well educated and trained in the technical skills of soldiering. What the former East German officers and NCOs lacked was initiative. They were used to a strict system and following orders to the letter. Mission-type orders common to Western armies ("Complete such and such task with available resources by such and such time") which leave the planning and execution of the order in the hands of the commander or even senior NCO were not part of the professional mind-set of the East German officers and NCOs. They were used to being told not just what to do but exactly how to do it. Again, the West German training teams and unit commanders assigned to Territorial Command East had to work hard to instil a completely different ethos into the former East German soldiers.

Evaluating the East Germans

Highly experienced Bundeswehr officers and NCOs were assigned to almost all of the senior leadership positions in Territorial Command East. Division, Brigade and battalion commander positions and command of other large units of the existing East German Army force were taken over by Bundeswehr officers. Many of the critical staff positions down to battalion level were filled by West Germans and some officers and NCOs even assigned down to the company level although the usual apportionment was for a few career Bundeswehr officers and NCOs to be found at the battalion level. The Troop Command East was largely staffed with

career Bundeswehr officers and NCOs but many staff officers of the NVA remained. In addition, thousands of civilian employees of the old East German Defence Ministry remained to staff and support Bundeswehr operations in the East. Civilian employees of the Bundeswehr were also employed, like the officers and NCOs of the East German regime, were also employed on short-term contracts.

It was made clear from the start that all the East German officers and NCOs who had applied for career soldier status in the Bundeswehr were on a probationary status for two years. Territorial Command East was not interested in performance reports, decorations, etc., from the NVA. Over the next two years, what would matter was performance in the courses and exams administered by the Bundeswehr and the officer and NCO efficiency reports written by the career Bundeswehr officers who had been placed in all the primary command and staff positions in the East. While former East German officers remained in command at the platoon and company level, their competence and performance would be critically judged by the career Bundeswehr soldiers. In addition, their attitude towards the democratic ethos of the Bundeswehr and their ability to adapt to the new system was carefully observed. At the final stage of the process of absorbing the old East German Army, the officer and NCO evaluation reports played a central role in the final selection process of the Independent Committee.

As the Bundeswehr planned a considerable downsizing, thousands of civilian employees of the NVA would have to be cut. There was a similar evaluation process for the civilian employees as for the East German officers and NCOs. Those who had worked with the Stasi or had been too closely associated with the Communist Party organisations and ethos were removed quickly. Those who wished to stay and become permanent civilian employees of the Bundeswehr also had to undergo a thorough weeding out process.

Lessons in leadership – building trust

Many of the East German soldiers feared that the Bundeswehr would come in and act as an "occupation army" in their treatment of those who wished to continue a military career. One of the primary tasks of General Schoenboehm and General von Scheven was to allay such fears and to build a relationship of trust with the East German soldiers. In the treatment of soldiers under two-year contracts who were applying for Bundeswehr career status the slogan was "Everyone receives a fair chance". This meant that each application would be treated fairly, that each applicant would receive careful consideration in regards to his previous career and educational attainments, that selection in the Bundeswehr would be based solely upon merit and performance and that each applicant would be given the chance to show that he could make the grade as well as any other Bundeswehr officer.

For the officers and NCOs of the old East German armed forces who asked to be released from service, their was a program of unemployment stipends and paid tuition to a variety of job courses to allow those officers a good chance to make their way in civilian life. For the officers and NCOs who applied and who were not taken into the Bundeswehr, these programs were also available. The German government made sure that there was not a class of embittered and unemployed former East German soldiers who had been simply thrown out on the street. Such a thing would have been bad politics and bad for the reputation of the Bundeswehr. General Schoenboehm spent much of his time speaking to East and West German businessmen setting up shop in the former East Germany and encouraging them to hire former NVA officers and NCOs.

General Schoenboehm wrote an excellent account of his duty as commander of Troop Command East that could serve as a useful guide to any officer who would have to deal with dissolving the army of a dictatorship and building a new democratic army in its place.[9] General Schoenboehm and General von Scheven were constantly on the road to visit the East

[9] See: Joerg Schoenboehm, *Zwei Armeen und ein Vaterland: Das Ende der Nationalen Volksarmee* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1992).

Military vehicles Volkswagen Type 183, commonly known as Iltis – a donation to the Estonian Defence Forces by the German Bundeswehr – have arrived in Muuga Harbour (1997). Boriss Mäemets/Estonian Defence Forces

German units, talk to the soldiers and to win their confidence. A large part of their job was to teach the East German officers and NCOs how to treat soldiers with fairness and dignity. The idea of a General visiting a unit informally and sitting and talking to troops and taking questions and answering questions was completely new to the East German military culture. Under the old regime, there was no informal contact. No one asked general questions or made any criticism or allowed anything beyond the view that everything was completely in order. The Bundeswehr officers and NCOs who came to staff Troop Command East were to set an example of scrupulous fairness and honesty in their treatment of their soldiers and worked to train the East German officers and NCOs to treat soldiers with the respect that is normal for Western armies.

Schoenboehm devotes a long chapter of his book describing his daily activities and impressions in detail. For example, the East German draftees were often very badly trained in carrying out basic military duties.

There were several instances of East German troops on guard duty who shot themselves or the comrades while apparently playing with their firearms. Basic guard procedures and firearms safety training had not been part of the East German military culture. In another instance, East German soldiers on guard duty were confronted with a loud protest demonstration outside a military installation. They had no idea how to handle the situation – the concept of a political protest was somewhat unthinkable while East Germany was a "workers' paradise". The Western concept of handling situations firmly and with the minimum required force was also unknown to the East German culture. In areas such as these, the commander of Troop Command East had to order more training in the basics for the East German soldiers.

The Independent Committee – final personnel decisions

In early 1992, the German government set up a committee of 28 members to review the records of all the officers and NCOs who applied for career status in the Bundeswehr. The Independent Committee was headed by a chairman and two deputy chairmen. It contained 11 senior retired civil servants, 7 retired military officers and NCOs, 4 academics, 3 current members of the German legislature, 2 current senior civil servants and 2 other civilian members. The committee had full access to all the documents and records of the former East German personnel to include the files from the Ministry for State Security, files of the Communist Party, recent efficiency reports, training reports, exam results, interview transcripts, application forms and so on. They also could request the military Counterintelligence Branch to search out additional information and provide reports on applicants.

The Independent Committee was organised into subcommittees of five members. For an applicant to be accepted into the Bundeswehr on long-term or career status, the unanimous approval of all five sub-committee members was required. The Independent Committee began work

in March 1992 and completed its work of evaluating thousands of officer and NCO applicants by early 1993. The criteria the Independent Committee used for acceptance into Bundeswehr career status was: applicant credibility and trustworthiness, the ability of the applicant to adapt to a democratic armed force, proper NCO and officer competence, and the ability to understand the past and to overcome it.

Members of the Independent Committee were carefully chosen by the German Defence Minister and the Military Committee of the German parliament. It was overwhelmingly composed of retired experts with knowledge of and credibility with the military. It was decided that the majority of the Independent Committee members would be outside the ranks of active politicians and those currently holding high positions in the government to ensure that the committee would be well-insulated from political party pressures and outside influences. Although there were some current politicians and senior civil servants on the committee, they were greatly outnumbered by the non-political members. The appointment of the committee was carefully made to ensure that each applicant for NCO and officer status would be considered fairly and objectively and would not enter the Bundeswehr on the basis of purely political considerations.

By all accounts, the Independent Committee was a great success in that it got the job done efficiently and gave each applicant the kind of fair and objective treatment that the armed forces of a democracy requires. The Independent Committee started and finished its work with a high level of credibility and met the Bundeswehr's policy that "each applicant was to have a fair chance".

Summary of the transformation of the East German forces into the Bundeswehr

The Bundeswehr in 1991–1993 provides a useful model for the armed forces of a democratic state to take over the armed forces of a totalitarian dictatorship and retrain those personnel in the culture of democracy. It was an exceptionally tough task as the influence of a generation and a

half of Communist rule had deeply affected the culture and psyche of the East Germans, particularly the military personnel who had been servants of the state. The German model provides a useful example of vetting the military personnel of a dictatorship and selecting suitable NCOs and officers for continued service in the armed forces of a democratic nation.

The Bundeswehr program was largely successful by most accounts. In a little over two years the Bundeswehr carefully weeded out officer and NCO applicants who were too closely connected with the Communist Party and its ideology. The Bundeswehr also weeded out those who simply could not adapt to a democratic system or those who lacked the education and basic skills to become effective career officers and NCOs. Those remaining spent extensive time being retrained in the principles of civilian control, learning German history from a non-communist viewpoint, learning how democracy and democratic constitutions work as well as learning the tactical and operational methods of the Bundeswehr. Most importantly, the officers and NCOs from the old East German regime learned how to properly serve as military leaders of a free and democratic state.

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Czechoslovakia and its Armed Forces in Times of Change

Prokop Tomek

ABSTRACT

In the 1980s Czechoslovakia was one of the strongest countries in the Warsaw Treaty Organisations in terms of military capacity. In addition to the regular army, Czechoslovakia had strong internal security forces and people's militia. The army was under the control of the Communist Party, whose extension was the political main directorate of the army.

The reorganisation of the army started in 1990. The main task was to reorganise the army of a totalitarian country into the armed forces of a democratic state. A civilian was appointed the Defence Minister; a new military doctrine was prepared, which stated that national defence was the duty of the army; the general staff and the Ministry of Defence as well as the structure of units were reorganised; reducing the number of staff started; the length of compulsory military service was shortened; and becoming a member of NATO was set as a goal.

The Soviet army units that were stationed in Czechoslovakia in 1968 were withdrawn by summer 1991. The Warsaw Treaty Organisation was disbanded at the same time. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist by the end of the subsequent year: the Czech Republic and Slovakia became independent countries that also divided the armed forces by the 2:1 principle – in favour of the Czech Republic, which is the larger of the two and has a bigger population. The Czech Republic became a member of NATO in March 1999. The number of staff of the armed forces of the Czech Republic was reduced fourfold from 1993–2013. Compulsory military service was abolished in 2005 and a professional army was introduced instead.

The period of transition from a totalitarian military into the defence forces of a democratic state in the former Czechoslovakia is still an almost unexplored part of our recent history. Not all relevant sources are accessible and not all witnesses are willing to share their knowledge. The aim of this article is to outline the main defence issues a newly developing democratic society had to tackle.

Czechoslovakia and its armed forces

For more than thirty years, the Czechoslovak People's Army (CSLA, *Československá lidová armáda*) had been a firm part of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Its 200,000 soldiers (in wartime, reservists would increase the number to over 700,000 troops) were trained to perform a sweep attack against the territory of West Germany.

The Czechoslovak People's Army was equipped with 4,500 tanks, 2,000 armoured personnel carriers, more than 1,000 artillery systems (including short-range missiles with the possible use of conventional or nuclear warheads) and 400 combat aircraft. This huge power was subordinated to the intentions of the Soviet Union (the so-called defence of the international communist community). Czechoslovak national interests (primarily the survival of the Czech and Slovak nations) were unimportant. In the case of such a war, Czechoslovakia would probably have been annihilated.[1]

Aside from the SNB (*Sbor Národní Bezpečnosti*, National Security Corps), consisting of the StB (*Státní bezpečnost*, Secret Police) and the VB (*Veřejná bezpečnost*, order police), and the People's Militias (*Lidové milice*, paramilitary troops comprising communist party members), the army was one of the direct power tools for manipulating society. The armed forces were involved in suppressing the mass demonstration of citizens on the first anniversary of Soviet occupation in August 1969. The High Command of the CSLA had been prepared to defend the regime internally.

[1] Petr Luňák, *Plánování nemyslitelného. Československé válečné plány 1950–1960* (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie Věd ČR and Dokořán, 2007), 36–71.

For decades, the military had been a traditional part of social life, but its public image progressively degraded. From an official 1987 opinion poll: "Compared to 1980, there has been a strong negative shift in rating the CSLA's ability to ensure national defence. Currently 75% of Czechoslovak citizens consider the CSLA well equipped and prepared, but only 56% think the CSLA shows a high morale and discipline. And 20% of citizens think that the military has no support and confidence of the population."[2]

It should be noted that in another survey in 1991, the decline of the population's confidence in the army's ability to fulfil its tasks continued. Forty-six percent of citizens had confidence in the ability of the army, 45% had no confidence and 9% did not know.[3]

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia systematically created an absolute political rule in the military. The main tools serving that purpose were a huge and powerful political apparatus and a system of nomenklatura in the selection of commanders.[4]

During the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, it was unclear how the military would react to general criticism of the communist regime. From the 20th of November 1989 on, leaders of the Ministry of Defence developed an initiative for the political activation of army service members in support of communist rule. The Minister of Defence, Army General Milán Václavík, ordered the preparation of military forces for project "Response," suppressing mass demonstrations of citizens led by a new opposition force, the Civic Forum.

Forces selected for intended intervention were on standby from the 24th of November. On the same day, at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, General Václavík proposed as a member of the Central Committee to place the "army" forces, police forces and the People's Militias on standby and forcibly take over the mass media for acting against protesters, with the intention to

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[2] "Veřejné mínění o vybraných otázkách mezinárodní politiky a obrany socialismu," http://archiv.soc.cas.cz/download/1212/1987_4_%C4%8C%C3%A1st1.pdf (accessed 9.9.2013).

[3] Army – evaluation. Survey of the Institute for Public Opinion, 1991, APS-P-ČR, Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 15/IV.

[4] Vladimíra Hradecka, František Koudelka, *Kádrová politika a nomenklatura KSČ 1969-1974* (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd ČR, 1998), 174–180.

save the weak, imploding regime. General Václavík's suggestion was met with no positive response by other Central Committee members. Leaders of the Communist Party realised there was no clear support from Moscow. The Central Committee, on the 25th of November, declared the intention not to use force, except in the case of threat to life and property and the disruption of the basis of socialism.[5]

But not many other army officers had such high communist ethics as General Václavík had. And the last point was made by the newly elected leadership of the communist party. They sent to the Army's main political administration and to the highest officers a clear political message on the 30th November 1989: "We ask you to understand with the respect to interior and international situation that we have no other possibility than only political solution of crisis."[6]

General Václavík was replaced in the post of defence minister by General Miroslav Vacek. General Vacek had a long service career, was a communist party member and was ranked a general. Before being appointed the minister, he was the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces. As newly appointed minister, General Vacek met Václav Havel in December 1989 and promised him that the army's neutrality would be maintained.[7]

Armed Forces in a new democratic state

The Czechoslovak People's Army did not play a tragic part in the "Velvet Revolution", but the army's position was strange. On the other hand, nevertheless, political conditions inside and outside the country changed completely. The future was totally unknown. In 1990, socialism as a political model had not yet been dismissed. Czechoslovak membership in the

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[5] Commitee for Security and Defence, Army – evaluation, Report of the Commision of the president CSFR for the investigation of army activity in November 1989, APS-P-ČR-AFS, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, file no 15/IV.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] Vladimír Hanzel, *Zrychlený tep dějin: Reálné drama o deseti jednáních* (Praha: Ok Centrum, 1991), 251–290.

Warsaw Pact was not officially questioned, but there was no rationale to keep such a huge military force in the new Europe.

At the beginning of 1990, the armed forces had the same role to fulfil as before: to maintain the necessary capacity for national defence and perform its tasks as a part of its membership in the Warsaw Pact. The armed forces had to struggle with troubles arising from its own existence: internal day-to-day activities and a lack of discipline.

The new democratic state had a complicated heritage to tackle. The military was too huge for the period after the Cold War. The Czechoslovak armed forces were the third largest out of the seven Warsaw Pact states. The Czechoslovakian armed forces owned the highest number of main battle tanks per capita (30 for 100,000 inhabitants) and combat airplanes (26 for 1,000,000 inhabitants). Czechoslovakia had over 14,000,000 inhabitants.[8]

In his legendary 1990 New Year's Day address, President Václav Havel claimed: "As the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, I want to guarantee that bold peace initiatives including the shortening of conscription, the establishment of alternative compulsory service and the general humanization of life in the military are preferred over alleged national defence interests."[9]

Possible external threats did not represent a major challenge for Havel. He emphasised solving the situation inside the Czechoslovak Armed Forces and possible threats for the new democracy.

The end of totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia 1989 brought about a set of four great challenges:

- Transition of a totalitarian army into the armed forces of the democratic state
- Dissolution of the Warsaw pact
- Withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Czechoslovak territory

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[8] Army – evaluation, Materials for Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE-T), APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 15/I.

[9] Osobní stránky Václava Havla, http://vaclavhavel.cz (accessed 11.12.2013).

- Two years after 1990, it was necessary to deal with something that had not been anticipated at first: to divide Czechoslovakia into two independent states and divide the armed forces as well.

Transition

The first step in defence reform was to depoliticise and dismantle the political apparatus inside the military, with the top-level structure called the Main Political Directorate. This measure was considered an important tool for preventing the possible misuse of the armed forces against what was still a weak and nascent democracy. But out of the 3,164 former members of that political military apparatus, only 284 were discharged in 1990. All other officers were moved to a newly established army directorate for education and culture or into the positions of commanders or experts. So, by the mid-1990s former officers of the Main Political Directorate still held 88.8% of the positions in the newly formed Education and Culture Directorate.[10]

This fact aroused criticism that the armed forces were not implementing any changes. Society refused communist rule but not much changed in the military.

Army service members' own initiatives represented a completely new phenomenon. Soldiers and officers formed independent associations (interest groups) inside the armed forces. Those groups strived to have input in the changes underway in the armed forces and naturally have some influence, too. One such group was created by ex-military officers discharged from the military after the Prague Spring was crushed in 1968 and labelled as reformist ("euro communists"), popularly called "sixty-eighters". This association was called the "Military Revival" and was a part of the Civic Forum (main opposition force). There were two main tasks of

[10] Summary of engaging former party apparatus members of CSLA into the sector of public education, 10.7.1990, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 15/I.

this association: take part in changing the military into a new democratic force and rehabilitate its members.[11]

Another initiative was called the "Legion of Freedom". It was an ultra-radical group of young officers calling for rapid democratic changes in the armed forces. But in autumn 1990, the minister of defence abolished the Legion of Freedom for its allegedly extremist tendencies.[12]

The Parliament was very quick to enact a new democratic military oath, a new name (Czechoslovak Armed Forces) and the general principle of apolitical armed forces. At the beginning of 1990, the armed forces were to perform the following functions: to maintain their capacity for national defence but also to fulfil obligations stemming from the country's effective membership in the Warsaw Pact.

In his order promulgated on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the country's liberation in May 1990, President Václav Havel stated: "Czechoslovakia wants to keep the obligations following from the Warsaw Pact's existence as a political and military alliance recognising sovereignty and independence of member countries and an important tool of disarmament negotiations. The idea of security, democracy and overall global humanization is going to become recognized as a massive political and social power. At the forefront we see the task to struggle for a unified Europe. We want to become an integral part of such a Europe. But Europe is still divided into two blocs. There are still two huge piles of weapons in existence. The defence doctrine of Czechoslovakia accentuates the principle of sufficient defence, non-intervention into the internal processes of other countries. The main purpose of the armed forces is to defend sovereignty and the territorial integrity of our country."[13]

The new democratic government was increasingly discontent over the slow reform effort performed by Defence Minister General Vacek. He was

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[11] Zdeňka Kokošková, Stanislav Kokoška, *Obroda – klub za socialistickou přestavbu. Dokumenty* (Praha: Maxdorf, 1996), 149–150.

[12] Letter of the Minister of Defence to the Chairman of the Committee for Defence and Security, 16.10.1990, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 15/I.

[13] *Obrana lidu*, 8.5.1990, 4.

The last communist-era Defence Minister of Czechoslovakia General Milán Václavík (on the right) taking part of an army communist party meeting. The banner reads: all energy of the party and the people to fulfil the 16th communist party congress program (end of 1980s). Military History Institute in Prague

too closely tied with the totalitarian style of military leadership. In autumn 1990, the former dissident and Charter 77 member Luboš Dobrovský became the first civilian Defence Minister in 60 years. A friend of Václav Havel, Luboš Dobrovský, was nominated for a new position as guarantor of the civil administration and the democratic control of the army.

A great challenge was to define a new defence doctrine and security guarantees for the Czechoslovak Republic in turbulent times. The key word describing the doctrine was a good balance – among limited financial resources and human resources and the state's disadvantageous geographic position for national defence purposes. The Czechoslovak armed forces were to adopt a defensive, instead of offensive, posture. It was necessary for Czechoslovak security to achieve good relations with

its neighbours in Europe. The Warsaw Pact was, in reality, hollow and was burdened by painful reminiscences. Just as other countries in Europe, Czechoslovakia nevertheless strived for a new, more effective and trustworthy security system. As a temporary measure, the armed forces had to be prepared to repel any attack from any direction.

The second meeting of the State Defence Council on the 12th of November 1990 endorsed the Czechoslovak Armed Forces development concept. Consequently, the Military Doctrine of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic (CSFR) was approved in March 1991. Its principles were elaborated upon in the CSFR Comprehensive Defence Strategy and in the Operations plan of the Armed Forces' Employment for the Defence of CSFR. That policy document was authorised by President Havel on the 28th of January 1992.[14]

Organization of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces stemmed from the new strategic concept, stressing the defensive purpose of the military. The General Staff and the Ministry of Defence were reorganised. The changes included the reduction of personnel and armaments, the introduction of a three-echelon command system, and the adoption of a brigade structure. All those changes sought to prepare the armed forces for possible future accession to NATO.

For the previous offensive purposes under communist rule, a majority of the best-equipped forces were concentrated in the western part of the Czech lands (Bohemia) and along borders with the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria. The Slovak part of the Republic was considered the rear, far from any possible theatre of war. In Slovakia, predominantly training facilities and a few second-class equipped units were stationed. Only 18.6% of the entire personnel of the armed forces served on the territory of Slovakia.

During 1990–1992, one-third of the military units and equipment were relocated to Slovak territory. It was not only for the purpose of

[14] Use of the military doctrine in legislative and other law rules of the Czechoslovak Army and the level of relocation especially in the Slovak Republic territory. Speech by the chief of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak Army, 12.2.1992, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 15/IV.

"defence in all directions". Subsequently, separatist tendencies grew in Slovakia.

The reduction of armed forces personnel was prepared at the same time. Instead of 200,000 soldiers, as in the communist era, the military would have only around 135,000 – 140,000 service members at the end of 1993. In the context of the CFE-T (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty) and the planned changes in force structure, phase one was designed to dispose of 1,880 tanks, 2,453 armoured carriers, 34 mobile launchers of short-range rockets and of medium-range surface-to-surface missiles, 2,335 artillery pieces, rocket launchers and mortars (calibre 100 mm and bigger), 30 mobile launchers of surface-to-air missiles and 101 combat airplanes.[15]

The reduction of the defence budget entailed challenges for the military. It was a reason to postpone the steps leading to the future transition from compulsory military service to a professional army. Financial resources were spent mostly on the purchase of spare parts for military vehicles. But the reduced budget did not permit the acquisition of modern equipment that would meet NATO standards. Compared to 1988, the budget was 20% lower in 1990, but the prices of materials were higher. Financing the armed forces was influenced by the release of prices, which started in January 1991. Before that, the national economy was regulated by the state. The intensity of military training fell to a minimum. In 1990–1992, the armed forces were only surviving.[16]

Many old commitments also restricted the development of the armed forces. In 1990, the armed forces were forced to buy new, but now useless, weapons. For example, 80 armoured carriers and six MiG-29 fighters previously contracted were procured in 1990. The government even decided to procure eighty-two T-72 tanks from a Czechoslovak manufacturer, because a foreign customer had eventually declined to buy them.

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[15] Propositions of government for Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 15/I, 30.1.1990.

[16] Presentation by the chief of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak Army regarding the budget for 1992, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 39/I.

But such acquisitions did not make sense with the armed forces reduced as a result of the CFE-T.[17]

Society regarded the humanization of the military as a major priority. In March 1990, the Parliament shortened the length of conscription from 24 to 18 months. On the 14 of March 1990, the Parliament enacted an alternative civil service for conscientious objectors. The act was not well-formulated and permitted conscripts to request alternative service at any moment without limitation. But only a few of those conscripts were true conscientious objectors. Most of the people requesting alternative service sought personal benefits. A wave of such applications initiated chaos in the armed forces. After one year, the Parliament had to revise the act and the situation improved. Notwithstanding all steps taken for the humanization of the military service, the armed forces were viewed as obscuring the real state of affairs much the same way as in the communist era. Conscripts did not accept the opportunity to serve for homeland defence with a new moral conviction. According to their opinion the army system did not change much after 1989 compared to communist era conditions.[18]

Withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia

Armies of five members of the Warsaw Pact crushed the democratisation endeavour, known as "the Prague Spring", on the 21st of August 1968. Around 150 Czechoslovak citizens were killed during the first few weeks of the occupation. By the 4th of November 1968, Hungarian, Polish, Bulgarian and East German troops had withdrawn from Czechoslovakia. They took part in the invasion mainly for propaganda reasons. However, Soviet troops stayed in Czechoslovakia for more than twenty years. The stay of the contingent was based on the treaty made between the USSR government and the Czechoslovak government on "conditions for the temporary

[17] State's closing budget for 1990, chapter of the Federal Ministry of Defence, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 39/II.

[18] Civil alternative service, APS-P-ČR, f. Federal assembly – 6th period, files of the Committee for Defence and Security, no 20.

President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel signs the document of accession to NATO (26 February 1999). Military History Institute in Prague

stationing of Soviet troops on Czechoslovak territory", which was signed on the 16th of October 1968. The treaty permitted 75,000 Soviet soldiers of the ground forces and 200 aircraft to be stationed in the country.

The deployment of Soviet troops resulted in the relocation of about a hundred Czechoslovak military units and caused many subsequent difficulties for Czechoslovak armed forces personnel.

Many violent acts were perpetrated by the Soviet troops in Czechoslovak territory during the more than 20 years of their stay. These primarily involved traffic accidents, but naturally street brawls, rapes, robberies, black market crimes and murders occurred, too. Soviet soldiers behaved like occupiers in Czechoslovakia.[19] This fact was obvious mostly in the

[19] Milan Bárta, Lukáš Cvrček, Patrik Košický, Vítězslav Sommer, *Oběti okupace. Československo 21.8.-31.12.1968* (Praha: ÚSTR, 2008), 11–16.

first few years, when the Soviet Army forcibly punished all cases in which citizens disagreed with the Soviet presence in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet army also arbitrarily seized flats and land for use as training sites. It used both Czechoslovak state property and the environment. Much groundwater was contaminated because of inappropriate construction and improper operation of oil tanks. Many accidents were caused by the Soviets driving vehicles that did not meet roadworthiness standards.[20]

Czechoslovak citizens' feelings of annoyance surfaced, for instance following the victory of the Czechoslovak ice hockey team over the Soviet team in March 1969 and during events linked to the first anniversary of Soviet occupation in August 1969. However, legal and repressive measures taken by the state effectively diminished the amount of civil discontent expressed by the Czechoslovak people.

Political authorities of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the armed forces continued to produce propagandistic, artificially friendly relations between civilians, the CSLA and Soviet troops. Soviet soldiers were involved in the production of or appeared on various cultural or political occasions. Seemingly, the citizens of Czechoslovakia became used to their presence.

The first act of withdrawal, however limited, stemmed from a Soviet-initiated deal announced by Mikhail Gorbachev on the 7th of December 1988. The Soviet Airborne Battalion left its location in the Lest military training area (Slovakia) in April 1989.The Standalone Road Transport Battalion and the Standalone Combat Engineer Battalion, both stationed in Olomouc, soon followed in May and June 1989. The fourth unit going back to the USSR was the Standalone Chemical Defence Battalion. The number of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia thus decreased by 1,500 soldiers, 192 tanks and 20 combat aircraft during 1989. Additionally, the number of tanks in tank divisions and the number of armoured carriers was to decrease by 20% and 40% respectively, due to a planned reorganisation into a "force structure with defensive purposes". The withdrawal

[20] Files of damage incidents, VUA, f. the governmental plenipotentiary for the provisional stay of Soviet troops on the Czechoslovak territory.

Swedish JAS-39 Gripen fighter jets of the Czech Air Force. Military History Institute in Prague

was planned to finish with the withdrawal of the 31st Tank Division from the town of Bruntál by the end of 1990. However, in reality, history did not follow those plans.[21]

In November 1989, during the overthrow of communist rule, the idea to withdraw Soviet troops became one of the most important subjects for the public. A vast majority of Czechoslovak citizens wished to be rid of Soviet forces. It was regarded not only an issue of national pride but also as the removal of a possible threat to the future independent development of the country. Nevertheless, the way to fulfilling that wish was not so easy.

First Ladislav Adamec's reformed federal government reacted quickly and issued a response to the proclamation of the countries (dated 4 December 1989) that had taken part in the 1968 occupation. Warsaw Pact armies were blamed for breaking the rules of international law. Adamec's government suggested starting negotiations on an "inter-

[21] Jindřich Pecka, *Sovětská armáda v Československu, 1968–1991: chronologický přehled* (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1996), 139.

national treaty regarding the temporary deployment of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia. The effort aimed at involving the Central Group of Soviet Forces in a global process of the disarmament of superpowers". As a result, the withdrawal of Soviet forces would be included in negotiations over the reduction of Soviet and American forces in Europe. On the other hand, that scenario would in fact legalize the presence of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia as a part of a joint defence system. Not even the Soviet Union had requested such a statement before. According to Adamec's dangerous interpretation, an expert group of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia started to work on a new treaty regarding the stay of Soviet forces.[22]

In contrast, the Civic Forum requested immediate withdrawal. Things started to progress according to the wishes of the nation when Marián Čalfa's completely new government was constituted on the 10th of December 1989.

The first round of Czechoslovak-Soviet negotiations took place in Prague, from the 15th to the 17th of January, 1990. Despite the efforts of the Soviets to maintain their foreign forces in Czechoslovakia and to keep the negotiations exclusively on a formal level, they finally accepted the demand for withdrawal by 1991.

The second negotiation round took place in Moscow on the 7th of February 1990. The Soviets did not concede the nullification of the original treaty of 1968. Therefore the Czechoslovak delegation used arguments based on the proclamation of the Soviet government dated the 4th of December 1989, stating that the occupation was against international law. By the end of June 1991 the withdrawal was agreed to be finished.[23]

On the 26th of February 1990, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union signed a government-to-government agreement on the "Withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Czechoslovak Territory" in Moscow. By the 30th of June 1991, a total of 73,500 soldiers

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[22] Jaroslav Šedivý, *Černínský palác v roce nula. Ze zákulisí polistopadové zahraniční politiky* (Praha: Ivo Železný, 1997), 46.

[23] Jindřich Pecka, *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991* (Praha: ÚSD AV ČR, 1996), 99.

Czech soldiers on a mission in Afghanistan. Military History Institute in Prague

with their 39,000 family members and relatives, 1,220 tanks, 2,500 armoured carriers, 105 combat airplanes, 175 helicopters and 95,000 tons of ammunition had left Czechoslovakia. The last train transport crossed the Czechoslovak borders on the 21st of June 1991. Commander of the Central Group of Soviet Forces Colonel General Eduard Vorobyov flew back home on the 27th of June 1991.[24]

The Central Group of Soviet Forces abandoned 355 buildings, 286 in the Czech Republic and 69 in the Slovak Republic. Soviet troops left behind extensive ecological damage throughout the country.[25]

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[24] Major General ing. Svetozár Naďovič, Major General Hartmut Foertsch, Major General Imre Karáczony, Major General Zdisław Ostrowski, *The Great Withdrawal* (Bratislava: Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, 2005), 56–57.

[25] Pecka, *Odsun sovětských*, 260–280.

Dissolution of the Warsaw Pact

The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was recognised as the third important challenge. The Warsaw treaty was considered by Czechoslovak citizens as a symbol of Soviet occupation in 1968 and long subordination of the country to Soviet interests. The planned military conflict between West and East would completely destroy the country and annihilate the nation.

The political changes that took place in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s had great historical importance. Soviet forces left Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In the early 1990s, US military intelligence concluded the Warsaw Pact did not pose an offensive threat for NATO anymore. The intelligence's conclusions were based on analyses of ongoing political changes in the respective Warsaw Pact countries and the fact that the countries had clearly politically diverged from the Soviet Union. However, the Warsaw Pact still remained a complicated political group and its natural dissolution was also accelerated by the course of events in the Western Bloc. In October 1991, Germany was reunified and joined NATO.

The process of the gradual dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was complicated and thus its final outcome could not be predicted in advance. It was feared that the dissolution might lead to dangerous instability in the Soviet Union or Europe.

Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze even made attempts to save the pact during a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact in Prague on the 17th of March 1990. He did succeed to an extent, and so the Warsaw Pact continued to exist for a limited period of time, which helped to prevent a security vacuum in Europe.[26]

As a result of political initiatives by Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, the remaining Warsaw Pact representatives agreed on the progressive reduction of military activities at a meeting in Moscow in June 1990.

Efforts leading towards the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact became more intensive due to worries regarding the intervention of Soviet forces

[26] Šedivý, *Černínský palác*, 125.

in the Baltic states in 1990–1991 and the generally unstable situation in the Soviet Union. Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary announced their intention to dissolve the Warsaw Pact by the end of 1991. All military structures and authorities were dismantled by the 31st of March 1991.

The top representatives of the Warsaw Pact countries signed the protocol for the pact's dissolution on the 1st of June 1991.[27]

The Soviet Union's wave of internal crises culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

Division of the states

In 1992, Czechoslovakia was divided into two independent states. The Czechoslovak Armed Forces had to separate its weapons and property between the new Czech Armed Forces and the Slovak Armed Forces by the end of December 1992. The Czechoslovak military was divided without incident. It goes without saying that the division of the state was an emotional moment. Czechoslovakia's division had previously been inconceivable for citizens and soldiers alike. But the division of the country was a political reality. The Armed Forces of the Czech Republic officially came into being on the 1st of January 1993 after the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Federation.

The separation of the states was realized on the basis of Act No 542/1992 Sb. on the abolishment of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on the 31st of December 1992. The Czechoslovak Armed Forces were abolished by the same token. From the 1st of January 1993, units and facilities of the former Czechoslovak Armed Forces were integrated on the territorial principle into the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic and the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. The Minister of Defence issued the formal order on the 21st of December 1992. All commanders were

[27] Zdeněk Matějka, "Jednání o rozpuštění Varšavské smlouvy," *Historie a vojenství* 3, no 54 (2005): 4–19.

ordered to complete a handover of materials until midnight of the 31st of December 1992.[28]

The principle key for the division of property was a 2:1 ratio in favour of Czech lands, as the Czech Republic had a bigger territory and more inhabitants.

Two new states endeavoured on their path of independence without any complaints or controversy. Many soldiers of Slovak nationality chose to serve in the Czech armed forces and some Czechs the other way around.

Dissolution of the Warsaw Pact opened questions about the future orientation of Czechoslovak Republic's defence policy. The Czech Republic could engage with the Western European military forces of the North Atlantic Alliance, or alternatively, it could declare neutrality. Integration with NATO was chosen as the most reliable approach, ensuring the acceptance by defensive and political structures of the democratic world. The process of accession to NATO began. The quest for international guarantees of the security of the state continued into the period of the independent Czech Republic. Several alternative scenarios, which were thoroughly discussed, came into consideration. The next step would be incorporation of the country into international security structures.

The Armed Forces of Czech Republic officially came into being on the 1st of January 1993 after the Czechoslovak Federation was dissolved. Its organization stemmed from a brand new strategic concept for the Czech Republic, stressing the defensive purpose of respective forces and services. Independent military jurisdiction with military courts for the offences of soldiers and officers and military prosecutor's offices were abolished; the General Staff and the Ministry of Defence underwent reorganisation. Further, the changes included: the reduction of personnel strength and armaments, the introduction of a three-echelon command system, and the adoption of a brigade structure for the armed forces. All those changes aimed to prepare the armed forces for accession to NATO.

[28] Realization of institutional law no 542/1992 about the termination of the Czech and Slovak Federational Republic in the conditions of the Czechoslovak Army, 21.12.1992, VUA, collection of the Orders of the Defence Minister 1992, no 004.

In 1993, the Czech Republic became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. The Czech Armed Forces started to participate in military exercises with the armed forces of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France.

In 1994, the Czech Republic joined the "Partnership for Peace" program. Czech soldiers started to take part in other international military exercises and enrolled in military schools abroad. Consequently, the Czech Republic was invited for initial negotiations on NATO accession during the NATO summit in Madrid in June 1997.

An important milestone for the Czech Republic was when the Czech Republic acceded to NATO – on March 12th, 1999. And on 16 March 1999, there was a flag raising ceremony at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in honour of the new member nations, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, officially joining NATO. That moment marked the completion of the accession period.

Another phase began to bring the armed forces up to the standards of compatibility and interoperability with other NATO Allies.

Table 1. Personnel strength of the Czechoslovak (Czech) Armed Forces 1989–2013[29]

Year (1st January)	Officers and noncommissioned officers (from 2005 only professional personnel including rank and file)	Conscripts	Civil employees	Total
1989 (communist era)	61,405	148,595	80,000	210,000 + 80,000
1990 (new state)	56,000			198,150
1993 (Czech Republic)	38,049	68,630	25,286	131,965
2005 (professionalisation)	22,145	0	17,288	39,433
2013	21,733	0	8,288	30,021

[29] Personel Size of the Defence Department in 1993–2013, http://www.army.cz/en/facts-file/personnel-size/personnel-size-at-the-defence-department--in-1993---2011-51638/ (accessed 1.7.2014).

The armed forces transitioned to a professional army in 2005. It gained the characteristics of an advanced military force capable of tackling new threats and actively engaging in alliance operations. Without conscripts, the armed forces became much smaller with only 39,433 service members, including civil employees. The number of professional soldiers has not changed too much since; only the number of civilians working for the military has dropped.

The Czech Armed Forces today is based on the principle of the smallest possible force sufficient for defence as an operational force. There are presently 21,733 men and women in uniform serving with the Czech Armed Forces and 8,288 civilians, totalling 30,021. Nevertheless, there are also units of the active reserve component, too. The Czech armed forces now have only 123 tanks, 501 armoured combat vehicles (armoured personnel carriers and armoured infantry fighting vehicles), 182 artillery pieces with a calibre of 100 millimetres and above, 39 combat airplanes and 24 combat helicopters. The quantity of these weapons is deeply under the limits stipulated by the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty.[30]

In NATO, the Czech contribution primarily specialises in defence against weapons of mass destruction. The standards achieved by the Czech Armed Forces in this niche specialisation are internationally considered rather high. Other such special activity is field medical service. The national economy nevertheless determines strict limits and the defence budget has declined over the last twenty years. Today, defence appropriations represent only 1.08 percent of the gross domestic product.[31]

Since its establishment, the Czech Armed Forces have taken part in many foreign missions under the flags of the UN and NATO. Over the last twenty years, the Czech Armed Forces proved its combat capabilities on foreign deployed operations. Its first operations were Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990–1991 in Kuwait. Since then, the Czechoslovak

[30] According to the CFE-T, the Czech Armed Forces is obliged to have up to 957 tanks, 1,367 armoured combat vehicles, 767 artillery systems, 230 combat airplanes and 50 combat helicopters.

[31] Defence Budget, http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=5760 (accessed 1.7.2014).

and Czech Armed Forces have taken part in 32 operations abroad. More than 20,000 Czech soldiers have been deployed for missions and operations in the former Yugoslavia, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Chad.[32]

As part of the NATO Integrated Air Defence System, a task force comprising JAS 39 Gripen supersonic fighters of 211th Tactical Squadron provided defence and protection of Baltic States airspace twice in 2008–2009 and 2012 – January 2013. The Czech Air Force contingents were located in Lithuania.[33]

Conclusion

The key issues relating to the armed forces in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic) were not the creation of new forces. The main challenge was to restructure the totalitarian army into the modern armed forces of a democratic state. And the second challenge was to devise new security guarantees in a quickly changing world.

Twenty years after 1993, the security of our country is ensured in the best manner in the history of the state since 1918. On the other hand, the Czech Armed Forces and the Ministry of defence are facing budget cuts and troubles with transparency in the use of financial resources. But the confidence of citizens in their armed forces is relatively high. Czech society already recognises the armed forces as a useful and necessary tool. Not only during a typical war conflict, but also during disasters and so forth. Participation in foreign deployed operations cooperation with NATO allies furnishes the Czech Armed Forces with many valuable lessons and much experience.

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[32] Foreign Operations, http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=5807 (accessed 1.7.2014).

[33] History of Czech Military Participation in Operations Abroad (1990–2013), http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=5717 (accessed 1.7.2014).

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Dawn of the Restored Latvian National Armed Forces

Sarmīte Baltiņa

ABSTRACT

The decision on the formation of the Latvian National Guard (*Zemessardze*) was made in August 1991. Men who were not Latvian citizens were also invited to join the Zemessardze at first, as the Citizenship Act had not yet been passed and the Supreme Council of Latvia wanted to involve loyal non-citizens in national defence. In December 1991 there were ca 10,000 men in the 34 battalions of the *Zemessardze*. The Compulsory Military Service Act was adopted in September 1991 and the Ministry of Defence was formed in November. The Latvian Defence Forces were formed in November 1992. The position of the Commander of the Defence Forces was established with the National Defence Act of 1994 and a single management structure was also developed to reduce unwanted competition between the *Zemessardze* and the Defence Forces.

The Intelligence Assault Battalion was formed in spring 1992. In 1994, Latvia joined the PfP programme and men who participated in international cooperation projects (BALTBAT) were trained in the battalion. The battalion was reorganised in 1998 and became the Latvian Peace Enforcing Battalion. The Intelligence Assault Battalion established a foundation for training Latvian soldiers who take part in foreign missions.

The goal of this paper is to give an overview of the beginning of the formation of the Latvian National Guard (*Latvijas Republikas Zemessardze*) and the National Armed Forces. Within the National Armed Forces (hereinafter NAF), the organisation of the Intelligence Assault Battalion (*Izlūkdesanta bataljons*) will be discussed, as it was one of the first units formed in the Defence Forces. The period from 1991 to the middle of the 1990s will be reviewed.

Documents from the archives of the Latvian Ministry of Defence and the Latvian National Guard have been used to prepare this article. Documents about the reorganised and liquidated structures of the National Guard and the Intelligence Assault Battalion are kept in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence. Out of the National Guard archive, orders of the Commander of the National Guard and the Chief of the Headquarters, as well as the orders on the basic activities have been used. Concerning the Intelligence Assault Battalion, official papers of the NAF 1st Infantry Battalion have also been used, as alongside with the reorganisation of the Intelligence Assault Battalion in January, 1998, the grounds for the 1st Infantry Battalion were laid. Materials from the stock of the Latvian War Museum, the publications of Jānis Maurītis, historian of the post-war department of the museum, in the Latvian War Museum's Yearbooks of 2011 and 2012, and Latvian Popular Front newspaper *Atmoda* have also been consulted.[1]

The beginning – the National Guard

Looking back at the events more than 20 years ago, we come to the conclusion that the fate of Latvia and the occupying USSR was actually decided in August 1991. In Moscow, the putsch of the reactionary communists and militaries collapsed and the USSR itself was agonising. Its breakdown came a couple of months later.

After the failure of the putsch, the Latvian Supreme Soviet immediately adopted the constitutional law "On the Governmental Status of the

[1] Latvijas Nacionālie Bruņotie Spēki 10 = Latvian National Armed Forces (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2001); Jānis Maurītis "Zemessardzes struktūru veidošana," – *Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata XII* (Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes žurnāla "Latvijas Vēsture" fonds, 2011), 44–55; Jānis Maurītis "NBS Sužu Izlūkdienesta bataljona vēsture," – *Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata XIII* (Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes žurnāla "Latvijas Vēsture" fonds, 2012), 64–73; *Atmoda: Latvijas Tautas Frontes (LTF) informatīvais biļetens*, nr. 2–46; *LTF Informatīvais izdevums*, nr. 47–51; *LTF Nedēļas izdevums*, nr. 52/53–61; *LTF Nedēļas laikraksts*, nr. 62, (1989–1992) = Awakening: newspaper of the Popular Front of Latvia; *Par Tēvu zemi un brīvību/Latvijas Republikas Zemessardzei – 10* (Rīga: Latvijas Republikas Zemessardzes štābs, apgāds Mantojums, 2001).

Republic of Latvia" on the 21st of August 1991,[2] and with it ended the transition period of the restoration of the independence declared on May 4th, 1990. Alongside the full restoration of independence, it was necessary to rapidly finish the revival of the formation of the national defence structures. On August 23rd, 1991 the Latvian Supreme Soviet adopted the law "On the National Guard of the Republic of Latvia"[3] in the third reading; it came into effect the next day. According to the law, all the inhabitants of Latvia aged 18 could join the National Guard and be involved in the defence of the public and state. Juris Bojars (one of parliamentarians) proposed that only citizens of the Republic of Latvia should be enrolled in the National Guard, but this proposal got as few as 8 votes.[4] This position accounted for the fact that a new citizenship law was not being reviewed in the Supreme Soviet and the goal of the consolidation of society called for the involvement of loyal non-citizens. The informative publication *Latvian National Guard* being printed in Russian in addition to the original Latvian was more proof of that.

The law stated that the chairman of the Latvian Supreme Soviet was simultaneously the commander of the National Guard. The Supreme Soviet was entitled to appoint the chief of headquarters as well.

The choice of the chief of staff turned out to be rather complicated and disputable. The Commission for the Defence and Interior of the Supreme Soviet nominated Deputy Odisejs Kostanda as a candidate, while the National Defence Board headed by Anatolijs Gorbunovs supported Juris Strīpnieks. Among the potential guardsmen, the Supreme Soviet deputy Ģirts Kristovskis enjoyed great popularity thanks to his activities during the period of barricades in January 1991.[5] Both the deputies to the Supreme Soviet and the Board of the Popular Front met with great difficulties to find a universally acceptable candidate.[6] Therefore, the approval

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[2] *Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs (Ziņotājs)* 42 (Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome, 1991), 2048.

[3] *Ziņotājs* 35/36 (1991), 1658.

[4] 1991. gada 22. augusta sēdes stenogramma – *Latvijas Vēstnesis. Dokumenti* (1991), 397.

[5] In January of 1991, unarmed Latvian civilians protected the state's most important objects from the USSR's military attacks. (Author's note.)

[6] A. Vladimirovs. "Kostanda vai Strīpnieks? Nē-Kristovskis??" *Atmoda* nr. 37, 17.9.1991, 4.

52nd battalion of National Guard, summer 1992. At the microphone in the centre – Chief of Staff Ģirts Kristovskis (later long-term minister of defence). 2nd row middle – Commander of the battalion Colonel Jānis Hartmanis. Latvian War Museum

process of the chief of headquarters was delayed. Voting for two candidates in the Supreme Soviet failed and the Commander of the National Guard Gorbunovs was authorised to appoint the acting person.[7] With his Order No. 2 of September 2nd, Kristovskis was appointed the acting chief of headquarters.[8] It was only on February 18th, 1992, that he was officially approved in this post by the Supreme Soviet.[9] Debate on the choice of the chief of the headquarters had been heated; therefore, Kristovskis could be considered a compromise.

The chief of headquarters was certainly the person to complete the main tasks necessary for creating and leading the National Guard. Upon taking up his responsibilities, Kristovskis declared that the National

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7 1991. gada 27. augusta sēdes stenogramma – *Latvijas Vēstnesis. Dokumenti* (1991), 4054.

8 ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 1, 2.

9 *Ziņotājs* 10 (1992), 342.

Guard was going to be a paramilitary structure able to replace the army and analogous to the former Latvian Guardsmen.[10] Obviously, reality corrected the initial vision of the chief of headquarters.

Right away on August 24th, 1991, the Commander of the National Guard by Order No. 1 entrusted the municipalities with beginning the registration process of national guardsmen in the territory of Latvia.[11]

It must be remembered that during the period of the Third Awakening[12] the units of the Voluntary Security Guards had been formed with the task to provide order at mass demonstrations, pickets and other activities. On September 5th, 1991, the 3rd Conference of the Units passed the decision to close their activities and join the National Guard en masse.[13]

In compliance with the law, national guardsmen started their service by taking an oath. On October 17th, the first 60 national guardsmen took their oath in the building of the Latvian Supreme Soviet in the presence of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Among them were Gorbunovs, Kristovskis, commanders of battalions, and staff of the headquarters, including three women.[14] That proved that the service in the National Guard was not a monopoly of males.

Besides the law "On the National Guard of the Republic of Latvia", the National Guard Service Regulations,[15] as well as the instructions and standing orders elaborated by headquarters, regulated the operation of the National Guard.

In September 1991, the Commander of the National Guard established the structure of the headquarters. The formation of the battalions started in the municipal territories in Latvia.[16] Each battalion obtained the rights of a legal entity. Post titles and their insignia were introduced, but it should be note that military ranks had not been established yet. The

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[10] Vladimirovs, "Kostanda," 4.

[11] NG Chief of Headquarters orders, ZŠA apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 1, 1.

[12] A term used in Latvian historiography between 1987–1990. (Author's note.)

[13] LKM 6-1249-DK/p.

[14] NG Chief of Headquarters orders, ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 2, 36.

[15] *Latvijas Zemessargs* nr. 1 (1991), 17.

[16] Latvia was divided into 26 districts. Each district had one battalion plus eight battalions in Riga and Riga region. (Author's note.)

voluntary application and registration intensity differed throughout the regions, but generally the response was very high. The formation process of the National Guard can be justly evaluated as a wide national movement uniting the patriots of Latvia for the defence and maintenance of public order in the restored state. The enrolment of patriotically minded people in the National Guard increased when the initiative for the restoration of the Latvian Guardsmen organisation had betrayed the hopes for it. By December, more than 10,000 people had been united in 34 territorial battalions. This number of national guardsmen has remained rather stable.

In March 1993, the emblem of the National Guard was affirmed. Its basis is a nibbed, four-cornered shield forming an octagon. Number eight stands for restoration; the colour white, for modesty; the downward-pointing sword, for readiness to defend; and the three stars, for the unity of the Latvian historical regions (Kurzeme-Semgale, Vidzeme and Latgale). This emblem is depicted in the chevron on the uniform of the National Guard.[17]

Initially, the following tasks were assigned to the National Guard: to participate in the defence of the Republic of Latvia; to guard essential national, municipal and economic objects; to guard people and their property against criminal offence; to assist the border guard, police and customs institutions when necessary; and to assist state and municipal institutions, as well as the population, during natural and ecological disasters, cataclysms, and large economic emergencies and help deal with their consequences. Despite the lack of armament, uniforms and adequate training, the national guardsmen coped with everything – guarded the national border, struggled with contrabandists, caught law breakers, extinguished fires, fought floods, and blockaded the Soviet units.[18]

It must be noted that the National Guard was based on voluntary enrolment. Concerning the restoration of the Latvian land forces the public attitude was different.

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[17] NG Chief of Headquarters order nr. 15, 15.3.1993, ZŠA, Fonds Zemessardzes priekšnieka pavēles.

[18] Štāba priekšnieka pavēles, ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 6, 91.

Consolidation of the National Armed Forces

At that point, the following views were being expressed in public: Latvia, being such a small country, doesn't need an army; it would cost too much and be inexpedient; the armed forces of the Russian Federation (Soviet Army) are still located in the territory of Latvia and the revival of Latvia's army might "annoy" them; Latvia must be neutral, etc. Nevertheless, the view about providing for elementary security with our own state's means won. The sociological inquiry organised by the Baltic Strategic Research Centre in 1994 proved that 71.5% of Latvian citizens consider that a national army was necessary for the state, while only 15.9% held the opposite view.[19] It can be presumed that in 1991 this view could have been even stronger.[20] It must be noted that their stance effectively influenced the formation process of the NAF.

In order to properly organise the Latvian NAF, an adequate legislative basis had to be created. On September 10th, 1991, The Latvian Supreme Soviet adopted the law "On the Mandatory State Service in the Republic of Latvia" (*Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs*).[21] This law established mandatory active state service for the permanent residents of the Republic of Latvia.[22] The length of the military service was 18 months. In compliance with the law, the autumn call-up had to start on October 1st, but it was delayed for organisational reasons. A minimum number of people were called up in the service of Border Guard and Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Defence was established by the law adopted by the Supreme Soviet on November 13th, 1991.[23] Tālavs Jundzis was appointed the first minister of defence. The next legislative

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[19] Tālavs Jundzis, "Valsts aizsardzības pirmsākumi 1991.–1993. g. padarītais un nepadarītais," *Militārais Apskats* 2 (1996): 6.

[20] J. Domburs, "Ja pērkons dārd, nevar dzirdēt, ka iespļauj jūrā," *Atmoda* nr. 48 (1991), 14.

[21] *Ziņotājs* 39 (1991), 1843.

[22] The first law about the National Guard of Latvia stated that all inhabitants of Latvia had the right to join. On October 15, 1991 the Supreme Council of Latvia passed a decision that persons who were citizens of Latvia on June 17, 1940, as well their descendants, are citizens of Latvia. (Author's note.)

[23] *Ziņotājs* 47/48 (1991), 2291.

Troops of the Estonian Defence Forces on a parade at the Freedom Monument in Riga (23 August 1993). A. Vidzidska/Latvian War Museum

package was adopted in November 1992 and consisted of the law "On National Defence" and the law "On Defence Forces".[24] I would like to note that the abovementioned stance of the Latvian politicans, who did not want strained relations with Russian troops in Latvia, was one of the reasons for the choice of the name "Defence Forces" instead of the historical name "the Latvian Army".

Thus, we can see that, within this period, a situation with the formation of two parallel military structures was developing in Latvia – the National Guard, subject to the chairman of the Supreme Soviet and later to the President of the State, and the NAF, subject to the Ministry of Defence, which consisted of the Defence Forces (*Aizsardzības spēki*), Air Forces and Navy.

The date of the order on the appointment of the commander of the respective unit must be considered as the moment of the establishment of

[24] *Ziņotājs* 46/47/48 (1992), 2270–2490.

Intelligence Assault Battalion on parade at the Freedom Monument in Riga (23 August 1993). A. Vidzidska/Latvian War Museum

a structural unit, as this order gave a start to the actual formation work of the unit both in the National Guard and the NAF.

Within the National Guard, the first orders of this kind were issued on September 9th, 1991.[25]

The numbering of National Guard battalions does not run in consecutive order and the system itself accounted for it. It envisaged that type 0, i.e. units No. 1–10 would be directly subordinate to headquarters; type 1 were battalions to be formed in Riga; type 2 were those formed in the Vidzeme region; type 3 were those formed in Latgale; type 4 were those formed in Kurzeme; and type 5 were battalions of the Zemgale region. The 9th Battalion, subordinate to headquarters, was formed first. Some documents identify this battalion as the Headquarters Battalion. As soon as April 1992, the National Guard headquarters Special Tasks Unit was formed on the basis of the 9th Battalion due to the necessity to gather into one unit specialists for assignments too complicated for the average guardsmen.

[25] NG Chief of Headquarters orders, ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 5, 188.

During the initial period, discussions arose about the expediency of battalion formation in large cities, Riga especially. With the growth of crime, it would be more efficient to form powerful National Guard units in rural regions. During the time when the Border Guard's formation was in its infancy and the police force was in the process of transformation, shedding itself from the legacy of the Soviet militia, the National Guard could provide for basic public order. Loyalty – both political and personal – was another problem. In rural regions, people recognised each other more or less and knew who could be trusted in contrast to the anonymity of large cities.

Nevertheless, cities were undergoing an active formation of National Guard battalions. In 1991, a total of six separate battalions were formed in each district of Riga. Two battalions were formed in the Riga region, and they were consolidated into the Riga regional regiment.[26] One battalion was formed in Jūrmala.[27]

1991 was the year when the National Guard battalion formation continued in the administrative regions of Latvia as well. For illustration, one of the battalions in Vidzeme will be used. By December 17th, the Limbaži 21st Battalion consisted of 4 companies with 14 platoons. The number of subunits went on growing. The Limbaži guardsmen initiated active cooperation with the Pärnu regional unit (*malev*) of the Estonian Kaitseliit.[28] Cross-border cooperation was widespread in other units and the National Guard as a whole as well. The first joint exercises of the National Guards of the Baltic States took place in February 1993.

In July 1992, the consolidation process of battalions in the National Guard brigades began. Brigades were assigned the task of ensuring the operational activities of the battalions of the respective region.

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[26] Battalions in Riga: *Centra, Kurzemes priekšpilsētas* (suburb), *Zemgales priekšpilsētas, Latgales priekšpilsētas, Vidzemes priekšpilsētas* and *Ziemeļu rajons* and two so-called exterritorials outside of the borders of Riga city on the territory of former Soviet-time Riga rayon. (Author's note.)

[27] *Okupētās Latvijas administratīvi teritoriālais iedalījums: vēsturiskās uzziņas un pārvaldes iestāžu arhīvu fondu rādītājs (1940–1941, 1944–1990): zinātniska arhīvu rokasgrāmata*. Atb. redaktore D. Bērze (Rīga: Rīga Latvijas Valsts arhīvu ģenerāldirekcija, 1997).

[28] Likvidētie ZS bataljoni, sadaļa ZS 21. Limbažu bataljons – vēsturiskā izziņa, AMCA.

With the changes of the situation in the state and its National Armed Forces, the necessity to pass a new law on the National Guard arose. This law was adopted in 1993. The new law was a more elaborate one. It concretised the tasks and defined the organisational structure and principles for management, resolved the issue of military ranks and promotion, as well as specified the rights and duties of guardsmen, and set the social security system up for them. The law determined the National Guard to be a constituent part of the NAF. Thus, the path to the formation of a unified NAF was laid, and the NAF and National Guard were brought together. According to the new law, citizenship of the Republic of Latvia was a precondition of joining the National Guard.[29]

Nevertheless, the National Guard operated as though it were a separate structure without subordination to the Ministry of Defence and the NAF. This problem was resolved by the law "On State Defence" of 1994.[30] The post of the Commander of the NAF was established. Creating a consolidated NAF was a significant gain for national defence. The principle of the unity of command was introduced in the NAF and the officers' personnel were strengthened. The creation of a unified command had undermined the informal and unwanted competition between the National Guard and the Defence Forces and merged the two *de facto* parallel military organisations. Numerous guardsmen left the National Guard for other NAF units. Thus the effect of Soviet-era influence was lessened because it can't be denied that many former Soviet officers, who served in the Latvian NAF, viewed it as the Soviet Army in miniature. The defence sphere had to be freed from the Soviet legacy.

The National Guard has to be considered the first military force after the restoration of independence in Latvia. In its turn, the Intelligence Assault Battalion was one of the first units in the NAF of Latvia.

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[29] *Ziņotājs* 16/17 (1993), 1001.

[30] *Ziņotājs* 2 (1995), 207.

Intellience Assault Battalion and the transition of infrastructure

On April 30th, 1992, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia Tālavs Jundzis signed Order No. 74 "On Changes in the Structure of the Defence Forces". Paragraph 2 of the order states: "The Intelligence Assault Battalion must be established within the Defence Forces with a staff of 262 and interim dislocation in Suži"[31]. On January 21st, 1993, the staff roll of the Intelligence Assault Battalion was changed, lessening it to a staff of 114 officers and professional NCOs and 192 soldiers of the mandatory military service.[32] Nevertheless, the staff roll remained incomplete for a long time. The place of its dislocation was in Suži, on the outskirts of Riga. It was a former Soviet Army military base and a military town. Though Suži was initially meant to be an interim place of dislocation, it remained permanent for a long period of time.

It is interesting to study the conditions the new battalion had to face upon beginning the service. The record of proceedings about the taking over of the Suži military city from the Northwest Group of Russian Forces military unit No. 42216 (257th Standalone Mechanised Regiment) was compiled on May 19th, 1992. On June 17th it was affirmed by the State Minister Jānis Dinēvičs on the Latvian side and Colonel General Valery Mironov on the Russian side.[33] It was noted that the Latvian side did not block the stay of existing tenants in five dwelling houses notwithstanding the decision on citizenship. It was stressed that the sides had not been able to come to terms over the value of the buildings and equipment, as well as the amount of damage to the environment caused by the operation of the Soviet Army.

A shortened quote from the report: the barracks built in 1958 lack 30% of glazing, 100% of the doors and 40% of the floors must be replaced, and the reinforcement of the bathing facilities has been dismantled. The canteen and kitchen need to be repaired. The inner doors and 10% of

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[31] AMCA, MoD, 1.apraksts, 6. lieta, 24.

[32] AMCA, MoD, 1.apraksts, 11. lieta, 22.

[33] Dokumenti par kara pilsētiņas Suži pieņemšanu no Krievijas bruņotajiem spēkiem, AMCA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 63.

the window frames must be replaced. 70% percent of the garage roof is leaking and 60% of the wooden gates must be replaced. Out of the four boilers of the boiler house, three do not work. Treatment plants are out of order, but the territory of the battle range has been turned into a dumping ground. The inspection report of the hygiene and epidemiology centre states that all premises are in an unsanitary state and demand repair work, clean-up, disinfection and sanitary improvement of the territory prior to dislocating troops there.

The development course of the Intelligence Assault Battalion can be conventionally divided into 2 periods: the formation period from 1992 to 1993 and its stabilisation period. The period starting from 1994 was an intensive training period for the soldiers. In February, 1994, Latvia joined the international programme "Partnership for Peace". Active participation in international training and preparation work for becoming involved in international peace missions started. The Baltic States concluded the agreement on the formation of BALTBAT. During the first period, following the establishment of the structure of the battalion and providing for the service support, the main task was the training of soldiers of mandatory service. Soldiers were trained in parachuting, survival in extreme circumstances, and elements of mountaineering. The unfinished district of nine-storied buildings in Purvciems in Riga was used as a training site. This kind of training composition was a special one and raised the self-esteem of the soldiers.[34]

The structure of the Intelligence Assault Battalion consisted of three companies, a supply and services company and a transport platoon. Their armament consisted of Kalashnikov automatic rifles of the Soviet type, a few machine guns and antitank grenade launchers. Officers and instructors had Makarov pistols at their disposal. The transport provision was relatively good and initially came from the Soviet Union or satellite countries. The supply and services company was provided with twenty-one vehicles, but the transport platoon with twenty-five. Not all of the vehicles were roadworthy.[35]

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[34] Maurītis, "NBS Sužu," 66.

[35] AMCA, LF (Land Forces), apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 1, 23.

The joint parade of Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian National Armed Forces at the Freedom Monument in Riga. At the centre from the left Latvian Minister of Defence Tālavs Jundzis and Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis (23 August 1993). A. Vidzidska/Latvian War Museum

Based on the authorisation of the Commander of the Defence Forces, with the order of February 25th, 1993, the Commander of the Battalion introduced special symbols for the battalion, stressing its particular status among other units of the Defence Forces. The battalion had a distinctive uniform – a dark blue beret with a cockade with the head of a lynx. Likely, the head of the lynx with an oak-leaf garland was depicted on the chevrons.[36]

The lynx was chosen as a symbol due to the motto of the battalion: "Soft step, sharp bite". The chevron was awarded after having done a two-day, 50 km forced foot march. This march was named the "track of the lynx".

The right to wear the beret had also to be earned in training: it was awarded after three completed bailouts and a 100-kilometre forced foot

[36] AMCA, LF; apraksts nr.1 , lieta nr. 2, 25.

The chevron of the uniform of the Intelligence Assault Battalion. Private collection

The chevron of the uniform of the National Guard. Latvian War Museum

march. After having been earned, the commando's beret could be lost as well. On November 17th, five soldiers were deprived of their berets. The possibility to earn it again did not exist.[37]

The first international Latvian-Estonian joint exercise with the participation of the Intelligence Assault Battalion took place in July 1993, in Ādaži. The battalion was incorporated into the "Partnership for Peace" programme. Within this framework, it participated in many training courses and exercises in the USA, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Germany, and France. The development process of the "Partnership for Peace" brought about new tasks for the battalion – to participate in international military peace-enforcing operations. Hereafter, training abroad, as well as foreign duty assignments for the commander of the battalion, its officers and career service instructors became regular.

The battalion took part in the first joint parade of the Baltic States on August 23rd, 1993, at the Monument of Freedom in Riga. This parade was of enormous symbolic significance; it demonstrated the unity of the Baltic States and their readiness to stand for their independence collectively.

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[37] Maurītis, "NBS Sužu," 68.

On January 12th, 1998, the minister of defence issued an order stating that, based on the development plan of the NAF, the Intelligence Assault Battalion was renamed the Latvian Peace Enforcing Battalion (LATBAT).[38] A new period started in the history of the Battalion.

Table 1. Report on the call-up drafts in the mandatory military service[39]

Year	Intelligence Assault Battalion			Total number of the drafted
	spring	autumn	total	
1992	162	135	297	4,572
1993	76	74	150	4,706
1994	80	59	139	4,107
1996	146	70	216	3,574
1997	95	169	264	3,160
Total			**1,138**	**23,354**

As the table shows, in number, the battalion trained a small part of all the drafted soldiers, but there the training was concentrated on the development of combat capability. Therefore, it was on the basis of this battalion that the unit for training aimed at international missions was established.

Conclusion

Looking back at the history of the organisation of the National Guard and the Intelligence Assault Battalion, we must conclude that the year 1994 was a new point of reference both for separate units and the NAF as a whole. On the 5th of October 1994, the Latvian Saeima appointed Colonel Juris Dalbiņš to the first NAF commander.[40] On the 29th of February, 1996, the Latvian Saeima accepted the North Atlantic Treaty and

[38] AMCA, MoD, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 445, 30.

[39] Maurītis, "NBS Sužu," 73; A. Rikveilis, "Five Years Without Mandatory Service – Was It Worthwhile?" – Tēvijas Sargs 2 (2012), 22–23.

[40] *Ziņotājs* 21 (1994), 1928.

the other states participating in the Partnership for Peace the Status of their Forces. Intensive preparation for Latvia joining NATO started. This period calls for further investigation.

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Transition and Continuity

The Polish Army's March into the Third Republic and into NATO, 1989–1999

Jens Boysen

ABSTRACT

Poland's transition from an authoritarian communist regime to a liberal democracy and market economy and from an army controlled by the country's only party, the Communist Party, to actual civilian control started at the end of 1989, in particular after Lech Walęsa was elected president. Unlike many other post-communist states, especially Germany, Poland regards the army as an institution that is the nation's school, the bearer of national unity and the guarantee of the state's existence. The *Armia Ludowa* – people's army – of communist Poland took over many national traditions of the Polish army, combined them with Marxist and pro-Soviet ideology, and stayed out of political games despite being controlled by the political main directorate of the party. Both the party and the army derived their legitimacy from the people. After the declaration of martial law in 1981, the army unexpectedly found itself with all the power and this was a serious blow to the prestige of the army in the eyes of the people.

The changes made at the beginning of the 1990s were small at first: members of the high command of the army were released from duty or resigned, but younger officers, many of them former members of the party, stayed on. The patron saints of the units and pre-war traditions were restored and field ordinariates of the three biggest churches were established, although there were Catholic chaplains in the Polish army also before 1989. Two crises were important from the viewpoint of civilian control: the first of them was related to the attempt by the conservative Defence Minister Jan Parys to cleanse the ranks of officers and the other to the public non-confidence motion against Defence Minister Piotr Kołodziejczyki by the Chief of the General Staff. The position of the Chief of the General Staff (i.e. the army) in relation to the Defence Minister, the parliament and the President was regulated thereafter. The military intel-

ligence created after World War II similar to the Soviet Army was reorganised as late as 2006.

The transition to democratic civilian control was driven more by the desire of Polish politicians and generals to join NATO than internal developments in Polish politics and the army. In Poland, the army is regarded as a national institution that has certain immunity. The example of Poland shows that the post-communist transition of the army to democratic civilian control is in many respects comparable to the post-fascist transition of the armies in Germany, Italy, Spain or Portugal.

The integration of a significant number of former Warsaw Pact member states, including Poland, into NATO was one of the most visible manifestations of the fundamental turnaround from "East" to "West" undertaken by those countries after 1989–90. Next to extensive material, technological and organisational changes, this metamorphosis implied a fundamental politico–normative reorientation from communism to democracy.

In the light of the established perception of democratic opposition movements in those countries having "defeated" the respective communist regime (after a longer or shorter period of "resistance"), it would seem that those normative changes had essentially already happened before the event, fuelled not least by a transnational human rights discourse in the wake of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) process.[1] Beyond any doubt, this was a crucial element of preparing regime change; but one rather pervasive problem with opposition studies (on any country) is the question of how representative those "democratic" opposition activists[2] were for the general public and its political views. Moreover, just as important as the transnational context were country-

[1] See Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War. A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. ch. 5, 115–134; more generally: *Entangled Protest: Transnational Perspectives on the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Robert Brier (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2013).

[2] A discussion of the question of which of the anti-communist forces in Poland united until 1990 under the *Solidarity* label were actually democratic in a Western liberal sense would require a separate paper.

specific domestic attitudes towards principles of societal organisation and the question of to which degree the rulers and the ruled agreed on those issues.

In Poland, there is an especially strong idea of a national "spirit of freedom" that is embedded in a romantic narrative of the divided nation and its pervasive "resistance" during the "long 19th century" that was renewed under communist rule. While this is not the place for a general critique of this view, at least concerning post-World War II Poland, later than 1956 one cannot speak of a particularly repressive regime (notably if compared with the Soviet Union or East Germany). Rather, the main tool employed by the Polish communist regime to achieve political legitimacy and societal cohesion was that very romantic narrative and its nationalist implications.

This, along with the fact that within that narrative a military and indeed militarist dimension was pivotal, makes it appear reasonable to reflect upon the role of the Polish Army within the transition process: How did the most important pillar[3] of the Polish communist regime react to the changing international security situation, and how did it manage in 1989–90 to survive regime change and integrate into the new domestic and international order?

Introduction: Systemic transition as a civil–military process

The transition from communism (or, real socialism) that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) began in 1989–90, has generally been held by scholars to be specific because it comprised a considerable change of both the political and the economic structures while most of the comparable cases, notably dictatorships in Southern Europe and Latin America, were already part of the West (in the sense of: the capitalist world)

[3] In Poland, the civilian Security Service (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*) wielded little public respect, notably because of its complete association with the weak party, and thus was of secondary importance for regime stabilisation.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw (2011). Wikimedia Commons

when their reform process began, which thus was largely confined to the political dimension (democratisation).[4] Moreover, this complex internal process in the CEEC was accompanied, and partially determined, by a reorientation/readjustment of external relations. In concrete terms, that meant the (gradual) replacement of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) as supportive communities by NATO and the European Union, which supervised and influenced the process from without. Therefore, not only the principles of the domestic political order were to be screened and likely changed but those of the foreign and security policies of those countries, as well.

[4] See: Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Gerardo L. Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, "Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* vol 29, no 3, April, Special Issue: Transitions to Democracy (1997): 343–362.

According to liberal/idealist theory, there should be little difference between those two fields, holding that foreign policy be widely the reflection of domestic interest representation and decision-making, with everybody tending towards a more and more peaceful and cooperative policy culture. In contrast, realist theory sees foreign policy, i.e. its actors, rather as an autonomous expert group serving the protection of a fairly stable national interest that is informed not (in the first place) by the domestic policy process but by assumedly permanent values and interests of an equally permanent nation/body politic. This topic became relevant in the Central European (and other) transition situations.[5]

Important here is that the "West", from which the countries in transition sought advice, has itself never been unanimous as to the validity of either of those theories. This has to do with the wide range of systemic outlooks within the "West" and equally with different political traditions. Similarly, the very term "transition" is problematic regarding its implication of clearly defined goals, in this case liberal democracy and market economy, even if these goals are in reality fairly general and leave considerable leeway for "individual" shaping.

Another theoretical body that concerns the transition process, is the teaching on *civil–military relations*, especially where it deals with the specificity of civilian control in communist regimes[6] and the necessary transition from one-party/authoritarian to democratic (or, "real") civilian control. Although in the CEEC, this aspect was less crucial than in the aforementioned "Western" ex-dictatorships where the military had long wielded a much larger influence and had their own political agenda,[7] it was nevertheless important.

There are two further issues that should be considered in this context: First, which are the values that worked in domestic politics – before and

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5 See for a neorealist approach: Tom Dyson, *Neoclassical Realism and Defence Reform in Post-Cold War Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

6 For a Western account in the late stage of the Cold War see: Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, "The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil–Military Relations in Communist Political Systems," *The American Political Science Review* vol 76, no 4 (1982): 778–789.

7 Aurel Croissant and David Kühn, *Militär und zivile Politik* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011), 195–196.

after 1989–90 – and thus would, to a larger or smaller degree, impact on foreign policy, too, not least in the field of security and defence policy? Precisely if the military does obey the civilian leadership, it is crucial to know what goals leadership pursues, and how "civilian" these goals actually are.[8] And second, with which historical precedents (whatever way interpreted) are those values associated?

Other theories of civil–military relations, too, will be tried to apply in this paper: Samuel Huntington's definition of "subjective" and "objective" civilian control of the military, and Amos Perlmutter's concept of the "praetorian army". However, the author would already like to claim here that none of these approaches seem to fit the rather *sui generis* case of communist and post-communist Poland in a convincing manner.

The Polish case of systemic transition

Among the countries that shed communist rule between 1989 and 1991, Poland represented a specific type that was different from two other types: on the one hand, East Germany whose state vanished, along with its army NVA, as a result of German reunification on October 3rd, 1990, and on the other, the post-Soviet states that either resumed older national structures and traditions (such as the Baltic States) or effectively had to invent new ones (such as Ukraine). Crucially, Poland, similarly to the other states in the former Soviet zone of influence that remained intact in regard to their territorial status, did not experience after 1989 any significant formal changes to its status under international law, either. Neither was the state's institutional structure fundamentally modified, except for communist bodies such as the State Council already disappearing under the "mixed" regime in force during the year between July 1989 and July 1990. This way, in Poland there was a fairly large continuity of formal sovereignty and state institutions dating back to 1944 (or, depending on the

[8] On this issue cf. Karen E. Smith, "Still 'civilian power EU?'," London School of Economics European Foreign Policy Unit Working Paper 2005/1, http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/projects/cidel/old/ WorkshopOsloSecurity/Smith.pdf (accessed 16.5.2014).

point of view, even to 1918). Essentially, Poland's international position (e.g. its membership in international organisations such as the UNO and the CSCE) remained unaltered, with the main change in foreign relations being – as indicated – its reorientation from the obsolete Eastern bloc organisations towards the Western ones.

Regarding domestic structures, the main task for the new *Solidarity*-based political class that gradually took over in 1989–90, was to free state institutions from the overarching control structures of the ruling party PZPR (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* – Polish United Workers Party) and in turn submit them to democratic control. This was – understandably – interpreted as a "return to normalcy"; however, what was not reflected there was the fact that even before the era of "alien occupation", which lasted, in a popular view, from 1939 through to 1989 (as Nazi German, Soviet, and later Polish communist rule),[9] Poland had not been a democracy but a semi-dictatorial military regime, and that accordingly a simple "return" to pre-communist times might be difficult. In light of the theory of civil–military relations, the crucial point to be obeyed here – but which was not so well reflected by Polish politics and society at any moment after 1944 – is the difference between *civilian* control in general and *democratic* civilian control in particular. According to the mainstream opinion of Western research, only the latter is compatible with the way that a Western-style democracy is supposed to relate to its armed forces and accounts for the difference between democratic and non-democratic "civilian" regimes.[10] This is as well the necessary reference framework for a proper definition of "freedom", "national community" and other terms concerning social organisation.

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[9] As an intellectually high-ranking and balanced presentation of this (nevertheless questionable) perspective, see: Andrzej Friszke, *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu 1939–1989* (Warszawa: Iskry 2003).

[10] Douglas Bland, "Patterns in Liberal Democratic Civil–Military Relations," *Armed Forces and Society*, Summer 27, no 4 (2001): 525–540.

The Army as a pillar of communism and guarantor of national existence: Regime-independent features of civil–military relations in communist Poland

However, the sources of Polish thinking about civil–military relations visibly were and still are mainly rooted in the era preceding such reflective, and often deconstructionist, liberal considerations. They illustrate especially well the ambiguous issue of regime change in a country whose politico–spiritual basis is not only the myth of a 50-year "fight for freedom" from 1939 to 1989 but also the continued romantic idea of the nation as a primordial and invariable entity. A characteristic feature was here that the numerous changes of government in the 19th and 20th centuries – comprising both Polish and "foreign" (Russian, German, Austrian) regimes – had made Polish political thinking focus on statehood and formal independence as central goals while reducing the normative base of any given regime – and thus domestic politics in general – to a matter of secondary importance as long as it could prove its "Polishness". This was not an ethnic/racist point of thought, but referred, in the tradition of, e.g. Johann Gottfried Herder, to the nation as a historical and cultural collective. This view was obviously irreconcilable with the actual nature of the so-called First Republic, the multi-ethnic and multi-denominational kingdom ruled *de facto* by the most influential aristocratic families; but by 1914/18, the "modern", ethnocentric type of nationalism had taken hold among a large part of the Polish social elites, especially those with a (lower) middle class background.

In any case, this romantic view served to establish a strong nationalism and, in particular, an explicit veneration of anything military that was hard to reconcile with the notion of liberal democracy. For it was the various regular and irregular military units that were regarded – at least with hindsight – as the decisive forces to maintain by their physical performance and sacrifice the Polish claim to statehood and independence during the "long" 19th century: beginning from the Kościuszko uprising of 1794 via the Legions in Italy and the Polish troops fighting with Napoleon's Grand Army between 1812 and 1815, the abortive risings of 1830,

1848 and 1863 to the border fights against all neighbours between 1918 and 1921. The complex mix, especially within the early phases of this long period, of class and "national" perspective and interests tended to be neglected, as well as the fact that the peasant majority of the ethnic Poles came only slowly to be taken into account by the elite as fellow-citizens with a legitimate claim to political participation.[11]

As one consequence of this, in independent Poland after 1918 the Army has not only enjoyed a vast degree of normative and practical autonomy – under *every* regime, with today's Third Republic certainly going furthest in terms of civilian control – but it actually maintained the idea of its being the "school of the nation" and guarantor of national existence. During the Second Republic (1918–1939), especially since the May Coup of 1926, the Army was even, under its leader Józef Piłsudski, the main authority in the state and its leadership was the *de facto* government,[12] which contributed to an ambivalent foreign policy including errant assessments of both political goals and the actual power relations in Europe.

The crushing defeat of that regime in September 1939 and the consequent German–Soviet occupation of Poland escalated the aforementioned focus on foreign and security policy to a veritable obsession. Against this background, the Polish communists who took over power in autumn 1944, too, resorted to the Army as a physical and spiritual anchor. To be sure, it was *their* Army that had been created in 1943 on Soviet territory and been trained by the Red Army. Not only was this new military instrumental in establishing communist rule in the country – and notably in the hitherto German territories in the West – but between 1944 and 1947/53[13] it waged a veritable civil war against the remnants of the wartime *Armia Krajowa* (Home Army) that had been commanded

[11] Paul Latawski, "The Polish Armed Forces and Society," – *Soldiers and Societies in Post-Communist Europe. Legitimacy and Change*, ed. Anthony Forster, Timothy Edmunds and Andrew Cottey (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 26–28.

[12] Andrew A. Michta, *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army after Communism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 25–28.

[13] The *Home Army* officially stopped fighting in 1947, but the last anti-communist resistance groups were eliminated only in 1953 by the Polish and Soviet security services.

by the right-wing government-in-exile in London. At the end of the war, most Poles sided with the *Armia Krajowa*; yet, after its destruction the communist armed forces took over from their enemies the bulk of military habits and traditions, as a lever to win the hearts and souls of the anti-communist majority of the Poles.[14] Although at least until 1956 these national traditions were combined with Marxist and pro-Soviet ideology, they remained in place – if with a partially new, class-based interpretation – and indeed fulfilled their educational and legitimising role. After 1956, the national outlook of the Army became almost complete again in terms of the pre-war pattern, only notably adapting its militant self-perception as both conquerors and defenders of "Polish soil" to the changed geopolitical and transnational situation, i.e. the "historically necessary" alliance with the Soviet Union.

In this context, it was anything but an insignificant detail that the Communist Army in July 1944 shed from its name the word "People's" (*Ludowe*) that had indicated its class-related origin and further was called simply the *Polish Army* (like the pre-war army). This was both a signal of historical continuity and an offer to the public to accept the new army in the name of national unity. The crucial reference was now made to *external* enemies, notably "West German revisionism;"[15] the wartime memories invoked by this slogan, sufficed to discipline the majority of the Poles and rally them, at least temporarily and to a minimal degree, behind the communist leadership. Not least in this context, the Army appeared – and to many Poles appears to this day – as an autonomous, apolitical institution that protects national independence as the highest public good, and thus cannot be tainted by the ill-doings of any regime.

Obviously, the organisational and ideological amalgamation of army and party, the period of Sovietisation between 1948 and 1956 as well as the close integration of the – since 1952 – "Polish People's Republic" (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*) into the Soviet external empire led to a

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[14] Marcin Zaremba, *Im nationalen Gewande. Strategien kommunistischer Herrschaftslegitimation in Polen 1944–1980* (Osnabrück: Fibre 2011), 145–184.

[15] A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 180.

characteristic perception of external and internal security of the socialist state as being inseparable, and of internal "enemies" as being equally dangerous as external threats.[16] However, the semantic interpretation of what constituted that enmity was widely conditioned, the latest since the Polish–Soviet standoff in October 1956, by the nationalist narrative rather than by the logic of class consciousness.

The Army as political agent in the 1970s and 1980s

In 1970–1971 the Army took part in the bloody quelling of workers' riots in the seaports of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Szczecin, which led to serious problems with some soldiers' loyalty. The recurring problem for the Army of squaring the circle between external alliance (and thus regime) solidarity and internal "positive nationalism" had been expressed in an exemplary way by Minister of Defence Wojciech Jaruzelski after the aforementioned clashes. During a meeting with shipyard workers in January 1971, he asked whether these would want "to have an army that would install or change the government [---] as in Latin America and Africa, to have a government of colonels and generals?"[17]

This statement deserves some reflection in the light of, in particular, Amos Perlmutter's theory of the "praetorian army" that was developed primarily on the basis of analyses of civil–military relations in "developing polities".[18] Provided that one regards the communist regimes of the time as such polities, the notion of a "politicised" army with the potential to step in for a civilian leadership failing to build legitimacy[19] seems fairly

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[16] F. Rubin, "The Theory and Concept of National Security in the Warsaw Pact Countries," *International Affairs* vol 58, no 4, Autumn (1982): 650–651.

[17] Quoted from a 1985 Polish underground collection of sources on recent Polish history, in Andrew A. Michta, *Red Eagle. The Army in Polish Politics, 1944–1988* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 69.

[18] Amos Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army. Toward a Taxonomy of Civil–Military Relations in Developing Polities," *Comparative Politics* vol 1, no 3, April (1969): 382.

[19] *Ibid*., 383.

useful for explaining Polish politics at the time, especially with a view to the 1981 introduction of martial law. There, one might well identify the Polish Army as a praetorian army of the "arbitrator type" – a professional officer corps with limited own political interest and prepared to hand back power to the civilians after a period of stabilisation.[20] However, three *caveats* seem to be in place about this approach with a view to the Polish case: First, the "praetorian army" has been examined by Perlmutter primarily in its relationship with the civilian leadership but less so with the general population. In "communist" Poland, both army and party would refer throughout their legitimacy principally not to "abstract" Marxism but to the nation, if in an authoritarian manner. Second, those two main forces of Polish politics did not clash even in 1981 since the army acted in direct support of the dwindling party structures.[21] And third, most fundamentally, most of the social and political conditions for a praetorian army's takeover as defined by Perlmutter were not in place in People's Poland in the 1970s.

In any case, after the 1970 the Polish military leadership under Jaruzelski was visibly eager to avoid any violent development in domestic politics that would have burdened it with an undesirable responsibility. Accordingly, during the 1970s it sought to stay out of the vicissitudes of "politics" and rather focused on technical modernisation and soldiers', especially officers', professionalisation.[22] Unchanged, the military leadership continued to serve as the surest guarantors of Soviet hegemony in Poland. Ten years later, during the crisis over *Solidarity* in 1980–81, the Army acquired – rather unexpectedly – a much more active role, indeed, a "government of colonels and generals" was established. This happened because its special status in the eyes of both party leaders and the general public allowed the Army to introduce martial law on the 13th of December 1981 and so to take over the state openly in defence of the commu-

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[20] Perlmutter, "Praetorian State", 392.

[21] Mark N. Kramer, "Civil–Military Relations in the Warsaw Pact: The East European Component," *International Affairs* vol 61, no 1, Winter (1984–1985): 45.

[22] Jerzy J. Wiatr, *The Soldier and the Nation. The Role of the Military in Polish Politics, 1918–1985* (Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1988), 118–122.

nist regime – which meant, in the first place, keeping Poland within the Warsaw Pact and proving its reliability as long as Soviet support seemed to be indispensable. Thus, the regime's references and appeals to *patriotic* rather than socialist/communist values and interests to justify the tough measures against the "counterrevolutionary" activities of *Solidarity*,[23] were not merely a smoke screen to disguise an actually "communist" policy, but at a second glance they *did* reveal the actual motives of the military leadership: To them, "Polish socialism" was a governance model necessary to safeguard the "national interest" predating communism, and the entire socialist outlook of the country mainly a tool for embedding the Soviet alliance into that national interest. Significantly, the point of martial law allegedly being a measure preventing an invasion by the other Warsaw Pact countries – notably the Soviet Union, the GDR and Czechoslovakia – was raised by Jaruzelski only much later; at the time of events, they acted in full agreement with their allies.[24]

In any case, the Army's reputation hardly suffered from its leadership's role during martial law because society mainly tended to blame the party for the breakdown of relations between the regime and *Solidarity*.[25] This distinction that was wholly unreal given the amalgamation of army and party leadership, showed how deeply the described popular pro-militarism was rooted. Also, after the formal end of martial law in 1983, the Army remained in practical control of the country. When after 1985 the international situation showed signs of a fundamental challenge to the communist regimes (mostly on part of the new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev), the Polish civil–military leadership began to look actively

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[23] Jan Olaszek, "Antysolidarnościowa propaganda władz PRL," – *NSZZ Solidarność 1980/1989, Vol. 7*: *Wokół Solidarności*, wyd. Łukasz Kamiński i Grzegorz Waligóra (Warszawa: IPN, 2010), 178–181; Michta, *Red Eagle*, 207–208.

[24] On the motives for action on the part of the Polish and Soviet leaderships, see the account by Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, and the Polish Crisis of 1980–1981," – *The Solidarity Movement and Perspectives on the Last Decade of the Cold War*, ed. Lee Trepanier, Spasimir Domaradzki and Jaclyn Stanke (Kraków: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne, 2010), 27–66.

[25] See an independent opinion poll on the trustworthiness of institutions of May/June 1981, KARTA Archive Warsaw, Sign. AO IV/68.3: Ankiety do niezależnych badań socjologicznych, Nr. 1; also Wiatr, *Soldier and Nation*, 147–148.

Common exercise of c. 800 NATO specialists on Weapon of Mass Destruction for NATO Response Force in Drawsko, Poland (2008). General Staff of the Polish Army (SGWP)

for an exit strategy; its leaders were flexible enough to strike a deal with *Solidarity* in 1989 that allowed for the survival of the Army and almost complete impunity of its leading members. This development confirmed that the question of regime and normative issues mattered little for an officer corps whose values were fairly autonomous, even solipsist, focused on their own peer group and with little reference to the civilian environment.[26] So, their "patriotism" – with regard to civil–military relations – was of a particular, rather flexible nature; at the same time, society continued to receive its own ideas of "patriotism" largely mediated through public display of military power.

[26] On such corporative interest representation see: Croissant and Kühn, *Militär und zivile Politik*, 196–197.

Change and continuity in Polish military policies after 1989

This was relevant for the fate of the Army after the takeover by a *Solidarity*-led government of the country in August 1989, as a result of the *Round Table* talks of spring that year. Initially, the Ministry of Defence and the other "force institutions" (notably the Ministry of the Interior) remained under control of the party and thus of the military elite. This was first questioned by Lech Wałęsa after his election as State President in December 1990, and further when in July 1990 a new all-*Solidarity* cabinet took office. Now, while on one hand communist influence in the Army could finally be significantly reduced, on the other, several problems made themselves felt with respect to the need of putting the Army under the control of the new civilian powers. Generally speaking, the restructuring of the Polish Army was burdened not only, as in all post-socialist countries, by such issues as budget constraints, the need to adjust training goals and methods, and the definition of national security priorities, but also by the uncertainty about the purpose and attitude of the Polish officer corps.

First of all, ironically, the dismantling of party structures in the Army, notably of the *Main Political Administration* (Główny Zarząd Polityczny) as a de facto branch of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP, in Polish: PZPR), prompted the military establishment to demand "freedom at last" from civilian interference. Obviously, they didn't acknowledge that until then they had closely cooperated with those party structures, nor did they (want to?) understand the concept of civilian control to be inherent to democracy. Rather, they favoured a model of a loyal but independent army that stood at an equal level with the government, a partner rather than a subordinate institution. One reason for this was certainly that, as with so many other things, the communists' pervasive claim of truth had distorted the generally sound principle of civilian control;[27] in the Polish case, however, the reliable pro-military attitude in the civilian public worked also. Against this background, the Army leadership were hardly

[27] Michta, *Soldier-Citizen*, 7–8.

ready to acknowledge any responsibility for the repeated violent incidents with military participation during communism;[28] in their own eyes, they had always simply done their duty, and this way, continued the argument of "historical necessity" and of the primacy of external security. Visibly, the generals considered neither the tensions between that principle and civic liberties, nor the fact that the regime change should have an impact on their relationship towards civilian leadership.

This attitude effectuated, among other things, a remarkable difference with the memory culture notably of the German *Bundeswehr*: The latter distances itself in an almost paranoid fashion from both the *Wehrmacht* and the GDR's *National People's Army*, and has had, *notabene* under civilian government, extreme difficulty in establishing even the most rudimentary presence in society. In contrast, the Polish Army is not only almost omnipresent in the public space, but has no problem seeing itself as legal and spiritual successor to its namesake from the communist era. On the whole, there was relatively large personnel continuity after 1989. It is true that during the first years, certain groups of high-ranking officers retired either voluntarily or were discharged by the government; this concerned between 1989 and 1991, apart from the last "socialist" Defence Minister, Florian Siwicki (in office until July 1990), about one-third of the generals and many other senior officers.[29] Nevertheless, most of the personnel discharges and other reductions after 1989 happened for economic reasons and as part of force restructuring;[30] in any case, the bulk of younger officers, including many former party members, remained in their positions.

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[28] It must be noted, though, that Wojciech Jaruzelski later apologised in public for the role of Polish forces in the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 and for the casualties that had occurred under martial law in Poland between 1981 and 1983.

[29] Paul Latawski, "Democratic Control of Armed Forces in Post-Communist Poland: the Interplay of History, Political Society and Institutional Reform," – *Democratic Control of the Military in Post-Communist Europe. Guarding the Guards*, ed. Andrew Cottey, Timothy Edmunds and Anthony Forster (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 23.

[30] For an overview of the physical and technical changes in the Polish Army after 1989, see Lech Giermakowski and Tadeusz Keson, "The Post-socialist Demobilization of Poland's Armed Forces," – *The Military in Transition. Restructuring and Downsizing the Armed Forces of Eastern Europe*, BICC Brief/Bonn International Center for Conversion, 25, ed. Andreas Heinemann-Grüder (Bonn: BICC, 2002), 10–23.

Another factor favouring continuity is the fact that both the Army and society treat the regime changes as mere external events that do not affect the "inner core" of the Army. As an effect of this, the otherwise heavily displayed anti-communism of the post-*Solidarity* parties and their electorates has hardly affected the military that has after 1989 been widely spared criticisms based on normative categories, and is not associated with any regime but with the nation as an "eternal" institution and thus indispensable.

The only part of the Army against to which criticism has occasionally been directed is the military secret services that were created in the 1940s by Soviet intelligence and in whose leading ranks indeed many cases of corruption, illegal weapon trade, etc., have been detected. This is due to the post-1989 development of mafia-style structures based on the continued connections with post-Soviet military intelligence circles. Only in 2006, after years of parliamentary and public debate, the then right-wing *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) government had the military intelligence service WSI (*Wojskowe Służby Informacjyne* – Military Information Services) disbanded. It was replaced by the new SWW (*Służba Wywiadu Wojskowego* – Military Intelligence Service) and SKW (*Służba Kontrwywiadu Wojskowego* – Military Counterintelligence Service).[31]

In their stubborn attitude, the military top brass were further buttressed by the fact that the new rulers in 1990 decided to leave the Army practically untouched. Understandably, when the Warsaw Pact began to crumble in 1990, this seemed to be no good moment for a complete makeover of the military; rather, the new rulers opted to keep the Army as it was provided, of course, its obedience to the new regime. In different words, the new rulers applied a balanced policy "between decommunisation driven by political necessity and continuity in personnel driven by military requirements".[32] But the continuity went beyond mere pragmatic

[31] Artur Gruszczak, "The Polish Intelligence Services," – *Geheimdienste in Europa. Transformation, Kooperation und Kontrolle*, ed. Thomas Jäger and Anna Daun (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009), 129–131.

[32] Latawski, "Democratic Control," 22.

reasons to a fundamental normative consensus: The politicians from the *Solidarity* camp who took over the Ministry of Defence in 1991 and applied a specific and rather simple way of "de-ideologising" the Army, namely by reinstating pre-communist traditions: they redrew the lists of eligible name patrons for military units, of "memorable" events in military history (especially battles), of military holidays, etc. This meant not only the review of the "white spots" especially in the history of Polish–Soviet relations – a measure that had been prepared long before 1989 by the oppositional underground – but likewise a fairly carefree invocation of older eras of Polish military history that were represented almost wholly in a positive, uncritical manner. In a speech delivered in May 1991 to the Heads of Educational Services of the Military Districts, the new Vice Minister of National Defence, Bronisław Komorowski (today Poland's State President) defined as one goal of the new policy "to make visible [again] the withheld leaves of military glory and of the newest history of Poland".[33] Even in his first order of January 1991, the new Minister, Piotr Kołodziejczyk, had vowed to re-connect to the "chain of generations that ha[d] been interrupted during the half century in the Polish People's Army that had been consciously cut off from its historical provenance. [Particularly should be invoked] the Poland of the Piasts and Jagiellonians [Poland's hereditary royal dynasties, J.B.], the First Republic, the Napoleonic epoch, the era of national uprisings, the Second Republic and the fights for independence in the First and the Second World Wars".[34]

As a result, practically the entire pre-communist Polish history appeared as "clean" and, thus, eligible. The major error, or suppression, committed by the new defence politicians, was to suggest that in the communist era the nationalist heritage had been too little invoked. Actually, the difference from the preceding era was not too big since the commu-

[33] Speech by Vice Minister of National Defence Bronisław Komorowski of May 1991 in Żagań, quoted by Jerzy Zalewski, *Apolityczność Sił Zbrojnych Drugiej i Trzeciej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Teoria i praktyka* (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2009), 248.

[34] Order no 1 of the Minister of National Defence of 2.1.1991 for the area "Heritage and cultivation of the traditions of the Polish Armed Forces," quoted *ibid*., 250.

nists had drawn, with some few politically motivated exceptions – such as the memory of interwar military leader Józef Piłsudski due to his outspoken anti-Russian/Soviet views – on essentially the same nationalist heritage; practically all the new deciders did was remove communist personalities from the list of name patrons. Altogether, the Polish case differed quite remarkably from a pattern that American analysts had observed – or so they thought – in all former satellites of the Soviet Union, namely that "the anti-communist regimes that came to power in many of the East European states after 1989 held antagonistic views toward the military because of the militaries' decades-long close links to the communists. In an understandable, if rather one-sided, view, the former dissidents distrusted the military, due to the fact that the military had functioned in the context of the Soviet-dominated alliance structure, contained a large number of communist party members, and had participated in various domestic crackdowns [of which] in Poland in 1956, 1970, and 1981 [---]".[35]

Indeed, the majority, rather conservative *Solidarity* politicians, were at least as "military friendly" as the communists. Apparently at no moment did they consider introducing a less militant and nationalist education than the one that had been in place throughout the socialist era; after 1989, if anything, education got even more nationalist than before. Tellingly, within the opposition, pacifist groups such as Wolność i Pokój (Freedom and Peace)[36] had played only a marginal role. Obviously, the Western perspective on the Polish opposition had been guided by the Cold War situation, and thus they had paid little attention to the Central European nations' own mostly non-democratic pre-war heritage. Thus, Poland's "return to the West" at least in part looked quite differently from what the Westerners had expected; on the other hand, given the continuity of nationalist compromise in the People's Republic, the development was not really surprising.

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[35] Thomas S. Szayna, F. Stephen Larabee, *East European military reform after the Cold War. Implications for the United States* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1995), 9–10.

[36] The only relevant publication on this movement is Anna Smołka-Gnauck, *Między wolnością a pokojem. Zarys historii Ruchu "Wolność i Pokój"* (Warszawa: IPN, 2012).

This general pro-military attitude in Polish society and politics led to a renewed – after the decade-long pursuit of "socialist military education" in People's Poland – close cooperation between the Ministries of Defence and Higher Education in the field of "patriotic" and "defence-minded" education of the youth.[37] Likewise, even though since 1988 in Poland there had existed the option of civilian instead of military service, this was hardly made use of until the suspension of universal service in 2010. In particular, students continued to serve in the Army under privileged conditions that secured them the status of at least a reserve non-commissioned officer. Even after 2010, the economic crisis has again increased many students' interest in a military career.[38]

One measure aiming at "re-civilising" the Army was the (re-)establishment of field ordinariates for the Roman Catholic, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox and Protestant Churches in 1991, 1993 and 1995, respectively.[39] However, it must be mentioned that before 1989 the Polish Army had allowed – as the only Warsaw Pact army – the activity of ca. 45 Roman Catholic military deans, which is to be seen as another step to minimise the distance to civil society.[40]

The second problem with regard to civilian control of the Army aggravated the first one: For a couple of years after 1990, the President and the Parliament struggled over who should execute the civilian control over the Army. This paralysed them both; consequently, the Polish General Staff could play their own game by exploiting the new civilian rulers' lack of experience. According to Andrew Michta, the Polish generals – and likewise, to different degrees, their counterparts in other post-socialist

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[37] See, e.g. the agreement DKOW-CB-043/10/08 between the Ministries of National Education and of National Defence of 21.10.2008 regarding cooperation "in the field of civic, patriotic and defence-minded education of the school youth", website of the Polish Ministry of National Education, http://www.men.gov.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=154%3Aporozumienie-z-ministerstwem-obrony-narodowej&catid=204%3Aarchiwum-aktualnosci&Itemid=249 (accessed 25.11.2013).

[38] See the article "Wojskowe szkolenie dla studentów" (Military training for students) in the internet-based journal *Polska Zbrojna* (Armed Poland) of 2.6.2013, http://www.wykop.pl/ramka/1540485/wojskowe-szkolenie-dla-studentow (accessed 30.11.2013).

[39] Latawski, "Polish Armed Forces and Society," 33.

[40] Zalewski, *Apolityczność*, 248, footnote 152.

countries – were "soldier-citizen[s] reflect[ing…] the transitional nature of the post-communist state" after the demise of the old regime and before the stabilisation of the new one.[41] While this may at first glance sound similar to the German concept of the "citizen in uniform", the setting in Poland was quite opposed since the Polish generals' attitude towards the Third Republic's civilian leaders clearly lacked identification with these: not only did the generals do everything to evade civilian oversight but they even sought to influence the government's military policies, which they justified with their self-attained role as the actual guardians of the country. However, some civilian politicians did not behave in so constructive a manner, either; indeed, one can argue that the lack of experience with democratic government and subsequent uncertainty of civilian politicians was a major trigger for military disobedience.[42] To be sure, the Polish Army at no moment willingly endangered the general transition process towards democratic rule and a market economy; but the military leaders' behaviour made clear in an exemplary manner the significant difference between mere "national" and actually democratic political culture.

At this point, Samuel Huntington's theory of civil–military relations (CMR) as explained in his famous book "The Soldier and the State" deserves to be checked against the empirical case of Poland both before and under martial law.[43] His "subjective" model of CMR assumes a close entanglement of the civil and the military sphere embodied by an officer corps consisting of "citizen-soldiers" with an essentially civilian view to matters of security policy and limited military professionalism. Likely, the country that comes closest to this "ideal" is Germany in the way described above, but certainly not Poland (at any moment pre- or post-1989). But neither allows the Polish military elite's life-rescuing support in 1980–81 for the ruling party – to whose leadership they belonged themselves – to

41 Michta, *Soldier-Citizen*, 10.

42 Latawski, "Democratic Control," 28.

43 A recent re-assessment is given by Dayne E. Nix, "American Civil–Military Relations. Samuel P. Huntington and the Political Dimensions of Military Professionalism," *Naval War College Review* vol 65, no 2, Spring (2012): 88–104.

speak of separate spheres of activity with the civilian and military elites, with the latter one restricting itself to mere advisors as suggested by Huntington's "objective" CMR pattern. Altogether, his approach is little suitable for analysing non-democratic regimes, on whatever ideological basis those may rest.

Indeed, Andrew Michta was right in identifying the Polish generals of 1989–90 as "soldier-citizens" rather than "citizen-soldiers"; to them, a "soldierly" set of values was clearly available from Polish military tradition but hardly a civil-democratic one.

Infamous markers of that Polish state of uncertainty became incidents that disclosed a deep mutual distrust between the military elite and the civilian government, rendered the necessary internal reforms more difficult and created confusion as to the actual distribution of power. One of these incidents was the so-called Parys Affair. Taking over as Defence Minister in December 1991, the arch-conservative and nationalistic Jan Parys set out to a veritable purge of the officers' corps, driven by strong anti-communism and a related fear of continued Soviet/Russian influences. This led to numerous dismissals of officers considered to be "red", among others the former members of the *Military Council for National Salvation* (*Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego* – WRON) that had been the main governing body during martial law (1981–83). Apart from alienating this way the military elite, the minister also clashed with State President Lech Wałęsa over the prerogatives in security affairs that were not defined clearly under the existing constitutional law; and the "Small Constitution" adopted in 1992 did not make things much clearer. Finally, failing to gain support by Parliament due to his confrontational attitude, Parys had to step down in May 1992.[44]

The takeover by a left-wing government in October 1993, dominated by the post-communist *Alliance of the Democratic Left* (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – SLD) did little to alleviate civil–military tensions. Indeed, the political and normative confusion of the officers became clear from the fact that on one hand these expressed a continued preference for

[44] Latawski, "Democratic Control," 28–29.

leftist views and parties,[45] but at the same time the presence of left-wing politicians in the Ministry of Defence after 1993 made parts of the military establishment suspect that the Ministry "had become an outpost of the SLD".[46]

The second significant crisis concerning democratic civilian control of the Army evolved on the occasion of a dinner reception at the military training centre at Drawsko in Pomerania[47] in September 1994 where, in the presence of State President Wałęsa, the then Chief of Staff, General Tadeusz Wilecki, expressed his distrust of the Minister of Defence, Piotr Kołodziejczyk, which apparently accelerated the latter's resignation. He was even suspected by some to aim himself at the office of Prime Minister, which was an idea wholly incompatible even with the moderate scheme of a "partner army". This time, however, Parliament sided with the Defence Minister. Both were at the time sidelined by State President Wałęsa who aimed at subordinating the Army to himself by maintaining good personal relations with the General Staff and favouring it over the Defence Minister. But this policy ended when in 1995 Wałęsa lost the presidential elections to the socialist candidate Aleksandr Kwaśniewski. The new President who was eager to even Poland's path into the Western organisations, cooperated with the government and Parliament towards a more cooperative and effective civilian control scheme.[48]

The first main result of this was the adoption in 1996 of a new *Law on the Minister of National Defence* that integrated the General Staff clearly inside the Ministry of National Defence, and subordinated its chief to the Minister, i.e. to civilian control. In article 137 of the "Large Constitution" of 1997 then, the General Staff was finally subordinated to the President – who acts through the Minister of Defence – and to parliamentary control; as Supreme Commander the President appoints the Chief of Staff

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45 Michta, *Soldier-Citizen*, 17–21.

46 *Ibid*., 91.

47 The military history of this place goes back to Prussian and German times, then still by the name of Dramburg.

48 Michta, *Soldier-Citizen*, 91–92; Latawski, "Democratic Control," 29–30.

and the Heads of the different arms of the armed forces. Moreover, it created a National Security Council (*Rada Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego* – RBN) as advisory body to the President and successor to the socialist era's Committee for National Defence (*Komitet Obrony Kraju* – KOK). Here, Poland was obviously following the US model. Since even 1991 it has acted as a National Security Office (*Biuro Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego* – BBN) connected to the Chancellery of the President.[49]

NATO integration as factor of change in the Polish military

The *external* dimension of military reform comprising relations with the USA and NATO as well as strategic and doctrinal considerations proved to be less burdened by such fundamental contradictions. As one thing, here the military experts were on their actual turf (differently from politics), which fact was generally acknowledged by the civilians; moreover, there was general agreement between civilian and military leaders as to the changed security environment after 1990 and the desirable goal of integration with the Western organisations, in particular NATO.

The General Staff has therefore had an important share in the planning and implementation of subsequent strategic documents aimed at preparing the Army for its Western integration. The first document, the *National Security Strategy* of 1992, anticipated that development but was naturally much influenced by the "limbo" situation after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991. Poland's accession to NATO in 1999 was followed already in January 2000 by an updated *National Security Strategy* that set out equally Polish engagements out-of-area under the Atlantic Alliance and territorial defence, or security, tasks at home. However, any employment of the Army in the domestic context, apart from disaster relief, is highly unlikely in the light of history.[50] In this respect, Poland has joined a European standard pattern.

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[49] Latawski, "Democratic Control," 32–35.

[50] Michta, *Soldier-Citizen*, 48–49; Latawski, "Polish Armed Forces and Society," 29–31.

Tellingly, it was to a large degree Poland's negotiations about joining NATO that finally gave the Polish politicians the necessary momentum to force the military into subordination. One very visible signal was the demise in March 1997, on the eve of NATO's decision on Poland's accession, of "troublemaker" General Wilecki as Chief of the General Staff.[51] Since NATO insisted on the implementation of evident democratic control and the Polish military most of all wanted to be accepted by their Western peers, they finally accepted what can be labelled the Western liberal model of civil–military relations. From February to April 1999 lasted the process of adopting new statutes for both the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff that streamlined and simplified the internal structures of these bodies, bringing them to NATO standards.

This means that it was to a large degree respect for NATO and especially its lead nation, the US (rather than for their own politicians), which made the Polish generals give in. Moreover, those civilian politicians, too, who were just as interested in being accepted by their Western counterparts, still had to learn how to apply such an effective control of the Army. One factor that greatly helped this adaptation process was the Polish participation in numerous multinational structures, beginning from the *Partnership for Peace* programme (PfP) in 1994, and activities that have also served to provide a certain cohesion among the post-socialist countries "heading west".[52]

If theories are employed here such as *institutional socialisation*[53] or *epistemic communities*[54] both essentially suggesting a converging influence of national personnel's activity within an international organisation or another (long-term) cross-border professional framework, then

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[51] Michta, *Soldier-Citizen*, 104.

[52] *Ibid.,* 50; Latawski, "Democratic control," 38.

[53] Alastair Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments," *International Studies Quarterly* 45 (2001), 487–515; David H. Bearce, Stacy Bondanella, "Intergovernmental Organizations, Socialization, and Member-State Interest Convergence," *International Organization* 61, no 4, Fall (2007): 703–733.

[54] Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, no 1, Winter: *Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination* (1992): 1–35.

such effects can be expected rather for those younger officers that have served within NATO structures or at least in connection with the Polish Army's adaptation to NATO. The Social Research Division of the Polish Ministry of National Defence's Military Centre for Civic Education (*Wojskowe Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej*) has, since 1991, run regular (half-yearly) opinion polls among professional officers[55] regarding their assessment of, among other things, the anticipated and/or experienced effects of Poland's NATO membership. As a general trend, the interviewed officers, while acknowledging that the exchange of experiences with soldiers of other armies during common exercises etc. had significantly enhanced their professional skills as well as technical modernisation, also blamed the adaptation process for personnel reductions, a loss of social prestige and instances of internal "disorganisation".[56] In any case, the issues addressed in those polls were mostly interest-related and hardly of a normative nature. True, the younger officers' generation very likely has been growing since the 1990s into some sort of transnational military culture, but this process was not accompanied by any (at least official) critical assessment of the Army's pre-1990 policies.

However, what had worked with the pre-democratic military leadership of 1989–90 regarding their giving in to NATO pressure with a view to effective civilian control, was mainly, as indicated, the prestige-guided wish to gain official recognition by their Western, notably American, peers. That the Generals' generation on the whole did not undergo any significant learning process in terms of a reformed attitude towards civil–military relations, which fact was no little furthered by the aforementioned lack of essential normative (in contrast with procedural) changes on part of the new *Solidarity*-affiliated leadership of the Ministry of National Defence after summer 1990.

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[55] The Centre runs similar opinion polls among conscripted soldiers (until 2011, there was compulsory military service in Poland), but here I focus on those soldiers who have tied their career to the Army and need to identify with it in a substantial manner.

[56] Katarzyna Anna Gronek, "Konsekwencje wynikające z przystąpienia Polski do NATO w ocenie środowiska wojskowego," *Bezpieczeństwo – obronność – socjologia. Biuletyn* nr 1, April (2014): 3–21.

Taking the view once more to the external dimension, obviously, and similarly as with the later enlargement of the European Union in 2004, Poland (and other countries concerned) was admitted into NATO in 1999 before it had reached full technical and normative compatibility[57] because the receiving community itself expected to gain something from this: in the case of the EU this was the enlargement of the Common Market, in the case of NATO the wish to remove the grey security zone that the demised Warsaw Pact had left behind and to calm down the region, and even more urgent, the need for a unified deployment area for the war against Yugoslavia in summer 1999. In this situation, quite a number of unresolved issues were tacitly superseded, or rather, postponed.

While today Poland has doubtless grown into NATO's structures and already gained its own (ambiguous) experiences of the practical working within that alliance, the indicated domestic uncertainties as to the purpose and practical capacity of its civilian and military security structures have not disappeared. This was highlighted, e.g. by the tragedy of the 10th of April 2010 when the presidential plane crashed near Smolensk which killed not only the President, his wife and several deputy government ministers but as well the Chief of Staff and the Commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Force. As one thing, the subsequent investigations hinted at a serious long-term neglect of security rules such as by far too few flight-training hours on the account of the presidential pilots, in a country that spends vast sums on representational (cavalry) troops and the celebration of military holidays. Just for the sake of completeness the fact shall be mentioned here that after the incident of the 10th of April 2010 a fundamental rift (re)opened between, roughly speaking, the (national-)liberal and the (national-)conservative forces in Polish society (and media), with the latter group effectively blaming President Bronisław Komorowski and Prime Minister Donald Tusk with murder of then President Lech Kaczyński in the framework of a pro-Russian conspiracy. This "Polish-Polish" cultural war has helped to undermine, at least to some degree,

[57] For an overview of the technical integration of the Polish Army in NATO structures see: Mieczysław Cieniuch, "The Polish Armed Forces' Role and Development," *Military Technology* 35, no 8 (2011): 20–23.

popular certainty about the achievement after 1990 of a minimal democratic consensus among the political parties. Differently from the Catholic Church, the Polish Army has widely steered clear of that controversy, being widely occupied with its own internal restoration and adaptation to the new global security environment.

An issue that remains, however, is the attitude of the Polish Army towards the normative basis of democracy and its impact on national education: Without doubt, the Army is loyal to the Third Republic (as it had been to the People's Republic); but so far, there is little evidence for any fundamental withdrawal of either military or civilian educators (at schools, museums, etc.) from the established, widely non-civilian narrative of national strength, heroism, sacrifice and military victory as keys to political success.[58] In the first place, it will be economic and civilisational progress made by Poland within the European Union – and the dwindling attractiveness with young people of the military profession – that may set here a counterpoint in favour of a more civilian notion of politics.

Concluding remarks

Summing up, one can identify two major phases regarding the evolution of Polish thinking about security and defence, and the related practice: First, more or less throughout the 20th century until the early 1990s, a national-militarist discourse based on a "realist", i.e. antagonistic and essentialist, perception of international relations that was essentially home-made but reinforced by the Second World War and subsequent Sovietisation. And second, from the early 1990s onward, a gradual learning process on part of the Army that led to an – at least superficial – "civilisation" of civil–military relations and foreign policy; there, external influences notably from the US were crucial for overcoming the Polish military leadership's stubborn self-centredness and lack of responsibility.

[58] For some information on this topic see my article "Militär- und Kriegsmuseen in Deutschland und Polen. Eine Betrachtung erinnerungspolitischer Tendenzen," *Inter Finitimos. Jahrbuch zur deutsch-polnischen Beziehungsgeschichte* vol 10 (2012): 36–53.

The fact that after 1990 this military establishment was exchanged only in part and mostly due to technical and economic, but not political, reasons was due, on one hand, to pragmatic considerations, but arguably no less to the mythical, i.e. non-critical, image of the Army as an untouchable "national institution".

Concerning the issue of how to characterise theoretically the positions and policies taken by the Polish Army before, during and after the "break" of 1989–90, this article has argued that none of the referred-to major Western theories are able to explain in a satisfying way the crucial motives and behavioural patterns at work there. Without excluding that other post-communist armies may show similar features, Polish civil–military relations appear rather peculiar in terms of the far-reaching continuities in their ideological underpinnings across both the 1944–45 and the 1989–90 systemic change thresholds.

The fact that during the 1990s the Polish Army could relatively smoothly become integrated into NATO was obviously owed in the first place to its organisational, technological and armament-related adaptation to Alliance standards. This included, as mentioned, common training and qualification measures and the establishment of effective democratic control; the latter, however, was at the time a necessary and thus pragmatic step that said little about the Polish military leadership's actual normative views. At the same time, this process may be taken as a hint at NATO's incumbent members' attitude towards the post-communist candidates: Being sufficiently pragmatic to consider those elites' views mainly with regard to their significance for Alliance cohesion and effectiveness, and presented with the former Soviet allies' passionate desire to become "Western", they did not investigate too much time in assessing the actual motives behind this attitude. This way, they followed an established pattern that had worked in other countries before, e.g. in Germany, Italy, Spain or Portugal. Arguably, this is a point where the post-communist transition much resembled the post-Fascist one.

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Estonia's First Steps in the Direction of NATO and National Defence

Henrik Praks

ABSTRACT

The meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) which was held in December 1991 and attended by the foreign ministers of NATO member states, former members of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and the Baltic States was a prelude to enlargement. Although the direct threat of an attack in the territories of NATO countries had ceased to exist, armed conflict in the border areas of NATO – especially in the former Yugoslavia – emerged as new threats. The NATO cooperation programme Partnership for Peace (PfP) was launched on the initiative of the US in 1994 and was tasked with preparing the military structures of potential new member states.

Even before the adoption of the new Constitution, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Estonia Ülo Nugis declared in October 1991 that Estonia's goal was to join NATO as soon as possible. Secretary General of NATO Manfred Wörner visited Estonia in March 1992. However, the main task of the Estonian defence policy until 1994 was the withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of Estonia.

The fundamentals of the Estonian defence policy passed in the Riigikogu in May 1996 stated that the goal of the policy was to join NATO and WEU.

In 1994, Estonian soldiers took part in NATO/PfP training (Cooperative Spirit 94) for the first time. In 1995 Estonia joined the NATO Planning and Review Programme. Estonia has been taking part in NATO peacekeeping missions, initially as part of the Danish battalion, since 1995.

The idea of Estonia becoming a member of NATO seemed utopic at the time the country's independence was restored, but it had already become a serious possibility by the mid-'90s. The events in Europe and around the world, the openness of NATO and Estonia's own determination and efforts helped to achieve this.

Guaranteeing the security of the state became one of the main issues that the young, restored Republic of Estonia had to start dealing with from day one. It soon became clear that guaranteeing security with the state's own means alone was impossible and Estonia had to join the structures that ensure the security of Europe. NATO became the obvious choice. Although NATO membership seemed relatively utopic in a country that had just broken free from the shackles of the Soviet Union, it managed to achieve this goal a mere decade later, in 2004.

This article focuses on the first years after independence was regained (1991–1995/1996), when the foundations of Estonia's movement towards NATO membership were laid. The development of the NATO-related thought in Estonia, the first stages of the cooperation between Estonia and NATO, various types of international cooperation and the domestic activities aimed at supporting Estonia's integration with NATO will be discussed.

The general context of NATO enlargement and partnerships in the early 1990s

Period of self-searching in NATO

The collapse of the Soviet empire opened a completely new era in Europe's security.

At the Rome summit of the 8th of November 1991, NATO declared that the Cold War had ended and adopted a new strategic concept, which called for a broader approach to security where cooperation and dialogue would hold the key roles. The organisation decided to establish a new political relationship with countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

As a follow-up to the decisions made in Rome, a new cooperation forum called the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established at the meeting of foreign ministers of NATO and the former Eastern Bloc countries held on the 20th of December 1991 in Brussels. The initial members of the forum were NATO member states, former Warsaw

Pact member states and the Baltic states. The NACC was established at the same time when the Soviet Union was taking its last breaths. In the course of the meeting the Soviet ambassador announced that its country had ceased to exist and he was representing the Russian Federation instead.[1] The NACC became a forum of multilateral political consultations on security issues that were topical at the time, such as the various regional conflicts on the ruins of the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union.

However, the end of the Cold War was also an existential issue for NATO itself. The disappearance of the former enemy raised the question of the role of the Alliance in the changed situation. The bloodshed in former Yugoslavia, which soon required the intervention of NATO itself, indicated that whilst any direct military threat to the territories of NATO member states may have disappeared, the instability on the Alliance's borders and beyond had become a growing security threat. NATO's enlargement to the east became a part of the question of how to advance security and stability in the entire Euro-Atlantic region.

The emergence of the issue of NATO's enlargement and the birth of PfP

The topic of enlargement itself became a serious item on the Alliance's agenda in 1993. Under the political pressure applied by the so-called Visegrad Group[2] countries of Central Europe, the Allies were forced to start formulating their positions and the approach to the question of how to react to the desire of the former Eastern Bloc countries to become members of NATO. At first, there was no common understanding in NATO about whether the Eastern Enlargement would be beneficial for the Alliance. Supporters emphasised the benefits that the new members would bring to the Alliance; sceptics in their turn pointed out the prob-

[1] North Atlantic Coordination Council (NACC), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69344.htm (accessed 9.2.2014).

[2] Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

lems that the enlargement would cause in relations with Russia as well as in the functioning of NATO itself with a larger number of members.

Although the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, had signed a declaration during his visit of Poland on the 25th of August 1993, basically expressing his consent for the potential NATO membership of Poland,[3] he soon changed this position. The representatives of Russia started to constantly describe the negative consequences of NATO's enlargement and threatened to take counteraction. Russia's anti-NATO rhetoric became the background that accompanied the Alliance's enlargement deliberations throughout their various stages.

In 1993, President Clinton's administration in the US was following the so-called 'Russia first' principle, adopted after the collapse of the Soviet empire, in its foreign policy and Washington was therefore not ready to advocate the enlargement. However, it was clear that something had to be done, because the purely consultative NACC was basically nothing more than a talking shop and didn't meet anyone's expectations any longer. This is why the United States came up with the idea of the new cooperation programme called Partnership for Peace (PfP) in autumn 1993. This programme would, instead of enlargement, focus on the development of practical cooperation between NATO and non-member states.

The PfP programme was officially launched at the NATO summit held in Brussels from the 10th–11th of January 1994. The PfP was a kind of a compromise between the two sides: firstly those who wanted to avoid aggravating Russia at any cost and secondly those who were in favour of the enlargement. Within the context of enlargement, the programme primarily served two purposes for NATO: firstly, it had to bide its time before making any decisions about enlargement and secondly, it was actually necessary to start preparations for future enlargement to guarantee that new members could join the Alliance and especially its military structures as smoothly as possible.

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[3] Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO´s Door* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 37–40.

Meeting of NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Sir Brian Kenny and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Estonia Arnold Rüütel in Kadriorg Palace (25th of February 1992). From the left: Foreign Minister Lennart Meri and Arnold Rüütel; Brian Kenny, 2nd from the right. Erik Prozes/author's private collection

Whilst the NACC was a political forum created solely for the purpose of the post-Cold War European security environment and contained no bilateral cooperation programmes between NATO and partner states, the PfP was already a tool that could be used for practical cooperation and allowed the partner states to take steps towards NATO membership. The programme made it possible to proceed to direct defence and military cooperation with the Alliance. The future members could familiarise themselves with the way NATO functions via PfP planning, joint training and other activities. On the other hand, participation in the PfP process was supposed to help the partner states reorganise their post-Soviet armed forces to make them comply with the models developed in democratic countries. The PfP gave no guarantees that full membership of the

organisation would be offered, but it was a good opportunity to prepare for this.

Several Central and Eastern European countries had hoped that NATO membership would be granted to them by expedited procedure at the Brussels summit, and although these hopes did not come true, the Alliance reassured them that NATO's doors would remain open for new members. President Clinton explained that when it came to the enlargement, the questions were "when" and "how" and not whether it would take place at all.[4]

Gradual emergence of NATO membership as Estonia´s security policy option

Estonia's first cautious steps towards NATO

The first contacts and attempts at cooperation between Estonia and NATO started almost immediately after the restoration of independence in August 1991.

The first Estonian politician to raise the need for NATO membership was Chairman of the Supreme Council Ülo Nugis. Having returned to Tallinn from the Madrid meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly on 24 October 1991, where Estonia was granted the status of observer by this interparliamentary organisation of the NATO member states, Nugis declared at the press conference that "Estonia should try to become a member of NATO as soon as possible"[5]. This objective seemed utopic at the time and was purely an expression of Nugis's personal opinion. However, the ice had been broken and on the 17th of November 1991, *Päevaleht* published the article "Estonia should join NATO" by history student Vahur Made, where this idea was backed up by convincing arguments for the first time.[6]

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[4] Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand* (New York: Random House, 2002), 111.

[5] Toomas H. Liiv, "Ülo Nugis: Eesti peab saama NATO liikmeks niipea kui võimalik," *Päevaleht*, 25.10.1991, 1.

[6] Vahur Made, "Eesti peaks ühinema NATOga," *Päevaleht*, 17.11.1991, 3.

NATO membership became a possible security policy choice for Estonia. However, some other concepts were also popular in the first years after the restoration of independence. The most widespread one of them was to remain neutral like Finland and Sweden.[7] It can be assumed that the continued presence of the Russian troops made its own mark on people's way of thinking and, moreover, on the courage of expression: there were fears that putting too much emphasis on the NATO card would give the Russians an excuse to delay the withdrawal of its troops.

However, Estonia was definitely interested in the establishment of contacts and cooperation with NATO. Foreign Minister Lennart Meri was the first member of the Estonian government who officially visited the NATO headquarters on the 12th of November 1991. He met with the Secretary General Manfred Wörner and spoke to the ambassadors of the member states in the North Atlantic Council (NAC). When the NACC was established on the 20th of December in the same year, Estonia was naturally one of its founding members. Relations with NATO developed within the framework of the NACC at first. The representatives of Estonia started taking part in seminars and meetings, and mutual familiarisation visits were organised for both politicians and military staff members. Ambassador Clyde Kull, who was also the Ambassador of Estonia to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Permanent Representative to the European Union, was accredited the Permanent Representative of Estonia to NATO in December 1991.

The first high-ranking NATO officer who visited Estonia was General Sir Brian Kenny, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (Deputy SACEUR), who came over on the 25th of February 1992. This visit was soon followed by the first visit of the Secretary General of NATO to Estonia: Manfred Wörner was in Tallinn from the 14th–15th of March 1992. Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Vigleik Eide visited Estonia in October 1992. The warships of NATO member states started port visits to Tallinn – these visits had a symbolic meaning for Estonia that still had foreign troops in its territory. The visit of eight ships and

[7] An overview of the discussions of security and defence policy trends at the time is given by Hellar Lill in "Eesti riigikaitsepoliitika kujunemisest," *Akadeemia* nr 9 (2009): 1741–1748.

1,300 seamen of the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) in the beginning of August 1992, which lasted for several days, was particularly impressive.

The representatives of Estonia in their turn started paying frequent visits to NATO headquarters. The commanders of the defence forces of the three Baltic states visited the NATO Brussels headquarters and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons in July 1992 by invitation of the NATO Military Committee. Chief of the General Staff of the Defence Forces Colonel Ants Laaneots represented Estonia. Lennart Meri visited the headquarters again on the 25th of November 1992 in his new capacity as the President of the Republic of Estonia. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly, where Estonia had been an associate member since May 1992, also became an important forum for explaining Estonia's opinions and aspirations.

The main objective of Estonia's security policy until 1994 was to achieve the withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory. This is why one of the main issues raised at the time in all contacts with NATO was the Alliance's possible assistance in making the foreign troops leave. However, the work done to achieve the withdrawal of the Russian troops was channelled into other organisations and formats, and NATO never really played a role in this.

The questions of practical defence assistance raised by Estonia in contacts with NATO included the need of the newly re-established defence force for various training and material support as well as expert assistance. Again, the NATO of those days didn't turn out to be the suitable format for this. However, the Alliance did encourage Estonia to establish direct relationships with its member states, and assistance programmes of specific NATO countries soon followed.

All in all, the contacts between Estonia and NATO in the first years following the restoration of independence remained relatively superficial and on the level of political contacts, military diplomacy and information exchange. Both sides had their reasons for this.

The Estonian foreign and security policy authorities, especially the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces, had no connections or expe-

rience, and there was also a lack of people who spoke English as well as of money. When the first meeting of NATO defence ministers with partner states in the NACC format took place in April 1992, Estonia was represented by diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Estonia didn't yet have a Ministry of Defence. The first Defence Minister Ülo Uluots admitted in his so-called political testament, which he left to his successor in the position of minister in autumn 1992, that "good contact with NATO has been established, but we cannot play along due to the lack of staff and money".[8]

On the other hand, NATO itself wasn't ready for closer relationships either. The Alliance still hadn't developed a more specific framework for cooperation with the non-member states. As a result a deeper military cooperation with former Eastern Bloc countries was basically out of the question. NATO was interested in security and stability in the Baltic Sea region, and in Estonia and the other Baltic states continuing to exist as independent countries. At the same time, the West was generally still cautious about the Baltic states, as it had no idea how these three would cope. Back then, the Baltic states were still seen as potential sources of conflict because of the presence of Russian troops, potential ethnic tensions, border disputes and a number of other reasons. For example, at the meeting with Ambassador Clyde Kull on the 15th of November 1992, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Vigleik Eide mentioned the situation in the Baltic States as a source of tension in Europe that was a concern for NATO in addition to the events in the Balkans and the situation in Russia[9]. The (unofficial) arms embargo implemented by the NATO member states as well as the Nordic countries on the Baltic states at the time was an expression of that fear.

The topic of NATO wasn't really discussed during the Riigikogu and presidential elections of September 1992. However, discussions of NATO membership on the political level started in earnest after the formation of Prime Minister Mart Laar's government in October 1992. The new

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[8] Ülo Uluots, "Poliitiline testament," 1992, KMA 1/18.

[9] Memo of Ambassador Clyde Kull "Meeting with the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Eide, Summary", Brussels 15.11.1992, copy in author's possession.

government immediately chose full integration with the West as its clear political direction and this also covered joining the security structures of Europe.[10] NATO was seen as the only functioning security organisation that had the political and military means required to ensure the security of Estonia against the resurgence of the Russian threat. Although this direction of Estonia's security policy was not formally defined anywhere at the time, the country's gradual movement towards NATO membership had started.

The topic of NATO still remained relatively distant for the Defence Forces and national defence on a broader scale. In March 1993, the Government submitted the document "Fundamentals of National Defence", which had been prepared in the Ministry of Defence and constituted the first proposal to formulate a national defence concept, to the Riigikogu. The document declared: "Estonia will integrate into Europe and work with collective security systems that follow the principles of the UN (CSCE, possibly also NATO, WEU)"[11]. This is the only mention of NATO in the document and the topic of NATO was never raised during the discussions in the Riigikogu. In the end, the document itself fell victim to the political battle of those days and was never adopted by the Riigikogu or even properly discussed.

However, the need to develop the Defence Forces in accordance with the standards of NATO began to be mentioned, often without any real knowledge of what these standards were like. For example, the decision to transfer to NATO standards in regard to mutual procedures and topographic maps was adopted at the meeting of Baltic Defence Ministers in February 1993.[12]

In this context, the political decision to transfer to the use of armament corresponding to NATO standards in the Defence Forces, which

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[10] Mart Laar, "Esimesed sammud NATO poole," – *Eesti NATO lugu 1991–2004*, toim. Lauri Lindström, Henrik Praks (Tallinn: Eesti NATO Ühing, 2014), 64–69.

[11] Draft of Riigikogu Resolution No O88 on the Development of National Defence Acts, RA 2/27/1, 64.

[12] Press release of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Defence Ministers on their 24 February 1993 meeting in Tallinn, copy in author's possession.

Supreme Allied Commander Europe General George A. Joulwan (in the middle) visiting Kalevi Infantry Battalion in Jägala, Estonia. On the right Commander of Defence Forces General Aleksander Einseln (22nd of September 1995). Albert Truuväärt/ETA/author's private collection

was adopted by Mart Laar's government immediately after it stepped into office, was significant. The result was the agreement for purchasing weapons for the Defence Forces from Israel, which was signed in January 1993. The scope of the agreement was unprecedented under the circumstances and its price including interest payments amounted to US $60 million. Politically, the weapons deal was seen as a part of Estonia's clear intent to break away from its dependence on the East. Prime Minister Laar compared it to the introduction of the country's own currency in term of strategic importance.[13] As a result of the deal, the Defence Forces of Estonia were the first in Central and Eastern Europe that became equipped with weapons that used the same ammunition as NATO member states.

[13] Verbatim report of the 2nd Session of the 7th Parliament, 19 April 1993, http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=steno&stcommand=stenogramm&date=735206400 (accessed 9.2.2014).

The appointment of Retired Colonel of the US Army Aleksander Einseln as the Commander of the Defence Forces of Estonia by the Riigikogu on 4 May 1993 was another expression of the ideology of getting closer to the West and thereby also to NATO.

Estonia joins PfP and the political course towards NATO is set

As NATO started discussing its enlargement options, Estonia started making clear declarations in the second half of 1993 that it wanted to become a member of the Alliance. At the meeting held in Tallinn on the 15th of December 1993, the Baltic presidents confirmed together that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia see NATO as their main security guarantee in the future.[14] The direction of NATO was not just the initiative of the President, Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but an expression of a wider consensus in Estonian politics.

Estonia emphasised the importance of the European Union's enlargement alongside the Eastern Enlargement of NATO from the very beginning. It was understood that Estonia's chances of NATO accession would improve via the success achieved in the direction of the European Union. In his interview to *Päevaleht* on the 26th of February 1994, Foreign Minister Jüri Luik summed up Estonia's approach as follows: "The main problem of our foreign policy is that we have to keep all of our options open: NATO, EU… No one can predict today when we'll become members of the EU and NATO. It's important that we're prepared, that we're open to these organisations. We don't know when our chance will come"[15].

When NATO announced its Partnership for Peace programme in January 1994, it created a lot of confusion at first. The launch of the PfP caused significant disappointment in the Visegrad Group, as it had

[14] Alo Kullamaa, "Balti presidendid näevad NATO-t peamise julgeolekugarantiina," *Päevaleht*, 16.12.1993, 1.

[15] Toomas H. Liiv, "Jüri Luik: poliitika ja armastus on mõlemad hukutavad kired," *Pühapäevaleht,* 26.2.1994, 2–3.

Presidents of the Baltic States in BALTBAT headquarters in Ādaži, Latvia. President of Estonia Lennart Meri is hammering a nail in a flagpole of the training centre (8th of February 1995). Lembit Michelson/ ETA/Estonian Film Archives

been hoping for much clearer enlargement prospects. Estonia, however, was able to assess its options rationally. It greeted the launch of the programme as a positive, concluding that this was the maximum it could get from NATO at the time. It was also important for Estonia that the candidate countries were not divided into groups and that the Baltic states were therefore not separated from the Visegrad countries in the process.

On the 14th of January 1994, President Lennart Meri and Prime Minister Mart Laar signed their joint letter to the Secretary General of NATO Manfred Wörner to confirm Estonia's wish to join the PfP programme. Foreign Minister Jüri Luik signed the PfP framework document on behalf of Estonia at the ceremony held in Brussels on the 3rd of February 1994.

Estonia was the fourth country to join the Partnership for Peace. In his address to the North Atlantic Council, Minister Luik declared that Estonia had taken the first step towards full NATO membership.[16]

The launch of the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994 opened a new, broader dimension to Estonia's political and practical NATO integration efforts and to the related international cooperation. The departure of the Russian troops in August in the same year alongside the stabilisation of the country's internal security and economic situation also meant that Estonia started feeling more secure as a state and thereby also more confident in its aspirations.

The new government of Prime Minister Tiit Vähi that came to power after the Riigikogu elections in spring 1995 continued with the course towards NATO established by its predecessors. This policy was formally confirmed on the 7th of May 1996 when the Riigikogu unanimously approved "The Fundamentals of Estonian Defence Policy", the first national defence policy concept of Estonia after it regained its independence. This document stated expressly that "Estonia's goal is to become a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Western European Union (WEU). Cooperation with their defence organisations is our main political and practical opportunity to develop and strengthen the security and national defence of Estonia"[17].

Estonia's NATO aspirations had gained strong support in political circles as well as in society as a whole. As the actual outlook of accession was still vague this didn't mean that the relevant security debate had completely ended. Possible alternatives to NATO membership continued to be suggested, such as neutrality or perhaps a different organisation, e.g. a military union of the Baltic States.[18] However, these alternatives failed to generate any in-depth political discussions. Estonia's aim was set at NATO.

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[16] Address to the North Atlantic Council by H. E. Jüri Luik, Brussels, NATO, 3.2.1994, copy in author's possession.

[17] "Eesti riigi kaitsepoliitika põhisuunad," RT I 1996, 33, 684, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/13009161 (accessed 27.6.2014).

[18] Hellar Lill, "Eesti riigikaitsepoliitika sõnastamisest 1996–1999: Põhisuundadest NATO-liikmesuse tegevuskavani," *KVÜÕA Toimetised* 17 (2013), 91–96.

NATO and the establishment of the Estonian national defence

Unlike the European Union, NATO does not have any specific criteria for the selection and admission of new members. The enlargement of NATO is a political process and the Alliance wants to preserve its political decision-making and freedom of operation whilst avoiding anything that's automatic.

However, the Alliance prepared the NATO Enlargement Study in 1995, which stipulated the principles of enlargement, i.e. the general conditions for why and how NATO should enlarge. According to the study, states that want to join NATO have to meet a number of various conditions. Adherence to the principles of democracy, free market and human rights is the main basis for enlargement. As NATO is a military alliance, then defence and military aspects are of particular importance. For example, the study emphasised that the capacity of future members to make military contributions to collective defence and the Alliance's missions will be the factor that will determine whether they will be invited to join. In the practical sense, the countries had to harmonise the principles of their defence planning and the civilian control of armed forces with those of NATO to ensure that their armed forces are interoperable with NATO nations, contribute sufficient resources to their integration into NATO and be able to participate in joint operations, incl. collective defence.[19]

The desire to join NATO gradually started influencing the wider defence policy choices of Estonia. In the beginning of the 1990s, there were still quite a number of people who believed that since Estonia would never be able to put up military resistance against a possible aggressor, then all we needed were police and border guard forces. However, it now became clear that in order to become a member of NATO, Estonia had to have a defence capacity that NATO could count on.

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[19] Study on NATO Enlargement, 3.9.1995, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24733.htm (accessed 9.2.2014).

In practice, this meant that the country had to develop its own military capabilities and do it in a manner that would guarantee procedural and technical interoperability with NATO. The document "The Fundamentals of Estonian Defence Policy", adopted in 1996, tried to answer these questions. It declared that national defence would be developed in two main directions that complement each other and are integrally connected: independent defence that is based on national defence forces and international defence cooperation aimed at joint defence activities with European security and defence organisations.[20]

The size of the defence budget was another issue raised in relation to NATO accession. Estonia had to demonstrate to the NATO Allies that it was prepared to contribute to national defence. NATO's general guideline to its member states is to allocate 2% of their GDP to national defence, but implementing this in Estonia initially remained at the level of wishful thinking. In reality, Estonia's defence budget in the 1990s reached 1–1.2% of the GDP.[21] National defence wasn't yet a real priority for the governments of those days.

In building the defence forces with a view towards NATO accession, the state started developing international military cooperation in four closely related areas:

- participation in the Partnership for Peace programme of NATO;
- participation in international peacekeeping and crisis management;
- practical defence cooperation with other Baltic states; and
- bilateral defence cooperation with different Western countries.

[20] "Eesti riigi kaitsepoliitika põhisuunad," *RKo RT* I (1996), 33, 684.

[21] *Eesti NATO lävepakul: 80-aastane Eesti Kaitsevägi = Estonia on the threshold of NATO: Estonian Defence Forces 1918–1998*, tõlge: Ilvi J. Cannon, toimetajad Lea Arme jt (Tallinn: Kaitseministeerium, 1999), 15.

Cooperation network within the scope of the Partnership for Peace programme

The PfP programme became the main driver of the practical cooperation between Estonia and NATO. Estonia made a policy decision that its cooperation with NATO within the scope of the PfP should be seen as the tool that would help it achieve its ultimate goal – NATO membership. It was therefore important for the cooperation to be as close and diverse as possible. After the declaration of the programme, President Lennart Meri compared it poetically to a beautiful empty perfume bottle that had to be filled with content.[22]

The PfP individual cooperation programmes between NATO and the partner countries were set up bilaterally, which meant that the specific features of each country could be considered and the exact content of the cooperation programmes depended on each country's own activity.

Participation in the PfP had various benefits for the security policy and national defence of Estonia:

- it was the best and most specific tool for getting closer to NATO and for cooperation with the defence structures of NATO and its member states that the Alliance offered at the time;
- it provided the opportunity to learn the operating logic of NATO troops, the so-called military English and terminology used in NATO as well as the standards and technical requirements of NATO;
- it offered the opportunity to build Estonia's defence forces and infrastructure in a manner that would allow for cooperation with NATO whenever necessary and for receiving military aid from abroad;
- it enabled Estonia to participate and have a say in global and European security processes, e.g. by participating in international peace missions;
- it became the basis for constant exchange of security and defence information with NATO.

[22] Kullamaa, "Balti presidendid," 1.

Estonia's participation in PfP had to be made as meaningful as possible in order to maximise the programme's benefits for the development of the defence forces and its capabilities as well as achieving the interoperability with NATO and its member states.

The cooperation network within the scope of the PfP turned out to be diverse, primarily covering two areas – participation in the joint events of NATO/PfP, including military exercises and training; and the development defence interoperability and bringing Estonia´s national defence planning procedures closer to those of NATO.

The first practical step in the development of cooperation was sending a liaison officer to the Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC) at Mons. This cell was created for the coordination of cooperation and information exchange with partners. Estonia's Liaison Officer Lieutenant Peeter Läns was sent over in April 1994, and he became the first representative of the Estonian Defence Forces to NATO.

In order to launch substantive cooperation, Estonia first had to submit the PfP Presentation Document, which contained its proposals and requests for cooperation. A workgroup consisting of the representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence and of the Defence Forces was formed for the preparation of this document. The document was completed in summer 1994 and in July, Ambassador Clyde Kull handed it over to NATO. Estonia announced that it was prepared to contribute to the Alliance activities by connecting one company of the Defence Forces with NATO. In return, Estonia hoped for financial support for the construction of an airfield, port and training centre.[23]

The next step was the preparation of the Individual Partnership Programme (IPP) between Estonia and NATO. NATO approved the first IPP of Estonia on the 1st of March 1995. It listed priority areas of cooperation and cooperation events with the Alliance in 20 areas of defence policy and military issues. The areas that Estonia underlined in the first IPP as those of most importance for itself were as follows: 1) airspace control; 2) various exercises with supporting seminars and courses; 3) language

[23] Estonian PfP Presentation Document, draft, 30 June 1994, copy in author's possession.

training; 4) peacekeeping cooperation; 5) training in equipment and logistics; 6) development of civil-military cooperation.[24]

Participation in PfP events

Estonia tried to take part in as many PfP events (seminars, conferences, training and exercises) as possible in light of its limited resources, both human and financial. In addition to the practical benefits, active participation was also politically important and was meant to demonstrate Estonia's will and readiness to join NATO. There was also an opportunity to gain experience from cooperation with troops of NATO Allies. The participation of Estonian servicemen in numerous field and command post exercises of NATO/PfP therefore became one of the main and most visible parts of the cooperation between Estonia and NATO.

The first NATO/PfP training exercise in which Estonian servicemen participated was the peacekeeping exercise Cooperative Spirit 94. An *ad hoc* platoon of 25 men, mainly officers and non-commissioned officers of the peacekeeping company, was created for the exercise.[25] In 1995 the Defence Forces participated in about ten PfP-related training exercises, either with subunits or observers. This included sending an infantry platoon to the Cooperative Nugget peacekeeping exercise in Louisiana, United States. One of the main duties of the Estonian Navy that was re-established in 1994 was to participate in the NATO/PfP naval training exercises. The first exercise Estonia took part in with a ship (EML Sulev) was BALTOPS '95, an exercise organised by the US in the in June 1995. The participation of the Defence Forces in PfP events kept growing in subsequent years. In 1996, for example, they participated in 24 training exercises and 125 other events.[26]

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[24] Aruanne Eesti-NATO koostöö arengutest 1994–1998, undated, copy in author's possession.

[25] *Sõdurileht*, nr 1(12), January 1995, 5.

[26] *Estonian Annual National Programme 1999* (Tallinn, 1999), 31.

Lack of money was an obstacle in the development of cooperation with NATO. The support of the United States of America has to be mentioned in this regard. The US provided significant amounts of funding to finance the participation of Estonian representatives in the PfP events. However, Estonia still had many expenses to cover and finding money for this was difficult in the beginning. For example, it became evident in the beginning of 1995 that although Estonia had joined the PfP programme and selected a number of events in which to participate, no money had been allocated for them in the state budget for 1995.[27] Non-participation would have not only meant falling behind in acquiring NATO experience for the Defence Forces – Estonia's reputation in NATO also depended on active participation in PfP events. The necessary money had to be allocated from the government's reserve fund. In order to avoid such embarrassing situations in the future, the budget of the Ministry of Defence had a separate line for PfP participation expenses from 1996.

National defence planning and the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP)

In January 1995, NATO launched the Planning and Review Programme (PARP) which was aimed at developing the interoperability of the forces of partner states with NATO. This interoperability in its turn was a precondition to becoming a full member. Also, PARP mechanisms were very similar to NATO's own planning procedures. Therefore, the participation in PARP became the first actual step for the development of national defence in Estonia according to the standards of NATO. Within the scope of the PARP, Estonia also started submitting data about the situation and future plans of its Defence Forces as well as the conceptual objectives of national defence.

[27] Letter of Defence Minister Enn Tupp to Commander of the Defence Forces Aleksander Einseln, no 01-22/555, 28.2.1995, copy in author's possession.

Estonia's first PARP action plan prepared in cooperation with NATO was approved on the 25th of April 1995. Estonia chose 11 of the 25 Interoperability Objectives initially suggested by the Alliance. These objectives covered both the units that had to be prepared for international missions as well as areas related to the development of national defence as a whole, such as the development of infrastructure and logistic support. These first 11 objectives represented a diverse set of various areas, such as the standardisation of fuel types and fuelling equipment according to NATO requirements, the standardisation of the frequencies of means of communication, the creation of English-speaking liaison groups, etc. Estonia decided to create a military unit the size of a company, which had to be prepared to participate in the missions and training exercises of NATO and able to operate as part of the NATO troops.[28]

Estonia's problem back then was the shortage of people who could deal with aspects of NATO in the national defence system. The first cooperation programmes and documents of Estonia and NATO were prepared by a handful of officials and members of the Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence, and the Defence Forces on a broader scale were still left out of the process. NATO-related work was done in the Defence Forces in addition to other functions and its importance tended to remain secondary, as there was little faith that accession to NATO was actually a possibility.[29]

This is why the impact of NATO on defence planning in Estonia and the development of the structures of its Defence Forces remained rather limited at first. National defence was still developed on the principle that it was necessary to develop a fully independent defence capability. At the same time, planning had to be done in consideration of essential everyday needs and the extreme limitation of resources. Also, NATO's planners did not try to directly influence Estonia as a sovereign state in its decisions and choices.

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[28] Interoperability Objectives – Estonia, Annex to PfP (PMSC)D(95)8, copy in author's possession.

[29] Margus Kolga, "Rahupartnerlusprogrammist liikmesuse tegevuskavani," – *Eesti NATO lugu 1991–2004*, toim. Lauri Lindström, Henrik Praks (Tallinn: Eesti NATO Ühing, 2014), 82–89.

However, there were exceptions too. The development of the Navy and Air Force that were re-established in 1994 was immediately and closely related to interoperability with and integration into NATO. The activities of these forces focussed largely on the international dimension and the creation of connections with the structures of NATO.

International peace missions, Baltic and broader international cooperation

Estonia declared that each PfP country also had to offer something to NATO instead of just benefitting from the partnership. It would have to produce security in addition to consuming it. This meant the capacity to contribute to regional and international security both independently and in cooperation with neighbour states. Participation in international peace missions became the main output of such contributions.

NATO itself was looking for a new 'idea' after the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the former enemy, and peacekeeping and crisis management started becoming the areas on which the Alliance increasingly focussed its attention. By taking part in international peacekeeping missions, Estonia could demonstrate its capacity for playing a role in guaranteeing peace and security at the international level as well as the actual interoperability of its Defence Forces with the troops of NATO and other partner states.

The idea for the establishment of a joint peacekeeping unit of the Baltic states first appeared in 1993. Things became more specific at the meeting of the commanders of the defence forces of the Baltic states on the 19th of November 1993, where the decision to start the establishment of the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) was made. The official foundation to this was laid on the 13th of September 1994 with a trilateral Baltic agreement about the establishment and formation of a joint peacekeeping unit. Although BALTBAT was formally created for participation in the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations, helping the defence forces of the Baltic states get closer to NATO and thereby

supporting the general NATO integration were seen as the unit's objective from the very beginning. Politically, BALTBAT was the clearest expression of the understanding of the Baltic states that they would have to contribute to international security. It was also aimed at showing NATO and the other partners that the three states are able to cooperate with each other. In practice, the battalion became the tool for channelling Western know-how, military culture, values and standards to the defence forces of the Baltic states.

BALTBAT was also of great interest for NATO and individual Allies. The UN peacekeeping umbrella above the battalion gave the Western nations the opportunity to give military aid without aggravating Russia. This is why BALTBAT became the first unit in the Baltic States that was fully equipped with Western weapons and trained according to Western standards. The Nordic countries, who were the traditional experts in peacekeeping, started supporting the project, and Denmark adopted the role of leading country in the process. In addition to the Nordic countries, leading NATO Allies, the United Kingdom and the United States, also provided significant support. Organisation of the general military training of the new battalion was assigned to the British marines. All of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the military unit were trained by them. This fact in itself demonstrated that the battalion's goal was much bigger than the preparation of the traditional UN Blue Berets that remain strictly neutral in areas of conflict.[30]

Since the formation of the battalion started from zero, it all took time. This is why the soldiers of the Estonian contingent of BALTBAT were not the first members of the Estonian Defence Forces who took part in an international mission. Denmark had proposed back in 1994 that Estonia dispatch an infantry platoon to the UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) in Croatia as part of the Danish battalion. The proposal was accepted and an infantry platoon called ESTPLA-1 was formed for the

[30] An overview of the birth of BALTBAT is given by Pete Ito in "Baltic Military Cooperative Projects: a Record of Success," – *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States,* ed. by Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013), 246–282.

mission. All that the Estonian Defence Forces gave to the platoon were uniforms; all other equipment and weapons came from the Danes. After some short training, ESTPLA-1 headed to Croatia in February 1995 and the participation of the Defence Forces of Estonia in international operations had started. In the second half of the same year, they were replaced by the new platoon ESTPLA-2, whose mission ended early as the local situation changed and the UN mission was terminated. However, this only meant a very short break in Estonia's peacekeeping activities. The end of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in autumn 1995 resulted in the dispatch of the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) to the country. The successful cooperation with the Danish Defence Forces that had started in Croatia also continued in Bosnia. ESTPLA-3 was dispatched there in spring 1996, becoming the first sub-unit of the Estonian Defence Forces that took part in a mission commanded by NATO.[31]

BALTBAT did not remain the only initiative in the Baltic cooperation aimed at NATO. The cooperation between the three Baltic States gave the opportunities to join efforts for the achievement of results that would've been unattainable individually.

The next specific area where the issue of Baltic cooperation arose was air surveillance. The first goal was to establish a joint Baltic airspace surveillance and control system in accordance with NATO standards. The existence of such an air surveillance system was seen as a precondition to NATO membership. In 1994 the Baltic air forces already started cooperating with the NATO Air Defence Committee (NADC). As this area is technologically very complicated and extremely expensive, the activities remained at the conceptual level at first. Things really started moving after the US suggested in 1995 that the Baltic States join the Regional Airspace Initiative (RAI) developed by the Americans for Central European countries. The objective of the RAI was to develop air surveillance and

[31] An overview of the participation of Estonia and the other Baltic States in international peacekeeping missions is given by Piret Paljak in "Participation in International Military Operations," – *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States,* ed. by Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013), 202–245.

Troops of the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) on training in Paldiski, Estonia (1995). Tõnu Noorits/author's private collection

control systems compatible with NATO, which could be connected to the general air defence system of NATO in the future. The joint Baltic air surveillance system BALTNET grew out of this project in the subsequent years.

The joint Baltic Naval Squadron BALTRON and the Baltic Defence College in Tartu were added to the list of common Baltic defence cooperation projects in the second half of the 1990s.

All of these projects were carried out with the strong support and assistance of a number of Western states. The role of Denmark was particularly significant – from the very beginning, it became the strongest supporter and adviser of the NATO aspirations of the Baltic states. In

addition to the active political support provided by other NATO Allies, Denmark also started supporting the development of the Baltic defence forces and their becoming eligible for NATO membership on the initiative of the Danish Defence Minister Hans Hækkerup. Denmark was the leading country in the BALTBAT project and oversaw the participation of the Baltic sub-units in international missions, played the key role in the launch of the Baltic Defence College, gave advice in PARP issues, etc.

In addition to the activities within the scope of the PfP, general bilateral and multilateral international defence cooperation also supported Estonia's NATO aspirations. The first bilateral defence framework agreements were signed in 1994 with Denmark, Ukraine, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. By 1996, Estonia already had such agreements with 12 states. Practical defence cooperation was based on annual cooperation plans, which by 1996 had been signed with Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Poland. In addition, the activities of the Military Liaison Team of the National Guard of the State of Maryland, US, in Estonia were very active – 84 events were organised by this group in 1996 alone.[32] Non-NATO countries, particularly Finland and Sweden, but also Switzerland, deserve a mention for their practical support as well.

One of the central areas of the bilateral defence cooperation was the organisation of training programmes for members of the Defence Forces. General advice on building the Defence Forces and the national defence system was also extremely valuable. For example, the group of retired high-ranking officers called the International Defence Advisory Board (IDAB), which was led by General Sir Garry Johnson, the former Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces Northern Europe, operated in this field. There was also significant material assistance from the Western nations, which at first didn't include any weapons. However, Estonia also started receiving donations of arms from the second half of the 1990s.

[32] *Eesti kaitsejõud 1991–1996 = Estonian defence forces 1991–1996*, väljaandjad Eesti Vabariigi Kaitseministeerium, Kaitsejõudude Peastaap (Tallinn: Kaitseministeerium, 1996), 21–22.

Conclusion

Estonia had different options to consider in its security and defence policy after regaining its independence. The lesson taught by the events of 1939/1940 was that Estonia should never again find itself in the situation where the state has no allies and has to stand up against a formidable enemy on its own. The logical choice in this light was to try and join NATO, the central defence organisation of the free and democratic Europe.

Achievement of NATO membership seemed utopic in the very first years after regaining independence. First of all, Estonia had to solve more urgent security issues, especially the achievement of the departure of Russian troops from the country. In national defence, NATO was mainly a background topic at first that didn't have much impact on practical developments. The breakthrough arrived in 1994, when Estonia focussed firmly on NATO membership. At the same time, NATO itself started taking the first specific steps towards opening the organisation. These steps were rather timid at first and focussed on the establishment of partnership relations within the scope of the Partnership for Peace programme. The PfP, however, gave the Estonian Defence Forces and national defence system as a whole the first chances to gain some real NATO experience. The North Atlantic Alliance was no longer *terra incognita* – Estonia started acquiring experience from the activities of NATO and the first plans for bringing Estonia closer to the Alliance were born. There was also the growing bilateral and multilateral international defence cooperation network.

By the mid-1990s, the Republic of Estonia was in the situation where speaking about NATO membership didn't necessarily sound like a fantasy any more. This objective was also conceptually cemented with the document on the fundamentals of defence policy in 1996. Many years of growing and expanding efforts were yet to follow, but a foundation for Estonia's NATO aspirations had been created.

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First Years of the Re-establishment of Estonia's Naval Defence

Reet Naber

ABSTRACT

The Navy and the fleet had been very important to Estonia during the War of Independence of 1918–1920. The British fleet that arrived at the roadstead in Tallinn in December fended off the threat of the Soviet Russia's Baltic Fleet and guaranteed supply channels for weapons, volunteers and other aid to be brought to Estonia.

History and historians played an important role in the restoration of Estonian naval defence: the Estonian Academic Military History Society was founded in the Maritime Museum in 1988, and the Guild of Estonians Who Served in the Finnish Navy during World War II was established in autumn 1991. The submarine 'Lembit', which had been launched in 1937, once belonged to Estonia and was reclaimed from the Baltic Fleet in early 1992, became the first vessel of the Estonian Navy. The first naval units of the Defence League were also restored in 1992 and they took over a number of patrol boats of the Soviet border guard.

The naval defence of Estonia was built up in the cooperation and competition of several institutions – the Defence Forces, the Border Guards and the Estonian Maritime Administration. The establishment of maritime border guard units was considered of primary importance. Estonia received ships and boats from the Nordic countries, Germany and the US, and some Soviet vessels were also in working order.

Structuring the Naval Forces of the Estonian Defence Forces started later and the Commander of the Navy was appointed in February 1994. There were five officers, five non-commissioned officers and five conscripts serving in the Navy at the time. The Estonian flag was hoisted on the Estonian Naval Base at the Mine Harbour in Tallinn in September 1994. In the same year, Estonian seamen participated in the first major international naval exercise BALTOPS '94.

Introduction

Speaking of naval defence, we must keep in mind that the term means much more than warships with powerful weapons or efficient coastal batteries. The state has different functions to perform at sea: it must guarantee safe vessel traffic in territorial, inland and economic waters; ensure a functioning maritime distress and safety system; be ready to eliminate marine pollution; guard the sea border; protect territorial waters, coast and islands; secure national defence traffic on the sea; guarantee the functioning of marine communications; provide defence in the case of a hostile attack, etc. The other terms used for this area today are maritime security and sea power. As this is a broad subject, I will only discuss some aspects from the very first years. The generally known legislation concerning the restoration of Estonia's national defence will not be discussed. The organisation of Estonia's naval defence was initiated by civil structures as a result of the conditions in which the independence of Estonia was restored as well as the reluctance of the Russian Federation to start negotiations about the status and withdrawal of the Northwestern Army group and the Russian Baltic Fleet before the beginning of 1992.

As the size of this article is limited, my goal is to give a briefer overview of the situation that prevailed in the 1990s and to introduce the ideas for the development of the naval defence concept in the early years. There are no overviews of the development of the maritime affairs, including naval defence, in that period. However, some fragments of information can still be found. The collection *Jälle kakskümmend aastat mereväge* (Another Twenty Years of the Navy) about the time when the navy was re-established, was published in 2014, and it contains overviews and memoirs of the first days of naval defence and the navy.[1] Materials include media publications, documents in the archive of the Defence Forces Headquarters (hereinafter DFH) and the Navy, plus memoirs of contemporaries

[1] *Jälle kakskümmend aastat mereväge: Ülevaateid ja meenutusi. Esimene raamat.* Koostajad Kalev Konso ja Reet Naber (Tartu: Kaitseväe Ühendatud õppeasutused, 2014).

and the recordings kept in the archive of the Estonian Public Broadcasting Company. Unfortunately, not all documents from the first years have been preserved. New material has been published about the Estonian national fleets and to explain the functions of the Navy.[2]

Maritime activities were extremely important during the achievement and defence of Estonia's independence from 1918–1920 because the entire foreign communication of the warring state depended on the possibility of maritime navigation. Supplies of consumer goods and military equipment from the West were no less important. The military and political significance of the arrival of British warships in Tallinn was difficult to overestimate. The first volunteers were arriving from Finland to support the initially retreating Estonian troops, so the connection with our northern neighbours was essential for us.[3]

It's therefore no surprise that twenty-odd men, whose merit was guaranteeing maritime traffic, were awarded the Cross of Liberty after the War of Independence. The best known of these men were Chief of Navy Pilots, Lighthouse and Seamarks Administration Sea Captain William Dampf; Chief of Port Factory Administration Edgar Heinrichsen; Commandant of the Port of Tallinn Sea Captain Oskar Toomara; Mihkel Tiidus, Leonhard Stamm and Theodor Holm, the pilots who helped the British Squadron navigate to Tallinn through minefields.[4]

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[2] Mati Terve, "Soovitused mereturvalisust tagava riigilaevastiku ülesehituse muutmiseks Eesti näitel" (Master's Thesis, Institute of Internal Security of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, 2011); Igor Schvede, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Assigning Coast Guard Duties to the Estonian Navy" (Master's Thesis, Baltic Defence College, 2003); Liivo Laanetu, "Totalforsvarets maritime komponent i Estland" (Graduation Thesis, Royal Danish Naval Academy, 2007), http://lok.org.ee/kirjutised/kirjutis-nr-15/ (accessed 27.6.2014); Taavi Urb, "Cooperation of Coast Guards and Navies in Baltic Sea Region" (Graduation Thesis, Staff Course of Baltic Naval Officers, 2011), http://lok.org.ee/kirjutised/kirjutis-nr-14/ (accessed 27.6.2014); Ott Laanemets, "Milleks meile merevägi?" Eesti Päevaleht, 19.12.2008, http://www.epl.ee/artikkel/452781 (accessed 27.6.2014); Ott Laanemets, "Merepimedusega löödud," *Postimees*, 15.5.2010, http://arvamus.postimees.ee/263085/ott-laanemets-merepimedusega-loodud/ (accessed 27.6.2014).

[3] Mati Õun, Hannes Walter, Peedu Sammalsoo, *Võitlused Läänemerel 1918–1919: Suurbritannia ja Eesti laevastik Vabadussõjas* (Tallinn: Olion, 2003), 13–19.

[4] Mati Strauss, Jaak Pihlak, Ain Krillo, *Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid. Register* (Viljandi: Viljandi Muuseum 2004), register.

The contribution of the pilots and those who trawled for mines can be explained with the frequently used example of the doubts of Commander Sir Edwin Alexander-Sinclair about whether sending his warships to the Gulf of Finland was even possible after the first ships hit mines in December 1918.[5]

Both the politicians and the general public gave a lot of attention to naval defence until the occupation of Estonia in 1940. Data pertaining to the Navy were some of the most protected state secrets.[6]

Naval defence has always been extremely important in securing Estonia's independence due to the country's geopolitical location.

First steps of naval defence re-establishment

Historians and navy veterans were the first to suggest the **re-establishment** of naval defence. There were many persons involved in maritime affairs among the founding members of the Estonian Academic Military History Society established by the Estonian National Maritime Museum in 1988, and they were the first to start promoting the history of Estonia's maritime affairs and navy. Naval warfare historian Mati Õun was selected the chairman of the society. The first biggest initiative of the society was the organisation of reclaiming the historical icebreaker Suur Tõll from the Russian Baltic Fleet in the same year.[7] Many patriotic Estonian men who cared about national defence joined it in the first years. The first Defence Ministers Ülo Uluots, Hain Rebas and Enn Tupp were members of the society. Roland Leit became the first Commander of the Estonian Navy.

The people who next got actively involved in naval defence issues were navy veterans, whose first public meeting was held on the 16th of

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[5] Õun, Walter, Sammalsoo, *Võitlused Läänemerel*, 29–36; Reigo Rosenthal, *Laidoner-väejuht: Johan Laidoner kõrgema operatiivjuhi ja strateegia kujundajana Eesti Vabadussõjas* (Tallinn: Argo, 2008), 51–52.

[6] Ivo Juurvee, *Rääkimine hõbe, vaikimine kuld. Riigisaladuse kaitse Eesti Vabariigis 1918–1940* (Tallinn: SE&JS, 2013), 225–232.

[7] Mati Õun, *Eesti Akadeemiline Sõjaajaloo Selts. Esimesed 20 aastat* (Tallinn: Sentinel, 2008), 5–6.

April 1991 at the Maritime Museum. The Estonian Assembly of Sailors considers this its birthday. The decision to establish the Guild of Estonians Who Served in the Finnish Navy was made at the meeting of the Estonian volunteers who fought in the Finnish Navy held on the 19th of October 1991,[8] and Ants Vaadre was elected its chairman. These three associations worked actively on the re-establishment of naval defence, published articles in the media, wrote memos to the authorities and met with several leading Estonian officials. The anniversary of the Estonian Navy was publicly celebrated for the first time in post-war Estonia on the 24th of November 1991 in the Old Town Music House. Director General of the Border Guard Board Andrus Öövel and member of the Assembly of Sailors Edgar Haavik spoke to the attendees.[9]

Takeover of submarine Lembit from the Soviet Union Baltic Fleet Museum

The first meeting of the management board of the Guild of Estonians Who Served in the Finnish Navy was held on the 14th of March 1992. The second item on the agenda of the meeting was the takeover of the Pirita-based submarine Lembit from the recipient of two Orders of the Red Banner, the Baltic Fleet Museum of the USSR.[10] Letters were written to Prime Minister Tiit Vähi and, on the 28th of March, also to the Government of the Republic requesting support for the takeover of the submarine and

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[8] In Estonia, they are called 'soomepoisid' (the Finnish Boys) and they were a group of *ca* 3,500 Estonians who served in the Finnish army during the Second World War. They also include the Estonians who served in the Finnish Navy from 1941–1944 and formed *ca* 10% of the staff of the Finnish Navy at the time.

[9] Jaak Sammet, "Eesti mereväeveteranid tulevad taas kokku," *Rahva Hääl*, 17.11.1991; Ants Vaadre, *Mereväepoiste tagakambri meenutusi* (Tallinn: EVG Print, 2010), 88–91.

[10] Two modern submarines, *Kalev* and *Lembit*, were purchased for the Estonian Navy from the United Kingdom in 1937. Both submarines were included in the Baltic Fleet of the Soviet Union after Estonia was occupied in 1940. *Kalev* perished in the Second World War. Lembit survived the war and was exhibited in the Baltic Fleet Museum in Tallinn in 1979. See: Ragnar Kokk, *Eesti Merejõudude allveelaevad ja allveelaevnikud* (Tartu: Kaitseväe Ühendatud Õppeasutused, 2006).

Former sailors of pre-war Estonian Navy and Estonians who had been serving in the Finnish Navy during the World War II on a meeting in the Estonian Maritime Museum (21st of April 1991). Erich Tarkpea/ETA/Estonian Film Archives

giving it to the Estonian Maritime Museum. On the 10th of April the Prime Minister signed Order of the Government no, 169-k: the Estonian Maritime Museum had to take over the submarine Lembit, which used to belong to the Navy of the Republic of Estonia from 1937–1940, from the Baltic Fleet Museum on the basis of the Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia of the 23rd of January 1992 "Declaration of the buildings, structures, armament, combat equipment, gear and other assets of the armed forces of the former Soviet Union located in the territory of the Republic of Estonia as ownership of Estonia".

After the meeting of the Assembly of Sailors and the employees of the Maritime Museum with the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces Colonel Ants Laaneots, the latter separated eight armed men under the leadership of Lieutenant Alar Laneman from the Headquarters Company, and

with their support, the submarine was taken over on the 28th of April.[11] Ants Vaadre later gave a colourful description of the takeover of *Lembit* to reporter of Eesti Raadio Lembit Lauri.[12] The flag of Estonia was hoisted on the submarine and a watch-keeping duty was organised.[13] The visual observation of the movement of the vessels of the Baltic Fleet on the Tallinn roadstead and in the basin of the Pirita Harbour started on the initiative of Soviet reserve naval officer Vladimir Koppelman. All of these activities were coordinated with the DFH and the observation data were also sent to them. In his letter to Defence Minister Ülo Uluots, Koppelman reported that in order to make visual observation more effective, three seamen and a non-commissioned officer should start serving on the ship, and he could teach them how to signal as well as about artillery. The gun was being repaired at the time and the commander felt that it could be used to defend the Estonian vessels at the port during the departure of the ships of the Baltic Fleet of the USSR.[14] At first, it was still uncertain that there was going to be no retaliation for the takeover, as there were incidents at night, incl. shooting. This is why strengthening security was discussed by the Border Guard Administration as well as among the members of the Defence League. A border guard boat stood by the opposite bank of the Pirita River for some time, and men took turns to be on night watch.[15]

On the 7th of July 1993, the 57th anniversary of the launch of submarines *Lembit* and *Kalev*, the Commander of the Defence Forces (hereinafter the CDF) General Aleksander Einseln thanked the crew of *Lembit* for their exemplary service and ordered the hoisting of the "pennant of senior (captain) on the roadstead".[16] On the 21st of November 1993 when the 75th anniversary of the Estonian Navy was celebrated on the premises

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[11] Vaadre, *Mereväepoiste tagakambri meenutusi*, 91–92.

[12] Kirjutamata memuaare. Soome mereväes teeninud eestlased. Recording no ASCDR-2318, editor Lembit Lauri, aired on 11 September 2004, http://arhiiv.err.ee/vaata/kirjutamata-memuaare-kirjutamata-memuaare-soome-merevaes-teeninud-eestlased (accessed 27.6.2014).

[13] Reet Naber, "Allveelaeval Lembit heisati Eesti mereväe lipp," *Meremees* 16, 13.4.1994.

[14] Letter of Vladimir Koppelman to Ülo Uluots, 27.8.1992, KVPSA K-13.

[15] Peeter Ivask, Peedu Sammalsoo to the author on 10 October 2013.

[16] Directive of the CDF no 11 of 7 January 1993, KVPSA K-12.

of the Assembly of Officers of the Border Guard Board, the widow, son and daughter of the former electrician of the submarine, Petty Officer 1st Class Rudolf Lepand (1908–1942) handed over the flag and jack of Lembit, which the family had hidden during the Soviet occupation, to the Estonian Maritime Museum.[17] According to the directive issued by Captain (N) Roland Leit, the Commander of the recently established navy, on the 1st of August 1994, submarine *Lembit* was given the number '1' in the Register of Ships of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Estonia and it was permitted to use the flag of the Estonian Navy from the 2nd of August.[18]

Start of the naval units in the Defence League

The Defence League also started establishing its naval units in the beginning of the 1990s. The later infamous voluntary light infantry company (*Jäägrikompanii*) was to become the coastal defence unit of Estonia. Pärnu County, Lääne County, Tallinn and Tartu County districts were the most active in the establishment of the naval units.

The first action by the members of the Defence League was the takeover of two boats of the former Soviet border guard troops. Namely, the Russian border guards had sold two Zhuk-class patrol boats to public limited company Favora at the end of 1991. The National Defence and Border Guard Board was the only one interested in the boats, and it confiscated and sealed the boats in expectation of the free transfer of military assets to Estonia.[19] The basis for this was the resolution of the Supreme Council, which prohibited purchase and sale transactions with Russian army units, as their assets had been declared the ownership of the state of Estonia. The boats were not guarded and the seals didn't really hold anyone back, so the boats were pretty badly plundered by the end of the summer.

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[17] Ants Pärna, "Lipp on alles," *Meremees,* 21.12.1993.

[18] Directive of the Navy Commander no 4, 1.8.1994, MVSA M-K-3.

[19] Madli Vitismann, "Ostaks õige kahuri?" *Meremees,* 4.2.1992.

As there were rumours that the boats were going to be sold abroad, the Defence Initiative Centre[20] had the idea to take over the boats and use them for training. Operation Patrol Boat was commenced at Miidurand on the 8th of June 1992. Armed members of the Defence League from the Pärnu County, Lääne County and Tartu County districts plus the members from Tallinn gathered there. They were positioned at the harbour to defend the perimeter, on the tug *Sõru* and a boat that were at the harbour. The head of the operation was Chief of the Lääne District of the Defence League Margus Järve, and Chief of the Hiiu Subdistrict Ülo Tuisk was responsible for the sea phase. Captain Lembit Loot towed the boats to the Rohuküla roadstead under a guard of armed men. One of the boats stayed by the quay in Rohuküla, the other boat was taken to Orjaku harbour in Hiiumaa.[21] The flag of the Naval Units was hoisted for the first time at the ceremony held on the Bürgermeister holm in Haapsalu on the 16th of September. The boat was named Edgar.[22] The takeover was bold and demonstrative, and its main organiser Margus Järve was named the 'First Pirate of Estonia' by the people.[23]

The boat was repaired and taken out to sea a couple of times, but it was then left idle due to the lack of fuel. It was handed over to the navy on the 14th of June 1994. However, it never took to the sea again. The other boat was somewhat more fortunate. After the requisition, it was named Erika and towed to Pärnu. In November 1993 the boat was given to the Department 7 (Navy Department) of the DFH. In the beginning of 1994 the first navy conscripts were referred to the vessel and repairs also commenced.[24] The Navy's auxiliary vessel *Ahti* towed the boat from

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[20] The National Defence Initiative Centre was established in 1991 on the order of the Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Estonia (in exile) in duties of the President Heinrich Mark (the exile government stopped operating in October 1992 as the constitutional Riigikogu and President of the Republic stepped into office). It was a military structure that dealt with the development of the national defence concept, etc. It operated partly with the Defence League. It attempted to assume the role of the organiser of Estonia's military defence.

[21] Report of the Chief of Staff of the Lääne District of the Estonian Defence League Ülo Tuisk to the National Defence Committee of the Supreme Council, 12.6.1992, KVPSA K-13.

[22] Anneli Ammas, "Edgar õnnistati ja talle heisati lipp," *Lääne Elu,* 19.9.1992.

[23] Andres Raid, *Kui Eesti oli kodusõja lävel* (Tallinn: Eesti Ajalehed, 2010), 81–85.

[24] Directive no 63 of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces of 9 March 1994, KVPSA.

Hoisting the Estonian flag on the naval vessel Edgar (19th of September 1992). Arvo Tarmula/Estonian Film Archives

Pärnu to Tallinn on the 2nd of May 1994. On the 20th of September 1994 it was officially named *Grif* and given the bow number A-402.[25] The boat was repaired, but the electricity generator burnt out during the first time it was tested. The faults kept recurring and Grift was soon hoisted on the quay of the Mine Harbour, where it remained until its transfer to the Maritime Museum.[26]

Another thing that must be mentioned when the establishment of the naval units is discussed is the restoration of the naval unit of the Pärnu County District of the Defence League on the initiative of Peeter Müürsoo in June 1992. This unit grew into one of the biggest of the naval units of the Defence League with more than 400 members registered by 1994.[27]

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[25] Directive of the Chief of Staff no 11 of 20 September 1994, MVSTA M-K-7.

[26] Reet Naber, "Mereväe algusaastad," – *Jälle kakskümmend aastat mereväge: Ülevaateid ja meenutusi. Esimene raamat*. Koostajad Kalev Konso ja Reet Naber (Tartu: Kaitseväe Ühendatud õppeasutused, 2014), 22–26.

[27] Kalle Ojaste, "KL Pärnumaa Malev," – *Eesti eest! Pilguheit kaitseliidu lähiminevikku 1988–2008*, peatoimetaja Merike Jürjo (Tallinn: Kuma, 2008); Peeter Müürsoo to the author.

In August 1993 the Ruhnu Island Group of the members of Defence League of the Pärnu County District started guarding the barracks on the island to prevent the state's assets from being plundered and destroyed, as they were needed for the development of the sea surveillance and defence systems. The Staff of the Ruhnu Group was set up there, and the establishment of the radio communication centre started.[28] The naval unit of the Port of Tallinn was restored on the 2nd of December 1994 when the Commander of the Defence League named the Naval Unit of the Tallinn District the successor of the pre-war Port of Tallinn Naval Unit.[29] The Naval Unit of Muhu commenced its operations in 1996.

The men from Tartu also showed initiative. The Inland Naval Unit, which had 37 members in 1997, was established by the Tartu District on the 29th of March 1995. Tartu City Government had the tugs *Ahti* and *Baikal*, which were renamed *Tarbatu* and *Vaike*, taken to the subdistrict. *Tarbatu* was repaired and it assisted during the construction work on Kärevere Bridge. The vessels were rented out in 1997 and later sold.[30]

Estonian Maritime Administration establishes coastal defence

The organisation of Estonian maritime affairs first started in the area of government of the Minister of Transport, still formally in Soviet times. Namely, everything that concerned maritime affairs, including the activities of the Estonian State Shipping Company, were under the central management and strict control of the USSR Maritime Ministry. The sea transport workgroup of the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR started operating on the 10th of October 1989. On the 1st of December, the Transport Committee adopted the resolution on the formation of the

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[28] Report of the Chief of Pärnu County District of the Defence League Peeter Müürsoo to the Commander of Defence Forces, 18.8.1993.

[29] Reet Naber, Kuno Peek, "Meredivisjon," – *Kaitseliit Tallinnas 1917–2010: juubeliraamat sõnas ja pildis*, peatoimetaja Merike Jürjo (Tallinn: Kuma, 2010), 125.

[30] Taivo Kirm, "KL Tartu Malev," – *Eesti eest! Pilguheit kaitseliidu lähiminevikku 1988–2008*, peatoimetaja Merike Jürjo (Tallinn: Kuma, 2008), 212, 235.

National Maritime Administration. The Estonian Maritime Administration (EMA) was established on the 16th of January 1990, and its statutes were approved on the 29th of April 1990. The primary task of the EMA was to explain on what different levels maritime economy was an important area of activity and that the revenues it generates are important for the entire state. The newly established Administration had to resolve issues concerning the sea border of Estonia, the establishment of the Estonian Ship Register, the work of ports and the preparation of the documents of seamen as well as cooperation with international maritime organisations. The four most important divisions formed in the course of the work were the Administrative, Maritime Safety, Coast Guard and Lighthouse and Hydrography Divisions.[31] On the 31st of January 1992 Estonia became a member of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). In June the same year, the Riigikogu adopted the "Estonian Merchant Shipping Code".[32] On the 13th of July 1992 the Government of the Republic of Estonia approved the "On Shipping on the Territorial and Inland Waters of the Republic of Estonia".[33]

One of the most complicated tasks of the EMA was the development of the hydrography division, which is extremely important for the state both in the development of merchant shipping as well as from the military aspect. The Chief Administration of Navigation and Oceanography of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR wanted to enter into an agreement that would have left the organisation of maritime safety in Estonia under its administration for at least another ten years. They demanded huge amounts of money for transferring the materials and data to the Estonian authorities. The goal of the Maritime Administration, however, was to take over the hydrography of the territorial waters of Estonia by the end of 1992. Director General of the Estonian Maritime Administration Nathan Tõnisson already went on his first work visit to St Petersburg at the end

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[31] Kalle Pedak, "Eesti Veeteede Amet," – *Eesti Laevanduse Aastaraamat 1995*, toim. Enn Kreem (Tallinn: Sekstant, 1996), 7–8.

[32] "Kaubandusliku meresõidu koodeks," RT, 1991, 46, 577, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/30363 (accessed 27.6.2014).

[33] "Laevanduse kohta Eesti Vabariigi territoriaal- ja sisemerel," RT 1992, 33, 439, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/29651 (accessed 27.6.2014).

of November 1991. The situation on the sea routes was quickly becoming dangerous. Several lighthouses had been turned off in the Pärnu region in summer 1992, and getting to the Port of Pärnu at night was therefore difficult. Negotiations about transferring the assets of and responsibility for the Tallinn hydrography region started in September 1992. The agreement was signed at the level of the military issues workgroups of experts and delegations on the 30th of September 1992. Commander of the Russian Baltic Fleet Admiral Vladimir Jegorov arrived in Tallinn on the 3rd of August 1993 to prepare for the visit of Commander of the Russian Navy Feliks Gromov. The agreement about the handover of the hydrography equipment, structures and systems by the 1st of September 1993 was signed during this visit. The final deadline for the removal of the Tallinn Naval Base of the Baltic Fleet from Estonia was agreed at the same time. Guaranteeing maritime safety in the coastal waters of Estonia was the task of the state of Estonia from the 1st of October 1993; this task was performed by the EMA. The representatives of the EMA took part in the work of the IMO for the first time in autumn 1993. In 1994, Estonia became a member of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) and in 1997 it became a member of the International Hydrographic Organisation. There two organisations played an important role in the fact that hydrography and navigation aids were transferred to Estonia relatively fast, even before the departure of the Russian troops.[34]

According to the Merchant Shipping Code, the functions of the Coast Guard Division of the EMA include rescuing human lives and the organisation of the elimination of pollution on the sea, participation in the supervision of the requirements for fishery and environmental protection as well as the use of the economic zone and continental shelf. The Coast Guard Coordination Centre was established for the collection and transmittal of information. The EMA had 33 different vessels by the end of 1994.[35]

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[34] Peeter Peetsalu, *Heitlike aegade tuules: Veeteede Ameti ajalugu* (Tallinn: Olion, 2008), 91–92.

[35] Pedak, "Eesti Veeteede Amet," 8.

Half-sunken Russian military vessels in Paldiski Northern Port (April 1993). Harald Leppikson/Rahva Hääl/Estonian Film Archives

The seriousness of the EMA about naval defence is illustrated by the letter about the draft of the naval defence concept sent by Director General Sea Captain Tarmo Ojamets to Defence Minister Hain Rebas on the 8th of February 1993.[36] The letter contained a thorough analysis of issues related to national defence and maritime affairs. Most of these options are still as topical today. It was recommended to add the environmental risk to the security risk described in the draft. Back then, it was already a reasonable fear that, considering the deteriorating condition of the Baltic Sea, every event of pollution, not to speak of massive events of pollution, threatened to cause an ecological catastrophe that the Rescue Service could not eliminate alone, and the help of the units of Defence Forces would also be required. The open view of national defence is illustrated by the proposal to expand the staff of the Defence Forces with the air force, a fleet and coast guard, and to change the part of the EMA's fleet that

[36] Letter from Director General of the Estonian Maritime Administration Tarmo Ojamets to Defence Minister Hain Rebas of 8 February 1993, KVPSA K-14.

worked on guaranteeing maritime safety, i.e. the fleets of the Lighthouse, Hydrography and Pilotage Division. Suggesting the use of the speed boats that were subordinate to the chiefs of the army brigades as the watercraft of the Defence Forces in the draft concept is mentioned as another weakness from the viewpoint of naval defence. Ojamets emphasised that the only thing that can guarantee Estonia has any kind of seapower is an independent navy that could consist of one or two frigates or corvettes, two or three torpedo or missile boats, two or three fast patrol boats, two or three minesweepers and one tanker – supply vessel, plus landing ships for the coastal defence brigade. This vision was of course out of this world considering the means of a small country, but if treated as a description of the actual navy needs of the state, it actually made sense. This was the first time that the importance of having minesweepers in securing maritime safety during peacetime was emphasised. The fact that access to Estonian ports could be obstructed with mines in the event of an armed conflict was also raised as an important threat. The development of the coast guard was separately discussed. Its tasks were to coordinate and organise the rescue of human lives and eliminate pollution in the Baltic Sea, inspect adherence to the state's law in inland and territorial waters and the economic zone, and participate in national defence against armed violence. It was also recommended that it should control the sea border with the units of the Defence Forces located on the coast.

Despite the lack of support from previous governments, relative divisions (see p. 152–153) had already been formed in the EMA. The coast guard at first had three ships in its use, which allowed it to start having more of a say in the performance of the tasks considered to belong to the Border Guard Board, Customs Board and the Marine Inspectorate. A positive example cited was the successful elimination of the pollution created by the approximately 100 tons of heavy fuel oil that poured into the sea from the tanker Kihnu after she got stranded in Kopli Bay in 1993.

Ojamets also suggested that the ships administered by the EMA must be treated as auxiliary vessels of the navy that will be armed if necessary. As a leftover from the Soviet era, the students of the Estonian Maritime Education Centre also had to pass a military course, which at the level

Estonian Border Guard is taking over Russian naval installations on Naissaar Island (August 1993). Harald Leppikson/Estonian Film Archives

of ship leadership corresponded to the training of navy reserve officers. Graduates acquired the lowest ranking of naval officer (Second Lieutenant in the USSR). It was also suggested that working on the EMA's ships could be made equivalent to serving in the Navy. The management of the EMA warned the Minister about the uncontrolled development of the Defence Forces and Border Guard, as it could lead to the emergence of two armed forces: one of them in the area of administration of the Ministry of Defence and the other in the Ministry of the Interior. "The second one is planning to develop three armed services: the army, the navy and the air force, whilst the first is rather vague about the need for navy and air force (according to the draft concept), or even denies it. The state can hardly sustain the double economic burden this would create. A large part of the present border guard units could be added to the Defence Forces; the naval ships (Navy) and air force would be parts of the Defence Forces. This would end the abnormal situation whereby the majority of

the Defence Forces are actually not under the leadership of the Ministry of Defence or the DFH and national defence is organised in the area of administration of two ministries."[37]

The EMA submitted the draft regulation "About the Estonian Coast Guard" to the Government on the 30th of March 1993. An explanatory memorandum about the main trends in the development of the coastal defence and an overview of the work performed with the Maritime Administration of Sweden since 1991 were enclosed with it. The draft stipulated that the majority of the tasks within the competence of the state on the sea and on lakes Peipus, Lämmijärv and Pskov would be performed by the EMA in close cooperation with the navy. Many may have been scared by the clause that the Border Guard Board had to transfer all armed vessels, coastal radar stations and the Navy Department to the DFH and unarmed vessels to the EMA by the 1st of June 1993.[38]

In reality, some tasks and fleet of the coast guard were transferred to the Border Guard Board with a Government resolution in 1995. The vessels that were used to abate pollution had to be transferred to the Maritime Inspectorate, which also had its own fleet, fishery protection and patrol boats.[39]

Development of maritime border guarding units

Due to the circumstances, the Border Guard, which had grown from the Estonian Domestic Defence formed by the Ministry of the Interior on the 17th of May 1990, was also forced to start developing its fleet.[40] One of the obligations assumed during the negotiations with the leadership of the Soviet border troops in September 1991 was to organise joint service with

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[37] Response of the EMA to letter of the Ministry of Defence no 81 of 27 January 1993, KVPSA K-14.

[38] Draft Regulation of the Government of the Republic, 30 March 1993; Explanatory Memorandum, 25.3.1993, MVSA F7-k10.

[39] *Eesti Laevaregistrid*, peatoimetaja Andrus Maide (Tallinn: Veeteede Amet, 1995), 124.

[40] Henn Karits, "Mehed, kodu kaitsma!" – *Leegitseval piiril: varipiirist ja sidesõjast vabaduseni 1990–1991*, koost. Henn Karits, Aadu Jõgiaas (Tallinn: Eesti Kodukaitse Ajaloo Selts, 2012), 26.

the Soviet border guards according to the agreement made between the Government of Estonia and the Soviet KGB[41] and to start establishing maritime border guarding units.[42] On the 1st of August 1992 the Russian border guards stopped guarding the northern and western borders of Estonia, and watercraft was therefore required to get the sea border under control.

The border guard boat PVK-001[43] (built in 1968) became the first vessel of the Estonia border guard fleet. It was a gift received from the Coast Guard of Sweden in April 1992 – the vessel was presented at a ceremony held in Karlskrona. The boat performed its first important task, greeting the Swedish royal couple on the ship during their visit to Estonia, in April 1992. In 1992 the border guard fleet received three patrol boats from Finland and then two more boates from Sweden in 1993. PVL-105 *Torm*, which was received from Norway, was also given to the border guard.[44] It was initially meant for the navy, and since the same Storm-class fast patrol boats had also been given to Latvian and Lithuanian Navy, the Estonian Navy saw the opportunity to develop a joint naval squadron on the basis of the same type of boats for participation in the NATO PfP (Partnership for Peace) training events. Despite the numerous requests sent by the Commander of the Navy to the Commander of the Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence, it was still given to the border guard.[45]

The Maritime Department was formed in the Border Guard on the 1st of June 1992, and the first specialist, Commander Senior Grade Ants Toomepuu was commissioned on the 28th of August. His task was to develop the concept for controlling the sea border, and he became the first commander of the Single Squadron of Border Guard Boats constituted on the 1st of February 1994. The Single Squadron was in charge of all bigger border guard boats and speed boats; its tasks included guaranteeing

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41 In the Soviet Union border guards were subordinate to the KGB.

42 Vabariigi Valitsuse korraldus nr 299-k, 9.9.1991 komisjoni moodustamise kohta piirikaitse ja tolli Eesti Vabariigi võimkonda allutamise küsimuste lahendamiseks.

43 *PVK – piirivalvekaater* (border guard boat).

44 *PVL – piirivalvelaev* (border guard ship).

45 Commander of the Navy R. Leit to Commander of the Defence Forces Aleksander Einseln on 16 November 1994; Commander of the Navy Roland Leit to Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence Tarmo Mölder on 17 November 1994, KVPSA.

the completion of the crews of watercraft, the organisation of in-service training, the planning and organisation of repairs and maintenance of watercraft, and supplying the craft with fuel and lubricants, spare parts and other necessary equipment.

The Border Guard College started training marine border guards in the building of the Maritime College in 1992. The first group referred to the navy was also trained there.[46] The fleet started growing, especially after Sea Captain Tarmo Kõuts became the Director General of the Border Guard Board in June 1993. The border guard development concept was officially approved in 1993. The State Borders Act and the Border Guard Act were adopted by the Riigikogu in 1994. This legislation also determined the tasks of border guards on the sea.

The Russian landing barge PVL-104 *Tiir* and two boats were purchased in 1994 to maintain a connection with the islands. Finland donated three border guard boats and 11 motor boats. The border guard boats PVL-105 *Maru* and PVL-107 *Kõu* were received from Finland in 1995. The EMA transferred three boats in the same year. Training boat PVL-108 Linda was received in 1996 and PVL-109 *Valvas* was received from the US Coast Guard in 1997. The construction of new vessels in Estonia also started on the initiative of the Board of Border Guard: PVL-103 *Pikker* was built in 1995.[47] Ice class border guard boat PVK-010 was built in 1997 and PVL-111 *Vapper* in 2000. The fast growth of the fleet increased the need for qualified seamen. The first post-war course for Estonian naval officers was therefore launched in 1996 and most of the graduates went on to serve as border guards.[48] The Border Guard was also made responsible for the organisation of search and rescue in Estonian waters from 1995. This meant that in addition to guarding the sea border, the border guard vessels also had to be ready to save human lives at sea and on transboundary water bodies. The obligation to carry out surveillance to detect marine

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[46] Tarmo Kõuts, "Eesti Merepiirivalve," – *Eesti Laevanduse Aastaraamat 1995*, toim. Enn Kreem (Tallinn: Sekstant, 1996), 46–48.

[47] *Register of Border Guard Boats* (Border Guard Board, Marine Department: Tallinn, 1997).

[48] *Tallinn: entsüklopeedia 2*, peatoim. Jaan Tamm (Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 2004), 64.

First vessel of the Estonian Border Guard fleet, border guard boat PVK-001, built in 1968 and donated by Swedish Coast Guard arriving in Tallinn (15th of April 1992). Tiit Veermäe/ETA/Estonian Film Archives

pollution and to inform the Maritime Inspectorate was also assigned to the Board of the Border Guard. Border guards also took part in field training in addition to their everyday obligations. The organisation of the trilateral sea rescue training of Finland, Russia and Estonia started in 1995.[49]

Vice Admiral Kõuts had a very positive opinion of the Border Guard of the first years: "Back then, the Border Guard was the best organised defence structure in the country, as the creation of the Defence Forces had only begun and there was nothing they could do anyway due to the presence of the Russian troops. [---] Our Border Guard was actually strong at the time as an organisation, as they had many enthusiasts in their personnel who were literally ready to jump to the defence of our country. Andrus Öövel had done a great job. We managed to motivate the staff to

[49] Tarmo Kõuts, Ants Toomepuu, "Eesti piirivalvelaevastiku arendamisest ja rahvusvahelisest koostööst. Ülevaade" (manuscript, Tallinn, 1997), copy in author's possession.

operate as one team back then. The selection of staff and career management created a national defence attitude and the mood was extremely positive."[50] Let me add that the later commanders of the navy, Captain (Navy) Jaan Kapp and Commander Senior Grade Ahti Piirimägi gained their first leadership experience when serving in the Border Guard.

Concepts of re-establishment of the Estonian Navy

All other authorities had started to operate actively by the time the restoration of the Estonian Navy started. As a result of this, the navy faced bigger problems in finding staff, funding and equipment, including watercraft. The main reason why no attention was given to the establishment of the navy at first was its high cost (as is the case with the air force), but Estonian society had also become alienated from maritime affairs during the years of occupation.

On the 18th of March 1993 the Chief of Staff Colonel Ants Laaneots sent a long memorandum to President Lennart Meri, asking for his opinion of the problems that had emerged in the naval defence of the Republic of Estonia. He explained the situation where Estonia like every other independent country has the obligation to perform national defence and maritime safety tasks. He expressed his disapproval of the fact that whilst the Coast Guard Division of the Maritime Administration had started to perform these tasks, the Border Guard Board was trying to establish its own fleet. His position was that it was essential to create a navy within the composition of the Defence Forces of Estonia, which would perform military tasks and consist of two main parts: coastal defence units and a fleet. Laaneots emphasised that a system consisting of three maritime components would be impractical and expensive. He gave examples of how a civil organisation – a coast guard to which the authority of border police had been granted – performs some of the tasks during peacetime

[50] Velly Roots, Tarmo Kõuts, "Eesti oli, on ja peab jäämagi mereriigiks!" *Kultuur ja Elu* nr 2 (2008), http://kultuur.elu.ee/ke492_tarmo.htm (accessed 1.12.2013).

in Sweden, the US and many other Western countries. The coast guard cooperates closely with the navy and the latter only acts in the event the coast guard cannot cope on its own. He found that the creation of such a system (coast guard + navy) would also be practical in Estonia, because it would allow the state to save on resources and make operative management simpler.[51]

The proposals submitted by the heads of the Defence Forces and the Maritime Administration have been discussed in different commissions since 1994.[52] Unfortunately, this topic is still high on the agenda, as no solution has been found to the problem of combining the functions of national fleets and coastal bases.

Colonel Laaneots submitted the vision of the DFH about the navy at the meeting about the development of the main positions of the defence concept in February 1993: he mentioned the formation of coastal defence units as the most burning issue, which should be followed by the completion of the navy with patrol boats, minesweepers, battleships, speed boats and transport vessels. The coast guard should be made responsible for the sea border guard tasks, where a civil structure would operate with the vessels of the navy, without a separate border guard fleet. However, the situation on the sea border back then was such that the Border Guard with its four vessels performed practically all of the obligations of an independent state on the sea.[53]

The search for people began as naval issues were becoming increasingly more important. This was difficult, as there were few qualified specialists in Estonia and the majority of nationally minded specialists were already working in the EMA or the Border Guard.

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[51] Letter from the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces Colonel Ants Laaneots to the President of the Republic of Estonia of 18 March 1993, KVPSA K-5/153.

[52] For example, Minutes no 65 of Government of the Republic Session, 15.9.1995: [---] "Minister of the Interior Heiki Arike and the Ministry of Roads and Communications, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Defence are required, considering the opinions expressed during this Government session, to study in depth the issues related to the use of vessels belonging to the authorities operating in the areas of government of the ministries and to make the relevant proposals to the Government". [---].

[53] Presentation by Colonel Laaneots on 19 March 1993, MVSA F7-k10.

Lieutenant Senior Grade Edgar Haavik started serving as the head of the Planning Department of the Ministry of Defence on the 22nd of June 1993. Relatively soon, on the 30th of June 1993, he was appointed the Senior Officer of Department 6 of the DFH and, from the 1st of July, the acting commander of Department 6 with the directive of the Commander of the Defence Forces.[54] On the same day Igor Schvede was commissioned as the Senior Officer and Chief Naval Armament Specialist of Department 6. The newly recruited naval personnel had two chairs and a table in the building of the DFH when they started their job of building up the navy.[55] Their first task was to develop the necessary plans. They requested that the Ministry of Defence transfer the military base and coastal base with quays at the address Küti 17, Tallinn, to them[56] and intended to station a marine unit and the guard unit of the port there.[57] Taking over the Paldiski Northern Port was also planned in the beginning. The Commandant of the Paldiski Northern Port was appointed in January 1994. The lack of resources did not allow the navy to start using these sites and the Commander of the Navy suggested that they be given to private companies.[58] Consequently, the Paldiski Northern Port was given to the Paldiski City Government in 1995. By June, it was clear that it was also impossible to create the planned coastal defence units any time soon due to the economic situation of the state.

Vessels were the next concern.

The Statutes of the Register of Ships of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Estonia were approved on the 30th of September 1993. All of the ships and other watercraft for the defence of the Republic of Estonia were those whose total length was 12 m and over and which belonged to the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the Defence League were to be entered in the list.[59]

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[54] Directive of the Chief of Staff of 2 July 1993 no 154, service record, KVPSA.

[55] Author's interview with Captain (N) Igor Schvede.

[56] The exposition of the Seaplane Harbour of the Maritime Museum is now located there.

[57] Letter from the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence of 18 August 1993, KVPSA K-5/524.

[58] Letter from the Commander of the Navy to the Commander of the Defence Forces of 22 June 1994, MVSA M-K-8-1.

[59] Directive of the CDF no 21 of 30 September 1993, KVPSA K-13.

The first one dealt with was auxiliary vessel *Revalia* (later renamed *Laine*), whose fate had been very complicated. *Revalia*, which had been rebuilt from a fishing trawler into a passenger ship, had been withheld by the Finnish coast guard on the 2nd of February 1993, as there were 108 illegal Kurdish refugees onboard. The owners brought the ship back to Estonia. The Ministry of Defence bought it on the 13th of July 1993 and gave it to the Naval Department in September.[60]

Another two remarkable events occurred in November 1993: Government Order 637-k of November on the sale of research vessel Livonia and the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Estonian Navy in the Assembly of Border Guard Officers on the 21st of November. Livonia, which was in the balance sheet of the Marine Institute, was sold as a vessel not needed by the state of Estonia. The Swedish Navy, which bought the vessel in 1996, is still using it, and after its modernisation in 2003, it also took part in operation Atalanta (EUNAVFOR) in the European Union's action against piracy.

Formation of the navy staff

Sea Captain Roland Leit, who had been granted the rank of Captain (Navy) by the President the week before, was called to active service and appointed the Commander of the Estonian Navy on the 1st of February 1994.[61] Captain (N) Leit remembers that the priorities of the re-establishment of the Navy were determined at the first meeting held in the DFH in January: finding the personnel, i.e. officers, non-commissioned officers as well as conscripts; obtaining the vessels for the Navy; finding accommodation for the staff; and studying options for the establishment of a naval base.

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[60] Kalev Konso, *Eesti mereväe sümboolika kataloog 1993–2011 = The symbols and insignia of the Estonian Navy 1993-2011* (Tartu: Kaitseväe Ühendatud Õppeasutused, 2011), 29.

[61] Service record, KVPSA; Roland Leit, "Eesti Mereväe osa Eesti Kaitseväe taasloomises" (manuscript).

Commander Veljo-Harivald Pärli,[62] a former Swedish naval officer whose presence was invaluable for the young Navy, was called to active service and appointed the Chief of Staff of the Navy as of the 21st of April 1994. He compiled the first post-war naval regulations (revised the naval regulations of 1929) and a number of rules required for the organisation of the service. Commander Pärli himself has said that this period in Estonia was one of the most interesting ones in his life, because it was the first time that he could rebuild something and witness the birth of a navy.[63] Lieutenant Senior Grade Haavik had also compiled the development concept of the Navy by 1994. There were five officers, five non-commissioned officers and five conscripts serving in the Navy as of the 1st of March 1994. Fifteen conscripts were transferred from the Single Signal Battalion to the Navy in relation to the completion of the Navy, and they were sent to study in the Tallinn Border Guard College.[64] An agreement was signed with the Border Guard Board for teaching the speciality of ordinary seaman.[65]

A few other men were added to the ranks of navy specialists, and a directive of the Commander of the Defence Forces established the foundation for the formation of the navy and air force on the basis of Departments 6 and 7 of the DFH as independent legal entities with their own seals and insignia. The commanders of these armed services were granted the right to assign the military ranks on non-commissioned officers to members of the Defence Forces, and to issue directives and orders for the organisation of the service of military units and authorities.[66] This directive was complemented by the directive of the Chief of Staff of the 17th of June, which determined the buildings at Erika 13, Tallinn, as the location of the Naval Staff.[67] The Commander of the Navy signed his first directive on the 27th of June, confirming the fact that the Estonian Navy

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62 Service record, KVPSA.

63 Veljo-Harivald Pärli to the author, 5.3.2013.

64 Directive of the Chief of Staff of 28 March 1994, MVSA M-P-6.

65 Agreement between the Border Guard Board and the Defence Forces Headquarters, 5.4.1994, MVSA M-K-8.2.

66 Directive no 24 of the Commander of the Defence Forces of 13 April 1994, KVPSA K-13.

67 Directive no 155 of the Chief of Staff of 17 June 1994, KVPSA K-13.

had been established and that it consisted of the following units: leadership, Naval Staff, Paldiski Northern Port, auxiliary vessel *Ahti*, auxiliary vessel *Revalia*, patrol boat *Grif* and the mine countermeasures group. There were 42 men in total.

A small fleet was beginning to form. The Kingdom of Denmark had given the patrol boat *Mallemukken* to the Defence Forces of Estonia on the 29th of March 1994; it was renamed *Ahti* and entered in the list of naval ships as an auxiliary vessel.[68] On the 1st of September 1994 the two reconnaissance vessels of the former German Democratic Republic, which where a gift from the Federal Republic of Germany and had been preserved for several years, docked at the Mine Harbour, which had been taken over from the representatives of the Baltic Fleet the day before. They were named *Sulev* and *Vambola*. The mineship *Sulev* was repaired, and in summer 1995, it took part in the first joint naval exercise of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania Amber Sea '95. The most important voyage of the vessel was the visit of Prime Minister Mart Laar to Sweden in August 1999. This was the first official visit on a warship after the war. A small auxiliary boat, *Mardus*, was also obtained from Denmark in December.[69]

A ceremonial formation was held and the flag of Estonian Navy was hoisted at the Mine Harbour on the 1st of September 1994, the day after it was taken over. Vessels could once again be based at the historical naval harbour. The harbour and buildings left behind by the Russian fleet were in a dire condition and moving the staff took until November. Norwegian company AS Newt lifted out the wreckage that had been sunk in the basin of the harbour, and elimination of the environmental pollution lasted for many years.

Close cooperation with the Latvian and Lithuanian navies also started in 1994 and considerable help was received from the countries that supported us. The establishment of a joint naval squadron was planned from the very beginning to advance our integration with international military structures. In the same year, the first young men were sent to Sweden and

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[68] Directive of the CDF no 2 of 15 April 1994, KVPSA K-13.

[69] Kalev Konso, *Eesti Mereväe sümboolika*, 35–37.

Finland to study the specialty of naval officer. In June 1994 the Estonian naval officers participated for the first time in the largest international naval exercise in the Baltic Region, Baltic Operations (BALTOPS '94), but this time as just observers.

Navy as armed service

The Ministry of Defence sent the "Development Plan of Defence Structures for 1995-1997" to the Defence Forces for review in autumn 1994. The need to start developing the new armed services of the navy and air force was also mentioned in the plan. The need for them was justified as follows:

a) they are extremely operational;
b) they have the function of strengthening other organisations in peacetime and they must be able to protect the state's domestic and foreign policy interests (strengthen the border guard), they can be efficiently used for the promotion of defence policy cooperation (visits, joint exercises), and the state can also use these armed services to demonstrate its presence in one or another area of the region as well as its preparedness to protect its interests;
c) based on the results of the introductory research carried out by the Ministry of Defence, it can be said that the scientific and industrial capacities of Estonia make it possible to arm these services with weapons, which is an effective deterrent of aggression;
d) the establishment of their bases in certain areas will have a positive infrastructural impact;
e) bases have already been allocated to these armed services; their technical condition is such that reconstruction cannot be delayed any further. It must start in 1995; such delays will cost the state dearly both in financial and political terms.[70]

[70] Development Plan of Defence Structures for 1995–1997. Letter of Defence Minister Enn Tuppi no 01-11/1469 of 4 October 1994, MVSA F7-k10.

The structure of the Defence Forces approved by the Government in 1997 prescribed the formation of the Naval Staff, Naval Base and the 1st Naval Squadron.[71] The "Fundamentals of Estonian National Defence" prepared at the time when Andrus Öövel was the Defence Minister and approved by the Riigikogu in May 1996 also provided a stronger foundation for the activities of the Navy by formulating the objectives of its development: prepare the defence of territorial waters, the safety of marine communications, naval infrastructure, and the education and training of naval officers and guarantee them with opportunities to participate in international cooperation. This document also mentions assembling the vessels at the disposal of the Navy, Border Guard and Estonian Maritime Administration into the single system of the Navy and its military preparedness, and training would be inspected by the Commander of the Defence Forces. A joint coastal service had to be created to organise the expedient operations of this system.[72]

In 1997, the Navy obtained the minesweepers *Kalev* and *Olev* from Germany. The agreement for the foundation of the Baltic Naval Squadron (Baltron) of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was signed on the 16th of April 1998. The objective of the cooperation project was to develop the capacity of the seapower of the Baltic States for cooperation in international formations, primarily with NATO units, and to increase their mine-countermeasures capacity. The leading country of the international workgroup was Germany, and the supporting countries were Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. A new era in the life of our Navy had began.

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[71] Vabariigi Valitsuse määrus nr 92 "Kaitseväe struktuuri ja paiknemise kinnitamine," 29.4.1997, RT I 1998, 28, 365.

[72] "Eesti riigi kaitsepoliitika põhisuundade heakskiitmine," 7.5.1996, RT I 1996, 33, 684, MVSA M-K-10.

Summary

Several authorities were working in parallel in the establishment of Estonia's naval defence. This led to the situation where many important issues have still not been resolved to this day due to limited material and human resources and the insufficient capacity to perform. This lack of cohesion was an obstacle to the modernisation of the fleet, and the state counted largely on foreign aid.[73] Many problems that were topical in the days when our naval defence was created are still up in the air. We're still 'struck by sea blindness'.[74]

In conclusion, I would like to quote the opinion of General Laaneots of the first years in the development of our naval defence and of the present situation: "Estonia is a maritime nation with its larger number of islands and a strategically (both militarily and economically) important transit gate between Russia and Western Europe, i.e. in a way, Estonia also performs the functions of border defence in the interests of NATO and the European Union.

Looking from the angle of NATO, the Baltic States are a peninsula difficult to defend from the viewpoint of guaranteeing their security, as they're separated from Northern and Western Europe by the Baltic Sea and therefore only have a narrow, 70-km land connection via Poland between the Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus. The only and the primary threat to the three Baltic States is Russia, which has declared that restoring the control of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet territories as its main task. The Russians keep practicing closing this corridor during their military exercises (such as Zapad in 2009). The military aid of NATO can reach Estonia mainly by air and sea, which is difficult, as it requires keeping the marine communication lines open. For this purpose we need the capacity for mine countermeasures and the defence of marine communications, which are purely military tasks. The activities

[73] Reet Naber, "Eesti riigilaevastik," – *Eesti Laevanduse Aastaraamat 1998*, toim. Enn Kreem (Tallinn: Sekstant, 1998), 47–50.

[74] Ott Laanemets, "Merepimedusega löödud."

of NATO are a team game; we must be equal *(per capita)* contributors to the team if we want it to defend us. Many countries have one universal national fleet – the Navy, which performs both military as well as maritime border guarding and other maritime security. I know of no opposite examples of where the border guard also performs military duties and is subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior.

Estonia's problem for 20 years now is that we have three national fleets: the Border Guard Board, the Estonian Maritime Administration and the Navy each have one. [---] Sensible small countries have combined them into one and made them universal a long time ago. Even in Latvia, the Navy is the one that deals with maritime border guarding, not to speak of countries like Israel, etc. A single Navy, which would perform the tasks of all of the existing 'fleets', would allow us to react considerably more flexibly to various problems that might occur at sea and considerably cut the state's costs, as only one naval base would be necessary (instead of the present three)."[75]

Despite the harsh verdict of the former Commander of the Defence Forces, the development in the area of naval defence has been remarkable considering that it had to be done from scratch and all we had was good intent.

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[75] General Ants Laaneots to the author on 21 March 2013.

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The Constitution and Interpretation of the Authority Dilemma for the Leadership of the National Defence After Estonia Regained its Independence

Hellar Lill

ABSTRACT

After the restoration of independence in August 1991, Estonia had no national defence, defence capability or capacity for international defence cooperation. The armed forced had to be 'invented'. However, this can be regarded as an advantage, since retraining and reorganising an existing system is usually more difficult. The main principles of national defence were established in Chapter 10 of the Constitution, which was approved in a referendum held in June 1992. This chapter, which was influenced by the presidential constitution of 1937/1938, did not answer the question of whether the Commander of the Defence Forces would be placed under the authority of the President, the parliament or the government. Two voluntary national defence organisations, the Defence League and the Home Guard, which competed with each other, already existed in Estonia when the Defence Forces were established. The Ministry of Defence was established even later. There were fears that subordinating the Commander of the Defence Forces to the government may lead to the politicisation of the army and uneven development due to frequent changes of government. These problems were eased by subordinating the commander to the President – however, this caused tension between the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces Headquarters. The parliament had the right to appoint and remove the Commander of the Defence Forces, but the proposal had to come from the President. This conflict culminated in summer 2000 when the Commander of the Defence Forces was removed as a result of a vote in the Riigikogu, which the President called an issue of civilian control; the removal, as well as the Defence Minister and government keeping their positions, was decided by one vote, allegedly given by accident…

The Constitution was amended in 2011. The President remains the highest leader of national defence, but executive power in the leadership of national defence has been granted to the government.

Introduction

After regaining independence in 1991, Estonia initially lacked any national defence structures and even the basic capacity for self-defence, let alone international defence cooperation. The armed forces of the independent state had to be "reinvented" or built from scratch. This can also be considered an advantage, given that the comprehensive reforming and retraining of an existing system is usually a complicated task. There were no legislations governing defence and no armament, national military personnel, training system or other factors critical to national defence. National defence traditions to be relied upon dated back to the pre-World War II period and were important in terms of conveyance of values, as well as ceremonies and rituals, etc., but not necessarily relevant in the context of building up a defence suitable for a small independent state. Moreover, the nostalgic aspect could even have an inhibitory effect on the organisation of modern national defence.

When the development of national defence was started in Estonia, people had a lot of good will and enthusiasm to get things done, but the relevant skills and knowledge were limited. There was no experience of organising national defence in the country. The principles of national defence were sought to be formulated in Chapter 10 'National Defence' of the Constitution drafted by the Constitutional Assembly and approved by referendum in summer 1992. The Constitution gave rise to a major conflict that affected the development of national defence for two decades after the restoration of independence due to the ambiguous and contradictory wording regarding the leadership of national defence. Simply put, the question was: who is the Commander of the Defence Forces subordinate to?

Following the amendment to the Constitution which was approved by the Parliament in April 2011 and entered into force on the 22nd of July

the same year[1] and by which the problematic provision of the Constitution was changed, it is appropriate to make a brief retrospect of how the problem came into being, what the causes were and how solutions to it were sought, given that all this constituted a separate chapter in the development of national defence in Estonia.

Background

The first years of the development of national defence after Estonia regained its independence have been metaphorically referred to as the period of an "adventure film" or "people's theatre" in which the actors did what they deemed fit to build up the primary defence capacity and counterbalance the foreign troops that were still present in the country. Despite the proposals published in some newspaper articles and set out in official documents (by Rein Helme, Ants Laaneots and Hannes Walter)[2] and the first relevant discussions, Estonia initially lacked an official defence concept or doctrine formulating the principles of national defence. The principles of the defence concept are considered to have been presented for the first time and in the most concise way in the 'National Defence' chapter of the Constitution; the fundamental principles set out there were gradually supplemented in various acts of law on national defence.[3] Thus, the Constitution certainly had a significant impact on the overall national defence-related thinking in subsequent years.

The development of national defence was characterised by an acute shortage of people with relevant knowledge and experience. There were a number of enthusiastic and diligent people from different backgrounds – former Soviet army officers, officers who had served in the armed forces of Western countries, as well as some men with experience from the Estonian Defence Forces in the pre-World War II period, and a few officers

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[1] "Act Amending the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia," *RT* I, 27.4.2011, 1.

[2] See: Hellar Lill, "Eesti riigikaitsepoliitika kujunemisest. Esimesed visioonid 1991–1995," *Akadeemia* 9 (2009), 1740–1751.

[3] Rein Helme, "Uus hüsteeria kaitsekontseptsiooni ümber," *Eesti Aeg*, 30.8.1995.

who had fought in different armies during World War II. In spring 1992, the names of 421 regular officers of Estonian descent were ascertained, 16 of them from Western countries. Around 60 of them were involved in the creation of the Estonian Defence Forces.[4]

The shortage of civilians with an appropriate background and experience was even more acute. Also, the officers were usually servicemen with varying level of training and experience from several different (and mostly large) countries, and thus had to adjust to the national defence of the small independent state. There were no people with knowledge of the higher strategic level, where, figuratively speaking, the state and the army meet. Ants Laaneots, the then Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, has said:[5] "In the early years, the creation and development of the Defence Forces was only possible thanks to the fanatical and often self-sacrificing work of a small number of military enthusiasts".[6]

Formulation of the Constitution's 'National Defence' chapter and reasons for this

"It is with some bewilderment that I recently read in a newspaper that the Prime Minister has taken upon himself the task of governing national defence and has committed to fill the security vacuum with the help of our partner countries. Once again I am forced to recall the simple principle: it is common in Estonia to have one President at a time. Let's draw the line

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[4] Urmet Kook, "Ants Laaneots: rahvuslik ohvitserkond "saab valmis" 10 aasta pärast," *Riigi Kaitse (Eesti Päevaleht)*, 28.9.2004.

[5] General Ants Laaneots was the Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces from 1991–1994 and 1997–1999 and the Commander of the Defence Forces from 2006–2011. He was promoted to Colonel in 1992, Major General in 1998, Lieutenant General in 2008 and General in 2011.

[6] Ants Laaneots, "Eesti Kaitsejõud aastail 1991–2011," – *Kakskümmend aastat taasiseseisvust Eestis, 1991–2011: ettekannete kokkuvõtted teaduskonverentsil "20 aastat taasiseseisvust Eestis, 1991–2011" 20. augustil 2011 Tallinnas = Twenty years of restored statehood in Estonia, 1991–2011: the proceedings of scientific conference "20 years of restored statehood in Estonia, 1991–2011," 20 August 2011, Tallinn*, koostaja ja peatoimetaja Leili Utno (Tallinn: Välis-Eesti Ühing, 2011), 175.

here."[7] It is safe to say that the penultimate sentence of this quotation from 1993, which has even been used in a song, is the best-known statement of President Lennart Meri and its original context is not really remembered or acknowledged – as is often the case with quotations. The quotation is a vivid example of the interpretation problems and disputes concerning the governance of national defence in the 1990s and partly also in the next decade, which directly stemmed from the concept of national defence provided in the Constitution. The distribution of authority for the governance of national defence and more specifically the question of the subordination of the Commander of the Defence Forces has been regarded as the most problematic issue arising from the Constitution in the field of national defence. Constitutional disputes over the institutional roles and powers of the President and the Government resulted from the fact that, on the one hand, the Constitution appointed the President as the supreme commander of national defence, while, on the other hand, it stated that the executive power was vested in the Government and that the Parliament had the right to appoint the Commander of the Defence Forces.[8] Thus the Constitution sought to accommodate the national defence model of a presidential state in the context of a parliamentary state.[9]

The main features of the future principles of national defence were outlined during the discussions and debates of the Constitutional Assembly, which was composed of the members of the Supreme Council and the Estonian Congress and which acted from the 13th of September 1991 to the 10th of April 1992 and held a total of 30 sessions.[10] The Constitution was approved by referendum on the 28th of June 1992. The Constitution, in particular its Chapter 10, is definitely the most important legal

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[7] Speech of the President of the Republic at the threshold of the second year of his term of office in Estonian Television, 7 October 1993, http://vp1992-2001.president.ee/est/k6ned/K6ne.asp?ID=4238 (accessed 18.11.2011).

[8] Constitution of the Republic of Estonia before the amendment that entered into force on 22 July 2011.

[9] Märt Rask's interview to Urmas Ott, 4 December 2001 – *Põhiseaduse tulek*, koostaja ja toimetaja Eve Pärnaste, koostaja-konsultant Ülle Aaskivi, intervjuude autorid Urmas Ott ja Inge Rumessen (Tallinn: SE&JS, 2002), 247.

[10] *Põhiseaduse tulek*, 50–72.

source that determines the bases of national defence. As regards national defence-related legislation and a fixed conceptual basis in the first years of restored independence, it is actually possible to talk only about Chapter 10 of the Constitution, as other relevant documents were only slowly beginning to emerge.

Also Ülo Uluots,[11] the first Minister of Defence after the restoration of independence, referred to a lack of clarity in governance in his political testament issued at the end of his term of office, in which he stated that the Defence Forces and the Defence League were not subordinate to the Ministry of Defence and that the Minister of Defence could issue only requests, not orders, to the Commander of the Defence Forces.[12] In his interview to *Päevaleht* in October 1992 Ants Laaneots, who was fulfilling the tasks of both the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and the Commander of the Defence Forces, unequivocally confirmed his direct subordination to the President: "The Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces is subordinate to the President, as Lennart Meri, the Head of State, also confirmed at the meeting. As the Commander of the Defence Forces has not been appointed yet, I am fulfilling these tasks in accordance with the statutes of the Defence Forces Headquarters. I report directly to the President."[13] This raises the question whether the wording of the Constitution would also have allowed for a different interpretation in practice. However, subsequent relations largely relied on the original interpretation and the powers and subordination initially enforced. One can speculate whether many dissentions could have been avoided or mitigated if the National Defence Council, which includes both the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces and in which personal interaction would have enabled relations to be put in place a reasonable way, would have started work immediately. An important role was also played by the powerful personality of President Lennart Meri who – as is evident from the above quotations – interpreted the Constitution precisely in this way.

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[11] Ülo Uluots was the Minister of Defence in the first Government of Tiit Vähi from 18 June 1991 to 21 October 1992.

[12] Ülo Uluots, "Poliitiline testament," 1992, KMA 1/18, 10.

[13] Sulev Hallik, "Kolonel Laaneots: Meie rahvas ei ole sissisõjaks valmis," Päevaleht, 31.10.1992.

President of Estonia Lennart Meri (on the right) and Defence Minister Andrus Öövel attach lieutenant general's shoulder marks to Commander of Defence Forces Aleksander Einseln (1995). Lembit Michelson /ETA/ Estonian Film Archives

When thinking about the reasons behind the development of the wording of the 'National Defence' chapter of the Constitution, two aspects, in particular, should be addressed.

First, when describing the development of the leadership as stated in the Constitution, it should be admitted that the Constitution as such reflects a certain socio-political and socio-economic situation in society.[14] Undoubtedly, this points to the then political situation in which Estonia actually had two armed voluntary organisations that competed against each other: the Defence League and the Home Guard. In addition, it was feared that the Defence Forces to be created could be politicised by executive power, which is why it was sought to counterbalance this possibility by strengthening the role of the President in national defence. It was

[14] Rait Maruste, Anneli Albi, "Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus Euroopa Liidu õiguskorras," *Juridica* I (2003): 3–7.

feared that if the Commander of the Defence Forces were made directly subordinate to the Government, the Defence Forces would not be able to function normally due to rapid changes of the Governments.[15] The fears concerning the functioning of the principles of democratic governance of national defence in the first years after the restoration of independence are illustrated by the questions posed by Tönu Parming in an article on national defence issues in the collection titled *Pontes Novi* in 1995: "For example, how strong is civilian control over the armed forces in a situation where it has not been decided whether the Defence Forces are actually subordinate to the President or, through the Minister of Defence, to the Government? How firm is civilian control over the armed forces in a situation where the Commander of the Defence Forces basically refused to talk with the Government for a long time and has publicly named ministers crooks? And where the only General [of Estonia] states in an interview published in foreign media that certain persons and entities have suggested that he should take the helm of the state?"[16] The initial wording of the Constitution has also been explained by fears of potential undemocratic power ambitions of a then political leader. The same article by Tönu Parming contains a reference to worries concerning the authoritarianism of Edgar Savisaar in 1995: "[---] exceptionally strong and – compared to NATO member states – large armed formations are subordinate to the Minister of the Interior with an authoritarian disposition. Anyhow, Edgar Savisaar has more "guns and bayonets" (as was said in the old days) than Major General Aleksander Einseln."[17, 18]

Second, when drafting, discussing and adopting the Constitution, the Constitutional Assembly faced a complex challenge as regards the

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[15] *Põhiseadus ja Põhiseaduse Assamblee*, toim. Viljar Peep (Tallinn: Juura, 1997), 305–306.

[16] Tönu Parming, "NATO, Eesti ja sõjastrateegilisi küsimusi Läänemere ruumis," – *Pontes Novi: Eesti Üliõpilaste Seltsi ja Helsingi Ülikooli põhjala osakondade ühisväljaanne*, toimkond: Timo Höykinpuro jt (Tartu: Eesti Üliõpilaste Seltsi Kirjastus, 1995), 119.

[17] *Ibid*., 119–120.

[18] The first quotation refers to the statements of Aleksander Einseln who was the Commander of the Defence Forces from 4 May 1993 to 4 December 1995, and the second quotation refers to the period when Edgar Savisaar was the Minister of the Interior in the Government of Tiit Vähi from 12 April to 10 October 1995 and controlled police and border guard units.

regulation of national defence issues, because, unlike a number of other areas, Estonia then lacked any relevant relations or arrangements in the sphere of national defence that could be relied upon. According to Jüri Adams, a member of the Constitutional Assembly, it was unclear what the future national defence of Estonia would look like and thus it was not possible to address national defence issues in the Constitution in detail.[19] A similar view has been supported by Jüri Luik who has said that the authors of the 'National Defence' chapter of the Constitution were not aware what the national defence system of an independent state means or how national defence should actually be governed with such system.[20] This has been explained by the fact that, when developing the national defence governance system and defining the subordination relationships, the Constitutional Assembly and its working party dealing with issues of national defence guided themselves by the Estonian Constitution of 1938, which provided for the appointment of the Commander or Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces by the President of the Republic.[21] The ways of thinking could also have been affected by the general national defence practice prevailing in the Republic of Estonia before World War II, whereby the Minister of Defence was a relatively marginal figure compared to the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces or the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, as well as by the significant personal authority of General Johan Laidoner, a hero of the War of Independence who served as the Commander-in-Chief in the years 1918–1920, 1924–1925 and 1934–1940.[22] In its final report the expert panel on the Constitution concluded that "neither the Constitutional Assembly's working party for national

[19] *Põhiseadus*, 142.

[20] Mart Soidro, "Kaitseminister Jüri Luik: Me oleme kaitseväes liialt julgelt kasutanud pika nõukogude-taustaga inimesi," *Keskus*, 26.6.2002.

[21] The presidential constitution that came into force on 1 January 1938 set up the institution of the President of the Republic with large-scale powers and the right to appoint the Commander and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The bicameral Parliament was composed of the lower house, which was elected, and the upper house, which was appointed by the President. Because of the state of national emergency, the official title of the head of the armed forces was Commander-in-Chief until the *de facto* end of the existence of the Republic of Estonia.

[22] Merle Maigre, "Tsiviil-militaarsuhted Eestis," *Diplomaatia* 38, November (2006).

defence nor the members of the Constitutional Assembly had an entirely clear idea of the scope of authority that this general clause (appointing the President as the supreme commander of national defence) was expected to entail."[23] Rein Helme who was the chairman of the National Defence Committee of the Parliament from 1992–1995 criticised the Constitutional Assembly for its excessive nostalgia for the Constitution of 1938 in the context of regulating national defence matters, figuratively describing the conflict of authority in the governance of national defence as follows: "So, the current situation is such that, if one of two best friends would tomorrow be appointed as the Minister of Defence and the other as the Commander of the Defence Forces, their friendship would certainly be over, however good-natured or wise they are."[24]

As the possible third aspect, Vello Saatpalu, a member of the Constitutional Assembly, pointed to an *argumentum ad hominem* aspect already in 1992, stating that the inclusion of the President in the Constitution as the supreme commander of national defence "is certainly on the conscience of those who, being the advocates of a presidential state, could not accept their defeat and literally used every chance they had to plant provisions into the Constitution of Estonia, which will have to be kept in mind during the forthcoming arrangement of the Constitution."[25] Saatpalu's explanation is not likely, however; the wording probably resulted from a combined effect of the two abovementioned reasons.

Interpretations and effects of the Constitution's 'National Defence' chapter

As a result of the two aspects described above, the approach to the governance of national defence was formulated in the Constitution in a contradictory manner, and the attempt to combine the elements of two

[23] Final report of the expert panel on the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, http://www.just.ee/10738 (accessed 18.11.2012).

[24] Rein Helme, "Väheseadustatud Riigikaitse," *Postimees*, 15.1.2000.

[25] Vello Saatpalu, "Seekord aitab," *Postimees*, 11.12.1992.

The leadership structure of national defence after the restoration of Estonian independence was modelled on the pre-WWII Estonian national defence practice, which was greatly influenced by the authority of the Estonian Commander-In-Chief during the Estonian War of Independence and also from 1934 onwards General Johan Laidoner. Estonian War Museum

different systems of government has to be regarded as failed. Disputes over the governance problem reached a milestone in the ruling of the Constitutional Review Chamber of the Supreme Court in 1994, which stated that the situation where the President of the Republic gives orders to the Commander of the Defence Forces, bypassing the Government of the Republic, is not in line with the spirit of the Constitution.[26] This ruling was prompted by the Peacetime National Defence Act approved by the Parliament and sent by President Lennart Meri to the Constitutional Review Chamber of the Supreme Court.

In accordance with the proposal of the Constitutional Review Chamber of the Supreme Court, the Government of the Republic set up an expert panel for legal assessment of the Constitution in 1996. In 1997,

[26] See: Lauri Almann, "Riigikaitse õiguslik korraldus – põhijooned ja arengud," *Riigi Kaitse (Eesti Päevaleht)*, 2.6.2006.

the report of the expert panel was published, which, on the one hand, admitted that national defence was "more or less" sufficiently regulated in the Constitution.[27] On the other hand, the report stated that the inconsistency stemming from the authority conflict described above was directly inhibiting the development of the Defence Forces, causing subordination and authority conflicts and preventing the establishment of normal cooperation between the two central bodies governing national defence – the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces Headquarters.[28] An important conclusion was that the appointment of the President as the supreme commander of national defence involved a threat of double governance at the highest level of the chain of command. The appointment of the Commander of the Defence Forces by the Parliament gave the Commander an unreasonably strong position alongside the Minister of Defence, and quite similar legal status. The committee recommended the elimination of the empty and confusing wording of section 127 of the Constitution, which appointed the President of the Republic as the supreme commander of national defence, and amending section 127 of the Constitution as follows: *"The Government of the Republic shall ensure external security of the state and govern national defence on the basis of law. The Prime Minister shall form the National Security Council pursuant to the procedure provided by law. During a state of war, the Defence Forces shall be subordinate to the Prime Minister."*[29] It was also found that this governance system does not require the legitimisation of the institution of the Commander of the Defence Forces in the Constitution.[30]

One must admit that despite attempts to mitigate it, the conflict of authority had a suppressive effect on the development of national defence through the 1990s, giving both the Commander of the Defence Forces and the Minister of Defence opportunities to interpret the relationship of subordination differently and, in case of problems, refer to the omissions on the part of the other. The explanatory memorandum to the amend-

[27] Final report.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*

President of Estonia Lennart Meri at the presidential palace Kadriorg on the day he took the oath of office. On the right Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces Colonel Ants Laaneots, who according to contemporary view was subordinated directly to the President (6 October 1992). Tiit Veermäe/ ETA/Estonian Film Archives

ment of the Constitution of 2011 stated that "most of the political problems relating to the Defence Forces which have arisen after the restoration of independence and adoption of the Constitution pertain to the unclear civilian control of the Defence Forces."[31]

The confusion in the distribution of authority created a negative background for the development and organisation of national defence by the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces Headquarters, creating uncertainty in the formulation of doctrines and planning of national defence, and in balancing self-defence capacity with collective defence. It has been suggested that, in addition to the official national defence plan-

[31] Explanatory memorandum to the amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, 27 April 2011, http://www.riigikogu.ee/?page=eelnou&op=ems&eid=1325102&emshelp=true&u=20110409232849 (accessed 14.4.2012).

ning, there was also secondary double-planning, which was made possible due to the authority conflict and a lack of democratic governance practices in national defence. Margus Kolga, Deputy Undersecretary for the Defence Policy of the Ministry of Defence in charge of integration with NATO, later admitted: "Although the planning documents submitted to NATO were signed by both the Minister and the Commander of the Defence Forces, their contents were all too often not reflected in the planning documents of the Defence Forces and, even worse, the Defence Forces were engaged in entirely other matters."[32]

The unclear technical and legal subordination definitely was not the only issue. As the above example shows, there was also a question of the authority and credibility of the Minister and the Ministry. The fact that the Defence Forces as an institution were restored earlier than the Ministry of Defence also played a role.[33] Ants Laaneots has stated: "A peculiar feature of the recreation of national defence was the fact that Estonia lacked the Ministry and the Minister of Defence for a long time."[34] He has explained that the Defence Forces Headquarters then had to deal with security and defence policy-related activities not typical for such an institution, as public authorities whose duties cover such activities simply did not exist.[35]

The conflict between the Commander of the Defence Forces and the Minister of Defence culminated with the so-called "battle of directives" in 1997, when Andrus Öövel, the Minister of Defence,[36] and Johannes Kert, the Commander of the Defence Forces,[37] issued contradictory and mutually exclusive directives on issues concerning the provision of military

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[32] Margus Kolga, "Mis siis ikkagi kaitseväes toimub?" *Eesti Päevaleht*, 7.11.2006.

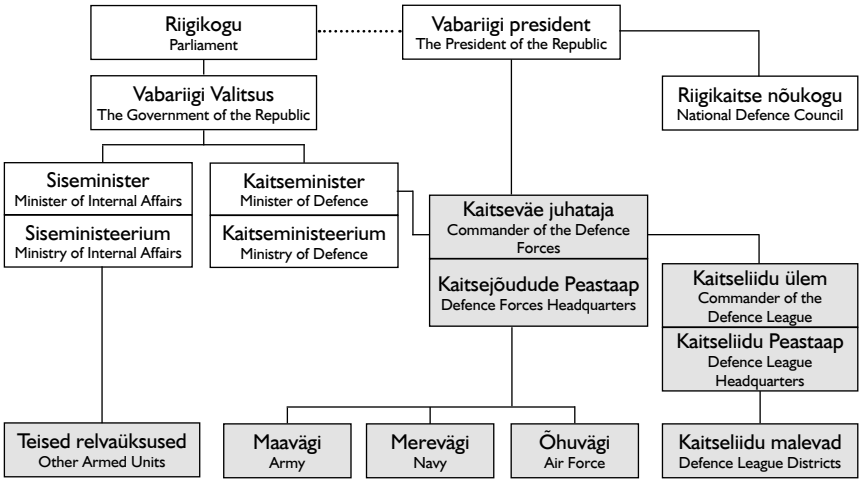
[33] The Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia decided to establish the Defence Forces on 3 September 1991. The Defence Forces Headquarters was re-established on 31 October 1991, the Ministry of Defence on 13 April 1992, and Ülo Uluots was appointed Defence Minister on 18 July 1992.

[34] Laaneots, "Eesti Kaitsejõud," 175.

[35] Ants Laaneots, *Eesti Vabariigi julgeolekukontseptsiooni areng aastail 1991–1994 ja kõrgkoolid: aulaloeng 8. veebruaril 1996* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 1996), 5–6.

[36] Andrus Öövel was the Minister of Defence in the Governments of Tiit Vähi and Mart Siiman from 17 April 1995 to 25 March 1999.

[37] Johannes Kert was the Commander of the Defence Forces from 1996–2000. He was promoted to Lieutenant General in 1998.



The leadership structure of national defence from year 1996. The Commander of Defence Forces was subordinated to the President as well as to the Ministry of Defence. Eesti Kaitsejõud 1991–1996. Tallinn: Kaitseministeerium, Kaitsejõudude Peastaap, 1996

education. Namely, instead of the military school that had been operating within the National Defence Academy of Estonia, a new military school was founded on the order of the Defence Forces Headquarters on the 9th of June 1997, and the admission of cadets was announced. Minister Öövel, in turn, revoked that document.[38] Johannes Kert, the Commander of the Defence Forces, then sent a letter to Öövel, declaring his refusal to publish the Minister's directive and to order the Defence Forces, the Defence League and the educational institutions of the Defence Forces to comply with it. On the 14th of July Kert issued a new directive ordering the establishment of a military school, a higher military school and a staff college within the training centre of the National Defence College. In turn, Öövel issued a directive on the 31st of July revoking the directive

[38] Directive no 108 of the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, 30 June 1997, KMA 7, 9–10.

of the Commander of the Defence Forces of the 14th of July, indicating that it was incompatible with both the Education Act and the Vocational Educational Institutions Act.[39]

To solve this situation, it was suggested that one of the men should resign. According to the expert panel on the Constitution, the resignation would not have solved the situation and the methods of resolving the conflict between the Commander of the Defence Forces and the Minister of Defence were inadequate due to the deficiencies of the legal regulation.[40] Eerik-Juhan Truuväli, the Chancellor of Justice, had to admit that he failed to see how vertical subordination could be created between the institutions of the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces. Yet he also acknowledged that the Commander of the Defence Forces could not issue a directive which the Minister of Defence did not agree with.[41]

It is true that the interpretation of the formal relationship between the Commander of the Defence Forces and the Minister of Defence was greatly influenced by the personal compatibility and relations between the persons. For example, Hain Rebas,[42] a reserve officer of Swedish Army and a professor of history at the University of Kiel who was the Minister of Defence in the government of Mart Laar, and Ants Laaneots, a former officer of the Soviet Army who, being the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, fulfilled the tasks of the Commander of the Defence Forces, quickly found a common language with each other.[43] However, the period during which they worked together was relatively short.

As the Parliament had the authority to appoint and release the Commander of the Defence Forces, the appointment and release became a

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[39] Aivar Jarne, "Käskkirjade lahing Ööveli ja Kerdi vahel," *Postimees*, 24.9.1997.

[40] Final report.

[41] Toomas Mattson, "Õiguskantsler möönab pädevusvastuolusid," *Postimees*, 26.9.1997.

[42] Hain Rebas was the Minister of Defence in the Government of Mart Laar from 21 October 1992 to 5 August 1993.

[43] Hain Rebas, "Meenutus Laari esimesest valitsusest: riigikaitse korralik läbikukkumine," *Delfi*, 21.10.2012, http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/arvamus/hain-rebase-meenutus-laari-esimesest-valitsusest-eesti-riigikaitse-korralik-labikukkumine.d?id=65143122 (accessed 2.4.2014).

subject of internal political struggle. The release of General Aleksander Einseln from the post of the Commander of the Defence Forces in 1995 was justified, *inter alia,* by his political statements. During the discussion of the relevant draft Act on the 19th of December, his release was also referred to as "political lynching".[44]

The voting on the draft Act on the release of Lieutenant General Johannes Kert from the post of the Commander of the Defence Forces in the Parliament on the 28th of August 2000 turned into a political vote. Even President Lennart Meri made a political statement in the Parliament, pointing to the need to depoliticise the post of the Commander of the Defence Forces and to Kert's behaviour that allegedly had not been consistent with the principles of civilian control among the reasons for releasing Kert from the post. Indeed, Meri viewed the vote on the release from the post as a question of civilian control.[45] Interestingly, the final outcome of the vote and Kert's release was determined by a supposedly accidental vote in favour by Tõnu Kauba, a member of the Centre Party faction, who had allegedly played with the voting button and thus voted differently from the rest of the faction (and got later expelled from the faction). In a way, it was a vote of confidence for the Government and the Minister of Defence which, in the case of Kert staying in office, would most likely have led to the resignation of Jüri Luik, the Minister of Defence.

Summary

The wording of the 'National Defence' chapter of the Constitution resulted from the shortage of know-how and the prevailing political situation and began to influence the development of national defence due to

[44] Verbatim report of the 2nd Session of the 8th Parliament, 19 December 1995, http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=steno&stcommand=stenogramm&date=819360000&pkpkaupa=1&paevakord=1900002852 (accessed 24.10.2013).

[45] Verbatim report of the Extraordinary Session of the 8th Parliament, 28 August 2000, http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=steno&stcommand=stenogramm&date=967468680#pk2000006887 (accessed 1.11.2013).

the conflict thus programmed into the interactions between two leading institutions. The conflict of authority that had arisen from the wording of the Constitution and its interpretations affected the development of national defence directly, in specific controversial issues, as well as in a more general and indirect manner. The confusion in the distribution of authority and the different interpretations of the relationship of subordination created a negative background for the development of the national defence. This conflict of authority could probably have been mitigated in its initial phase, had there been sufficient personal communication and a will to interpret the Constitution differently. Through a variety of instruments and "testing of the limits", the problem was mitigated and sorted out clearly enough to ensure that the conflict would not be an obstacle to the credible explanation of the governance of our national defence in the accession negotiations with NATO. An important role was played by the gradual development and entrenchment of understanding of the principles of democratic governance of national defence in Estonia, which contributed to the search for solutions.

What historian Ago Pajur wrote about the national defence policy of the first period of independence can also be applied to the more recent history of national defence: "The concept of national defence determines both the general attitudes of society towards the necessity and importance of protecting statehood and the specific areas and directions of action of authorities in charge of security policy and national defence. The genesis of national defence policy thinking is closely linked to the preparation and adoption of decisions of fundamental significance to national defence – on the one hand, the adoption of such decisions depends on the level of development of political thinking, but on the other hand these decisions serve as the basis for the organisation of national defence in practice."[46] The 'National Defence' chapter of the Constitution can thus be interpreted as a significant part of the concept of national defence, which placed the authorities organising national defence in a difficult situation due to the unclear governance model.

[46] Ago Pajur, *Eesti riigikaitsepoliitika aastail 1918–1934* (Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv 1999), 9.

While in 1997 the expert panel on the Constitution had recommended deleting the provision that appointed the President as the supreme commander of national defence, the amendment that entered into force in 2011 only omitted the third paragraph of the section, which discussed the status of the Commander and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces and the procedure for appointing them to office and releasing from office.[47] The function of governing national defence was unambiguously assigned to the Government of the Republic and thus subordinated to executive power, which is consistent with the constitutional order of Estonia.

In the context of the governance and recent history of national defence, it was a small "end of history" – a tense phase clearly came to its end. The verse added to a well-known folk song during the years of Soviet occupation, *"I would like to be at home when Päts is the President, Laidoner commands the army and kroon is the national currency"*, marked nostalgia for the way of life and the organisation of the state in the Republic of Estonia before World War II. It could now be stated that while after the restoration of independence it was relatively quickly realised that the role of the Head of State has fundamentally changed compared to the pre-war period, the final breakdown of the paradigm of national defence thinking "Laidoner commands the army" and the amendment of the Constitution took nearly two decades and materialised only after the kroon was no longer the national currency, with Estonia joining the euro zone on the 1st of January 2011.

[47] "Act Amending the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia," *RT* I, 27.4.2011, 1.

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PART 2

ARTICLES AND MEMOIRS

Armament of Estonia

Arms Procurements of the Ministry of Defence in the 1990s

Toe Nõmm

ABSTRACT

An independent state must have its own army. If we don't defend ourselves, someone else will come and defend us. The conflicts in the border areas of the collapsing Soviet Union and the Balkans in the 1990s as well as the unstable situation in Estonia and neighbouring countries underlined the need for the quick establishment of Estonia's own army. At the time the state's independence was restored, there were no people in Estonia who knew Western weaponry or how to carry out weapons procurements. The only things left behind by the Russian army were old gas masks, helmets, fuel and lubricants, a number of buildings and a polluted environment.

The West did provide military assistance to Estonia from 1993–1996, but no weapons were given to us. Estonia received old equipment, uniforms and vehicles from Germany, Sweden, Finland, the US, Denmark and other countries, which also included things that had belonged to the liquidated East-German army. Estonia received a couple of L-410 jets, some helicopters and ships from the 'bankruptcy estate' of the latter. Hand guns, Kalashnikov rifles, ammunition etc. were bought from Romania and China. In 1993, Estonia managed to enter into a contract for purchasing weapons from the Israeli company IMI-TAAS. The defence budget comprised ca 4–5% of the state budget from 1993–2000. In 1996 the Estonian parliament set NATO membership as the state's goal. Estonia participated actively in partnership programmes. From 1996/1997, Estonia finally started receiving aid with weapons from the West, which in addition to handguns included artillery guns, mortars, ships etc. This aid was important, as the state was poor. The first major procurements for weapons after the Israeli weapons deal were carried out at the start of the 21st century.

1. Fragile freedom and the invention of the national defence

The will to protect itself is one of the main features of a real state. The few exceptions there are call for special conditions. However, the threats of 1992 were very real for Estonia. A number of bloody civil wars and border conflicts broke out at the edges of the Soviet Union after its collapse in 1991 as well as in Yugoslavia, reaching their culmination in 1992: Moldova, the Caucasus, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and others were affected. The Russian Army, which was critically strong for Estonia, was still here in 1992 and the coup d'etat that occurred in Moscow a year before, the march of the Pskov troops to Tallinn and the anti-Estonian movement were a reality. The events of 1993 in Moscow were still in the future. Which prophet could have promised a separate paradise for the Baltic States?

A war waged by all of Russia against Estonia was not the most immediate threat. Local instability in and around our state was a much bigger problem. Estonia's almost non-existent armed forces couldn't have protected the state even against the invasion of a separate military unit by our neighbour and/or a conflict ignited within Estonia. Strengthening our self-defence wasn't the issue here – we had to create it from scratch.

If we don't defend ourselves, someone else will come and defend us. But how will we do it, and with what? We didn't have any of the important things we needed at first. We had the knowledge and practical skills for advancement in other areas of life, even if we had inherited them from the previous society – e.g. schools, hospitals, libraries, police, manufacturing – and the people working there were qualified professionals who had the equipment they needed. However, we had almost no idea or knowledge of armament. There were almost no people with the necessary battle experience and knowledge in Estonia's national defence organisation, and neither did we have any arms or the immediate military support of the West.

We had to create the defence of our state. Since we hardly had anything, making a list of the things we needed was not difficult. However, we had no answers to the questions concerning their use, quality requirements, or staffing and maintenance. In the first years, Estonia didn't just

lack experienced officials for dealings with the West, but we also had no people with knowledge of Western military equipment or how to procure it. Even an adequate command of the English language wasn't common yet. The connection between weapons and money was rather weakly perceived. The grandest ideas concerned Estonia's own air force and contemporary air defence. We had to learn everything, even how to give up on some things.

2. False expectations

After the independence of Estonia was restored, it may have looked like our country had a number of cheap armament options, incl. the resources of the Soviet army in Estonia, but also in Latvia and Lithuania – the former Soviet republics further away did receive a big share of them; the quick aid with arms we expected to receive from the West as well as the establishment of a domestic military industry. In reality, we received almost nothing.

All that the Russian army left behind were some old gas masks, helmets, oil and lubricants, and a vast number of buildings that were too difficult to maintain. Even these leftovers weren't counted before autumn 1994, and they became a burden instead of helping us in any way.

Only some items from the Soviet militia and a very small number of random arms, cartridges, hand grenades and signal flares made it into the ownership of the Defence Forces. They were of no help in actually arming the Defence Forces. The 45-mm obsolete salute cannon was used a couple of times when there were guests approaching from the sea.

Connections with the military industry of Russia were even a possibility. However, the manufacturers were offering their goods with the delivery term of ex works, i.e. they had to be picked up from the factory. Tula, for example, was unfortunately both politically and geographically further away from Estonia than Shanghai or Haifa. Dealing with the Rosvooruzheniye that ruled the vast expanses between Tula and Estonia was out of the question.

Private weapons in Estonia and via Estonia were also not a solution. After exiting the former social order, Estonia gradually entered another world, that of the West, and this also concerned controlling the arms trade on its borders. Estonia had not joined many important treaties yet and a number of domestic legislative acts and institutions still had to be created. Many smaller dealers and fortune seekers noticed the arms trade vacuum on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea from 1992–1994 and they regarded Estonia as a corridor between the arms trade of the East and the West.

Privately initiated illegal and unlawful arms trade in our region can be divided into three parts on the basis of the goods and those who transported them: attempts to move goods of Russian origin to the West via Estonia during the short winter period of 1991 and 1992, and the uncontrolled movement of European arms to Estonia and through Estonia in two separate stages – from 1993 to spring 1994 and thereafter from 1994 to summer 1995. The state had managed to create order in the area by 1995 and this kind of business fizzled out with the exception of a couple of later triers. This activity could not be combined with the goals of national defence.

Tens of thousands of registered weapons were in civil circulation in Estonia at the time when independence was restored, but the majority of them were smoothbore shotguns used for hunting that were of no use for the Defence Forces. Museum pieces and deactivated arms used for military training in schools didn't make much of a difference either.

Thousands of firearms, especially handguns and revolvers, and millions of cartridges were brought to Estonia at the height of the legal import of civil arms in 1994. The interest in private weapons started to decrease in 1995 and the number of people wanting to buy them was significantly smaller in the subsequent years. None of this met the requirements of national defence either.

The domestic defence industry was just starting to develop. Targeted work by the companies Eli and Englo in the relevant sector started in the period of 1996–1998 and E-Arsenal increased its production volumes by 1999–2000. However, no military weapons are made in Estonia to this day.

The defence cooperation between the Baltic States also developed much later. The Baltic States Peacekeeping Battalion was launched in 1995, and it didn't need any aid with arms from the West at first. The Baltic Naval Squadron BALTRON, the Baltic Airspace Surveillance Project BALTNET and the Baltic Defence College were established only in 1998–1999.

3. Weaponless assistance of the West 1993–1996

Boots – coats – cars – vessels – aircraft

The Baltic States received considerable aid from the West from 1993–1995, Estonia from Germany, the US, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland and France in particular. But this aid was weaponless and only included innocent, usually old and used items such as the personal equipment of soldiers, cars and equipment for barracks and kitchens. The first shipment of quality boots and older Willys-type jeeps to the Defence Forces of Estonia arrived from France in the winter of 1992/1993. Germany started sending the personal equipment of the soldiers of the former East Germany in spring 1993 and the US bases in Europe also sent uniforms. There were also tents, old radio equipment and field telephones from different countries. A big aid shipment from Sweden arrived in October 1993: several thousands of uniforms and helmets, bicycles, trucks, field kitchens and 13 weaponless armoured vehicles (the 1942 model).

The Defence Forces started with a very modest car fleet in 1992, which consisted of a couple of Soviet motor cars and trucks, but the West helped us with this from the very beginning. The Defence Forces received 600 cars in aid from 1993–1996 and the first of them were 200 East German trucks IFA and Robur. The second third was the aid granted by the US from 1995–1996, mainly in the shape of Chevrolet military vehicles, and the remainder came from Denmark, Switzerland and elsewhere.

The Navy was created a little later. The first usable warship was the 190-ton *Mallemukken*, renamed *Ahti*, which was a gift from the Danes

in spring 1994. The two 400 Kondor-type minesweepers, two L-410 aircraft and some Mi-type helicopters came from the stocks of East Germany from 1993–1994. The aircraft equipment went to the Border Guard Aviation Corps. The vessels received from Finland from 1992–1995 were particularly important in the Establishment of the Estonian border guard fleet.

East German (GDR) equipment – aid from a lost world

The most important thing for the West in the beginning of the 1990s was to reduce the critically dangerous military tension in the world and in Europe as a whole. One of the main initiatives for reducing the threat of war was launched in 1991 – spreading the vast quantities of troops and arms piled up in Central Europe to the peripheral regions. The Warsaw Pact was also liquidated and the Russian army started its great return home from Eastern Europe, with its weapons, which lasted until autumn 1994. In the opposite direction, the US withdrew some of its units from West Germany. This led to the birth of a special flea market of arms in 1991 – the reunified Germany started giving away and selling the massive estate of one of the main creators of tension in Central Europe – the NVA, i.e. the army of the former German Democratic Republic, which consisted of over 10,000 various armoured vehicles, 5,000 artillery pieces, 700 aircraft and helicopters, and 300,000 tons of munition. 44 countries of the world, including Estonia, had signed up for the East German assets by November 1991.

Most of the NVA's equipment was sold and distributed from 1991–1994 to tens of countries for the total price of just 1 billion dollars. The quantities of arms acquired by Greece and Turkey were particularly big: hundreds of thousands of automatic rifles, thousands of antitank weapons and hundreds of armoured vehicles. Finland bought a number of tanks, guns and automatic rifles for a very good price whilst Sweden opted for several hundred armoured vehicles. Hungary received tanks, Poland MiG-29 fighter aircraft, Indonesia tens of warships, etc. The prices for

Estonian Defence Minister Hain Rebas (on the left) and Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces Colonel Ants Laaneots supervising the demonstration of Israeli weapons on Aegviidu training range (22th of May 1993). Lembit Michelson/ETA/Estonian Film Archives

which East German arms were sold were very buyer friendly: for example, a good Kalashnikov automatic rifle cost 40 dollars, which was three times cheaper than the rifles Estonia bought from China. The difference with Western prices was even bigger. Hundreds of 23-mm anti-aircraft cannons of the same type, like the ones Estonia bought from Israel, were also sold cheaply.

But what about the poorer relatives? Like us? There was something for us too. A more or less similar gift package was allocated to all three Baltic States from 1993–1994: each of them got a couple of L-410 aircraft and some helicopters and ships, a couple of hundred trucks and piles of coats, boots and uniforms from the East German army. There was a difference, though – all of this aid was embarrassingly devoid of any weapons.

Non-armament of the Baltic States

The aid given in the first years was diverse but included no weapons. What was the matter? There is no reason to believe that Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius all just forgot to request them and offering them to us just didn't occur to the West. In the maelstrom of the Soviet Union's collapse and the changes occurring in Europe, there was one extremely important task: to prevent the outbreak of a major war. And this was achieved with a kind of cooperation and compromises between the West and the East that an entire generation had never witnessed. There was no way that listening to the local concerns of the eastern edge of the Baltic Sea could compete with this, especially since the Russian army was still here. One day, the time will be right for analysing the political background of the non-armament of Estonia and the Baltic States in the beginning of the 1990s.

It soon became evident that there are no such things as free lunches, i.e. there would be no cheap and quick aid with weapons. Finding options for purchasing arms and ammunition, for the full price of course, became the most important task of national defence.

The history of Estonian weapons procurements can be divided into periods of relatively equal lengths according to the manner and results of the procurement:

1st period of 1992–1996 – five years of rushed active self-armament using our own money, as there was almost no aid with arms from abroad;

2nd period of 1997–2002 – the passive period when not much was contributed to armament by the state; however, it was the peak time of free aid with arms and the advancement of the domestic defence industry;

3rd period from 2002/2003 until the global recession – another active period with major purchases of arms.

Estonian soldier armed with an Israeli Galil assault rifle in Iraq (2005). Author's private collection

4. 1st period of armament from 1992–1996: using our own money

The 1st period of armament in Estonia was characterised by the lack of free or affordable foreign aid with arms. Everything had to be procured with the state's own money in a situation where the number of actual options was very limited.

The first purchase of arms by Estonia after a 52-year interval was the procurement of a larger batch of Romanian AK automatic rifles. The arms arrived in the beginning of autumn 1992 and were immediately taken into use. The price of these rifles corresponded to their quality.

The number of orders for arms placed by Estonia peaked in the beginning of the subsequent winter. Six contracts for purchasing arms and ammunition from China and Israel were signed within five weeks from December 1992 to January 1993. Another four larger contracts were

signed later in the same period, three of them with Chinese companies and the last one with a Bulgarian company at the end of 1996 for purchasing 120-mm mortars and related equipment. Many smaller procurements, in particular for cartridges, were also organised at the same time. It would be interesting to find out whether anyone else other than China and Israel could have offered such a broad selection to Estonia in 1992 and 1993? It certainly wasn't the Republic of South Africa, especially considering the UN arms embargo.

It has become customary for people to roll around in tar and feathers when the purchase of weapons from Israel is discussed to make sure that nobody looks more stupid than an Estonian. Maybe we should take a different look at this for a change. Estonia broke through to the West in terms of armament with the well-known purchase of weapons from the Israeli company IMI-TAAS. The actions that led to this procurement of weapons lasted longer and involved more people than is usually mentioned. However, the most intense and volatile final stage of the contract preparations took place only in the last couple of months of 1992. The contract was signed on the 7th of January 1993.

In December 1992, before the contract was signed, the total price of the goods to be purchased was dropped significantly to 49 million dollars, Estonia was named as the place of destination of the goods and the first instalment payable under the contract was reduced three times. As we found out later, finding these 5 million dollars was also a struggle for Estonia at the time. At first, all of the goods were expected to arrive faster, incl. by charter flights, and payments were supposed to be made immediately upon the arrival of the goods, i.e. in 1 to 1.5 years. The arrival of goods and payment for them were later split into two separate schedules. The goods were supposed to be sent in three years (1993–1995) whilst the majority of instalments were to be made in the subsequent five years (1996–2000). It seems that in the interests of these changes, Estonia had to sacrifice a piece of its security in terms of time, i.e. the speed at which the weapons were delivered. However, this could have been the first security policy decision whose benefits could be measured in money.

Estonian air defence troops with a Soviet towed 23 mm anti-aircraft twin-barrelled automatic cannon Sergey ZU-23-2 in a German Magirus truck trailer. Estonian bought these anti-aircraft autocannons from Israeli company IMI-TAAS (1997). Rauno Volmar/Estonian Defence Forces

In retrospect, the amended conditions may be regarded as useful foresight. The rapid growth of the state budget and improvement of other financial indicators (*ca* four times from 1993–2000) made later payment easier for Estonia despite the interest (11.4 million dollars or 23% of the value of the goods) that had to be paid from the fourth to the eighth year of the contract. Perhaps that wasn't too much for such a long payment term and Estonia's international trustworthiness in 1992.

The unit prices of items had been presented in November, but when the total cost was reduced *en gros* in December 1992, they were not recalculated or entered into the contract. There was no time. This is why the received goods were registered at their earlier prices in Estonia and the calculated totals tended to be different. Most of the agreed-upon equipment arrived on time. Approximately 80% of the goods had been delivered

by September 1995, but Estonia still hadn't paid 70% of the contracted price. The second, i.e. the correct batch of 23 mm antiaircraft cannons and the majority of the MAPATS antitank system were late, arriving only in 1996 and 1997. Part of the equipment was checked during the last three years of the contract and some little things were taken care of, such as the replacement of bayonet scabbards and obtaining a number of extra magazines for automatic rifles.

The story of the 23-mm antiaircraft cannons is the backbone of the ongoing whinging that surrounds the TAAS procurement. The quantity of Russian-type 23 mm cannons specified in the contract arrived in Tallinn at the agreed time in the beginning of 1994. However, it was immediately obvious that the goods were not new or in good order. This gave birth to the 'overpaid scrap metal' claims, which would even deserve some attention if the Estonians had ordered such cannons or put up with them or paid anything for them, or if a brand new batch of the same arms had not been received later.

The second or the correct batch of fully functional new 23 mm cannons, which cost less than 8% of the total price of the purchased goods, arrived in Tallinn in 1996. These cannons had been made for Estonia on the order of TAAS in the factory where they were manufactured. The reason why 23 mm cannons were the only antiaircraft weapons purchased is a simple one: Estonia could afford them. Larger sets of even light antiaircraft missile systems cost about as much as the entire transaction with Israel and remained too expensive for Estonia for a long time to come. Also, control over the spread of surface-to-air missiles is stricter than average and our opinion of ourselves at the time may not have coincided with the way Estonia was regarded by others.

Some additional statements have also kept the mantra of the 'notorious arms deal' alive. For example, the concern that the purchased goods were all made for the desert and completely unsuitable for our puddles and snow piles. Most of these concerns are completely unfounded. However, it would probably possible to find a few smaller problems that are more truthful but have never been mentioned. The procurement was large, complicated and rushed, so it's unlikely that no mistakes were made

Estonian reservists during an excercise is an US military Jeep Willys-Overland M38A1, which was in production 1952–1971 (1998). Estonian Defence Forces

somewhere along the line. Additional spares and devices would have obviously been ordered separately as necessary. Unfortunately, the public atmosphere around the procurement turned toxic and the fact that the result of the contract was later never proceed to finish up, did, at the very least, cause a threat of political suicide.

Chinese weapons were cheap, but Europe or the customs service at Rotterdam didn't like them. The more time passed, the less they liked them. Estonia managed to receive most of the goods it had ordered. However, this squabbling couldn't go on forever and Estonia's arms trade with China fizzled out. The last batch of weapons from China arrived in spring 1996 and the very last shipment with simple pyrotechnics arrived in Tallinn in 2001. Several purchases of cartridges from China were also made in-between. However, the weapons purchased from Israel and other countries arrived without any problems.

Regarding Finland, there were some significant similarities with the start of the War of Independence in 1918, but in a different way – back

then we quickly received 'fish' in the form of weapons and men from our neighbours, but this time they gave us 'rather a rod than fish'.

The defence budget comprised *ca* 4–5% of Estonia's state budget from 1993–2000. The share of the payments made under the Israeli contract in the budget decreased year on year, from the initial one-third to one-tenth by the end of the period. This means that the increase in the state's revenue and budget was clearly ahead of the payment schedule of the contract. The part of the defence budget allocated to purchases of weapons was planned for the coming years in such a manner that the state would be able to pay all the payments due under the Israeli contract and *ca* one-tenth was added for so-say additional armament expenses, i.e. *ca* 0.5–1.5 million dollars per year. This wasn't enough for even small developments and training. The large quantities of ammunition previously procured from Israel and China helped here. Most of the defence budget has always been spent on people (wages, uniforms, barracks, etc.).

Lessons avoided

It is difficult to say what the proportion between smart foresight and luck was in 1992 and 1993, but Estonia missed out on some lessons in armament. The IMI contract was a substantive sign of a so-called unharnessing and helped avoid the integration of dealers with the state, locking most of the money. The cheap equipment from China was a suitable addition to what the country couldn't or wasn't able to buy from the West and also familiar to those who had served in the Soviet army. Estonia would have probably tried to purchase arms elsewhere if these first procurements had failed. But would these deals have been equally reliable, and how much would the weapons have cost? Estonia's actual armament capacity at the time was smaller than is often suggested.

5. 2nd period of armament – free aid

The armament policy of Estonia was changed cardinally in 1997. The only way to obtain any weapons over the last five years was to buy them for your own money, but there were no major purchases of arms in the long period that followed, and it was fully dominated by free military aid from the West.

The transition period started in 1996 when Western countries sent some small weapons to BALTBAT. But the actual breakthrough occurred in 1997 when M16 automatic rifles from the US and the first 105-mm howitzers and ammunition from Finland arrived in Tallinn. MG3 machine guns from Germany and a large quantity of engineering support equipment were received from Switzerland and Denmark in 1998, followed by M14 rifles from the US and 81-mm mortars from Norway in 1999. From 1997–2000 Estonia received Frauenlob- and Lindau-type minesweepers, Iltis-jeeps and signal guns from Germany, Unimog trucks from Switzerland and precision rifles from France.

The period from 1999–2002 was dominated by large-scale military aid from Sweden, which included automatic rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars, their ammunition and other similar equipment. The monetary value of the military aid from the Sweden would have increased the cost of the Israeli contract even if calculated at residual value.

The new weapons purchased by Estonia with its own money during this period could be counted on fingers. However, more cartridges and other munition were often procured in smaller batches. The circle of the countries who had sold cartridges and other munition to Estonia expanded rapidly from 1997: the Check Republic, Bulgaria, Austria and others were also added to the list. Estonian companies also intermediated smaller quantities of cartridges and sporting weapons.

The state also tried to actively develop its own defence industry in the 2nd period. Large quantities of training pyrotechnics were made in E-Arsenal from 1999–2005 – blank cartridges reloaded into spent cases of cartridges, training grenade fuses, smoke equipment and blasting devices. It's true that the attempts to make domestic production profitable

and competitive, or more modern and complex, failed despite the efforts of the authorities. Achieving valuable production without the existence of a civil market would have required a special financing policy.

The 3rd period of armament started in 2002/2003 with major purchases of weapons and was once again different from the other periods. Armament for *ca* 20 million dollars was ordered in the end of 2002 and the beginning of 2003.

Summary

Estonia bought weapons for *ca* 60 million dollars (weapons and accessories, ammunition, hand grenades, explosives, etc.) in the first decade of independent armament. 49 million of this amount was spent on the goods purchased with the Israeli contract (plus 11.4 million in interest), and other procurements of weapons cost *ca* 10 million dollars. In the third place is the single procurement from Chinese company China Jing An in 1994, followed by several smaller procurements of Chinese goods from 1992–1995, each of them costing around half a million dollars.

Some of the goods agreed to at the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993 (Chinese automatic rifles and cartridges, and samples of weapons from Israel) arrived in the first half of 1993. A strong breakthrough in armament occurred in December 1993/January 1994. First of all, the Defence Forces received the first larger quantity of Chinese antitank weapons and their rounds. Secondly, the first larger quantity of Israeli equipment arrived – many automatic rifles, all mortars, radio equipment, harnesses and body armour for soldiers, large quantities of ammo, etc. Six months were left until the departure of the Russian army. Another larger shipment from China with antitank weapons and rounds and hand grenades arrived from China in summer 1994. The Defence Forces and the Defence League became a considerable military force on the first half of 1994. They had the ability to arm *ca* 10,000 men with millions of cartridges, tens of thousands of hand grenades, antitank rounds and mortar bombs, and hundreds of sets of radio equipment.

Several tens of millions of various cartridges, *ca* 100,000 units of mortar bombs and antitank mines, hand grenades, etc. were purchased in the 1990s, mostly from Israel and China, which weighed *ca* one thousand tons in total. In comparison – after the War of Independence in 1920, Estonia had nearly 10,000 tons of such items (cartridges, mines, shells, explosives, etc.), i.e. considerably more. In some categories of goods purchased from Israel and China, ammunition ended up costing considerably more than the weapons themselves: for example, the price of 81-mm mortar bombs exceeded the price of the relevant weapons multiple times. The ammunition procured in the 1990s were enough for stock and training until the middle of the 2000s, sometimes even for longer.

The price indexes of consumer goods don't have much to do with the arms trade, as the latter is influenced by different things. The prices of cartridges didn't change much in the 1990s and even the cost of NATO's new, 5.56-mm automatic rifle cartridge remained pretty much the same, whether they came from Israel or any other Western manufacturer offering the average price. The rapid price increase of cartridges started in the 2000s as a result of the steep increase in the prices of copper and lead.

In addition to weapons, more than 100,000 metres of camouflage uniform fabric costing 1.7 or 2.7 dollars per metre, boots costing 25 dollars a pair and other items required for military services were procured from China from 1993–1995.

The ordered goods can be interpreted as aid in two ways, depending on needs and options: it's either free or arrives very quickly and can be paid for afterwards. Time or the speed of deliveries was the most important criterion in the weapons procurements organised immediately after independence was regained. The main part of the decisive foreign aid in the War of Independence (1918–1920) arrived during the first seven months of the war. Both now and back in 1918/1919, weapons were only available for more or less the full price and the possibility to pay in instalments was the biggest bonus.

In terms of speed, quantity and diversity, the results of Estonia's armament in the first years were unique. The state also managed to carry out all of its plans without any serious failures. The latter is also remarkable

considering the limited experience of Estonians at the time. This took place earlier than most other important defence policy developments in Estonia.

It's easy to be clever in hindsight – look, it was nothing. Unfortunately, the nations who have thought like that have disappeared along the way.

Accidental or Deliberate Failure?

The Story of Estonia's Defence Concept of 1993

Hain Rebas

ABSTRACT

One of my more important duties as the first post-war constitutional defence minister of Estonia, was to develop a national defence concept.[1] We prepared this together with Colonel Ants Laaneots, who was then Chief of Staff of Estonian Defence Forces. Once the initial framework was established, a couple of officials of the Ministry of Defence became involved; ultimately a large number of external experts from the Academy of Sciences to the Estonian Maritime Administration contributed to the concept. The result of this broad and creative co-operation, the first defence concept, was strongly influenced by Finnish and Swedish total defence thinking. It was proposed to the Riigikogu and debated in pleno in March 1993. Surprisingly, given a strong government coalition majority, the concept was rejected. The reasons for this most unusual parliamentary outcome may be found in domestic politics. Was the failure accidental? Or may it have been deliberate? As we know, three years later, in 1996, the next Riigikogu approved a concept for the defence policy of Estonia, a document little more than a more verbose development of our concept from 1993.

Task and preconditions

The first post-war *constitutional* government of Estonia took office on 22 October 1992. I had the honour of serving as its Defence Minister. My duties included the swift development, approval and implementation of

[1] This manuscript was reviewed by the then Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces (later General and Commander of the Defence Forces) Colonel Ants Laaneots, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence (later Captain) Priit Heinsalu, Director General of the Security

the first defence concept.[2] Surely, we all had to know why, how and against whom or what we had to defend our newly restored republic. Unfortunately, there were no plans or preparation on which to draw, as my predecessor had only taken office in June 1992. However, I was accustomed to organize large quantities of qualified text, and since I came with military, academic and public qualifications gained in Sweden, Germany, Canada and Estonia, and had recently published two fundamental articles on the topic in Estonia,[3] I took on the job rather optimistically.

This article is based on the draft of the "Concept of national defence" submitted by the Ministry of Defence to the Riigikogu, records of the Riigikogu debate of 16th of March 1993[4] and my bound diaries in A4 format that I brought from Sweden,[5] which I used to take notes. Also, rather fresh memories of the persons concerned, i.e. the Defence Minister, the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, the Secretary General and the Adviser to the Ministry of Defence contributed strongly to the text.

As our new government, led by Mart Laar, aimed to blend Estonia into the West as quickly and firmly as possible, in essence to make this affiliation permanent, we also had to achieve this via a new, Western-minded national defence concept. Despite a relatively small Ministry of Defence – only 23 employees at the time – I immediately had to fire the Deputy Minister (due to suspicions of serious corruption), the entire

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Police Board (later Minister of Justice) Jüri Pihl and Adviser to the Ministry of Defence (later Defence Minister and Colonel) Enn Tupp. I would like to thank everyone for their generous assistance and help in recalling certain events. The author is responsible for any inaccuracies that may remain in the text. (Author's comment both here and hereinafter.)

2 Regarding the defence concept, see Hellar Lill, "The Constitution and interpretation of the authority dilemma for the leadership of national defence after Estonia regained its independence", see this yearbook p. 175 ff.

3 Hain Rebas, "Riigile kilp ja mõõk! Rahvas relvastada! Veel kord riigikaitse põhialustest," / Shield and sword for the state! Arm the people! Once more on the fundamentals of national defence/, *Postimees,* 12.8.1992; *idem,* "Eesti riigikaitse suhetest Soome ja Rootsiga," /Estonia's national defence relationships with Finland and Sweden/, *Postimees,* 24.9.1992.

4 Verbatim report of the 2nd Session of the 7th Parliament, 16 March 1993, http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=steno&stcommand=stenogramm&date=732268800 (accessed 5.9.2014).

5 "Tidkalender" 1992 and 1993, in the author's archive.

Construction Department[6] and two *polkovniks*, one for having given me polically harmful advice twice and the other for behaving far too passively for a high-ranking officer. And the main concern of the short-skirted secretary seemed to be to ascertain whether the new minister preferred blondes or brunettes… No, our Ministry was not exactly rich in intellectual resources. But I was reassured by the fact that my main cooperation partner in the field of the concept would be the experienced Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces Colonel Ants Laaneots. Also, as a political back-up, our government coalition, i.e. Pro Patria, the Estonian National Independence Party (ERSP) and the Moderate Party, profited from a considerable majority in the Riigikogu. We were confident that we should carry the floor in any Riigikogu voting.

Course of work

So we started from scratch, but were highly inspired and full of hope. My next step probably came as a surprise and as a source of dismay to the coalition, and especially to the so-called 'back room', the personal think tank of the Prime Minister. To learn more and to protect my own back, I invited three 'formers' , i.e. former national defence decision makers – Arnold Rüütel, Indrek Toome and Raivo Vare[7]– to discuss national security issues. These meetings were enlightening in many ways.

In the meantime, Colonel Laaneots and myself had already started work on many initiatives, including on the concept. I was pleased to learn that the Colonel had been preparing for this for a long time.[8] Since I came

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[6] Enn Tupp ironically writes about the level of said Construction Department: "Builders of concrete fences for future military units". (E-mail from Tupp to the author of 10 June 2014.)

[7] Arnold Rüütel was the Chairman of the transition parliament, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia, from 1990-1992; Indrek Toome was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the ESSR from 1988–1990; Raivo Vare was the Minister of State in the transition government of Edgar Savisaar from 1990–1992. (Editor's note.)

[8] Ants Laaneots: "The Defence Forces Headquarters did a lot of research in 1992 regarding the selection of the national defence concept. We considered the military systems of large countries unsuitable for Estonia as a small and poor country. We focussed on small European

from Sweden and my father was a proud *Suomen marskin vänrikki*,[9] the direction in which we should take the national defence of Estonia had been clear to me for a long time – we had to aim for the total defence system as implemented by democratic Nordic countries, especially Finland and Sweden. It was a pleasure to realise that Colonel Laaneots, who had made a career in the Soviet army, had come to the same conclusions! We did not have a great deal of time, so we sometimes held work meetings in the evenings. I remember well how the floor of my modest hotel room could be covered in papers and maps even in the night!

Adviser to the Ministry of Defence, Enn Tupp was next to become involved in the process. He had been the Chairman of the National Defence Committee of the former Supreme Council and therefore had considerable experience in national defence planning. We had intense discussions among this inner circle, to which we also added the Ministry's lawyer Tõnu Põder, and we certainly talked to and briefed our coalition MPs on the topic. We wrote, dissected, thought, discussed, wrote again – as is the norm in this kind of work.

On the 14th of December I addressed the Riigikogu and asked all of the groups represented in the parliament to submit their visions and proposals regarding the national defence concept to the Ministry of Defence. On the 17th of December, I wrote to all of the parties represented in the Riigikogu and explained that it was high time for us, dear colleagues,

countries and Finland, Sweden and Switzerland stood out the most among them. We started to take a closer look at the national defence systems of these countries. As the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, I tried to establish close relationships with my colleagues in these countries, and succeeded. All three of them, and later Denmark as well, were ready to help us as much as they could. I visited all of these countries in 1992 to learn more about their national defence. I found the Finnish system to be the most suitable for Estonia, i.e. the total defence characteristic of Scandinavian countries as an total national defence system and military territorial defence as part of it. I was convinced back then and I still believe that it would be impossible to invest anything better for guaranteeing the primary self-defence of Estonia as a small country and the first state on the border of NATO and the EU. I remember that you agreed with these opinions wholeheartedly." (E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014.)

[9] Ensign to the Finnish Marshal (in Finnish); Robert (Rain) Rebas (1916–2008) graduated from the Estonian Military School in 1936. He served in the Finnish Army in 1943 and 1944, including in the Estonian Regiment of the Finnish Army (JR 200).

to try to find common ground on something as important and expensive as national defence: "Every political party must sport some kind of vision of national defence and how much it would cost". Not a single party responded to my call, not even Pro Patria, the party of the Prime Minister. Thankfully, one of the members of the Riigikogu, Paul-Olev Mõtsküla, presented to us his personal vision.

Concept

The first full draft of our concept was completed by the 18th of January 1993. Just a week later, on the 27th of January, we sent this source document to the President of the Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Defence Committee of the Riigikogu, the Defence Forces Headquarters, the Defence League, the Border Guard Board, the Rescue Board, the Estonian Maritime Administration and the Institute of Cybernetics of the Estonian Academy of Sciences with a request to submit their opinions, both positive and negative, and their proposals for amendments by the 9th of February. By then we received responses from the Institute of Cybernetics and the Estonian Maritime Administration, and a few days later also from the Defence Forces Headquarters and the Riigikogu's National Defence Committee. I also sent these fundamentals to Dr Erik Terk, Director of the Estonian Institute for Future Studies, who was pleased to accept them and promised to work them over with his red pen.

The initial version of the concept emphasised the idea of Scandinavian-style total defence, i.e. military defence together with foreign policy, economic, civil and psychological defence, which seemed to be the only possible model for a poor, small state. We all agreed that conscription would be a perfectly natural, if not welcome, duty for citizens of the restored Estonia. We optimistically suggested that its duration should be 18 months. The idea was that every young citizen, boy and girl, should dedicate a year-and-a-half of service to his/her homeland: some in the Defence Forces and others in the social sphere, such as hospitals, pre-

schools and nursing homes. Comparing our nation to Israel,[10] we thought that this system would gradually help grow, join and blend Estonian society, fragmented during the Soviet era, back into a whole nation.

The peacetime composition of the Defence Forces foresaw an army with three or four regular units and single training units, the nucleus of a navy and a tiny air force. The wartime structure should include army units of general purpose (3–4 divisions as in 1940) and a well organised territorial defence (Defence League). But we also looked to the future. Cautiously, but decisively, we introduced an international dimension in our thinking – "Estonia integrates with Europe and cooperates with the collective security systems that follow the principles of the UN (CSCE, possibly also NATO, WEU), particularly with countries of Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region". In this boldly forward-looking spirit, we entered into the first cooperation agreement at the level of defence ministers with Latvia and Lithuania on the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in 1993. Despite the issuance of a proper press release by the Ministry of Defence, almost all of our media publications missed the event (!).

Suurupi on the 27th and 28th of February 1993

In addition to the names listed above, we sent the draft of the national defence concept to Kalle Eller's National Centre for Defence Initiative.[11] We invited all addressed institutions to a seminar about this subject, which was held in Suurupi on the northwestern coast of Estonia over the last weekend of February. Once there, we collegially went through our initial text, from start to finish. Together we resolved our disagreements

[10] The relationship between Estonia and Israel continued to develop well at the time. See: Hain Rebas, "Republic of Estonia on the road back to the West… Background and reality of the Israeli weapons deal 1992/1993", see this yearbook p. 231 ff.

[11] National Centre for Defence Initiative – the organisation established in autumn 1990 with the resolution of the Estonian government-in-exile on the basis of the members of the Defence League whose duty was to start building Estonian national defence. In early 1990, military ranks were still granted to the leaders of the restored Defence League by the government-in-exile. (Editor's note.)

and prepared the skeleton of a developed concept. Minister of the Interior Lagle Parek, members of the National Defence Committee Rein Helme and Jüri Põld and Colonel Kalle Eller attended, as did Colonel Laaneots from the Headquarters, while the Defence League was represented by its Commander Major Johannes Kert, the Border Guard Board by its Commander Major Andrus Öövel, the Rescue Board by Director Ants Hein, the Estonian Maritime Administration by Tarmo Ojamets and the Institute of Cybernetics of the Estonian Academy of Sciences by academician Ülo Jaaksoo. Secretary General of the Ministry Priit Heinsalu sat for two days at his computer and entered all of the amendments as they were made. Today, some twenty years post festum, we might state that this was the highest-level conference in Estonia until then – all of the top players in the area of national defence were present and working together towards a common national goal.

Afterwards, in the Ministry, Enn Tupp once more went through the results of the collective work in great detail and then I did the same, just as thoroughly. I then sent the results to my friend, internationally well-kown author and also a MP Jaan Kross for a final polish – he also had a background as a Tartu university lecturer in international law. He undoubtedly "had a pretty good command of Estonian".[12]

In the meantime Lieutenant Colonel Lembit Tõns, the Chief of Staff of the Centre for Defence Initiative, was asked to prepare his own defence concept. What he delivered was a page-and-a-half of text, more like an essay written by a secondary school student.

The above should show that as far as the Ministry of Defence was concerned, we did all that we could in a very short time to present a concept that was as broad as possible, competent, up-to-date, flexible, and also suitable for further development and legislative approval.

[12] Jaan Kross (1920–2007), one of the internationally best known Estonian writers, graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Tartu in 1945 and was a lecturer in the Chair of National And International Law of the same university from 1944–1946. (Editor's note.)

The 16th of March 1993 in the Riigikogu

Well before the relevant session, our draft of the "Concept of national defence", prepared in the elegantly polished Estonian of Jaan Kross, was distributed to all of the members of the Riigikogu. We wanted to give our honourable MPs, together with their fractions and parties, enough time to pore over the document before the official debate and voting ensued.

What transpired during the sitting of the Riigikogu on the 16th of March could have been comic were it not so appalling; we almost failed to introduce the actual topic![13] Once again the opposition, true to form, focussed on launching long and detailed personal attacks against the Defence Minister. The Defence League also had to take severe blows. The main attackers were MPs Eero Spriit, Tõnu Kõrda, Olev Anton, Toomas Alatalu, Kalev Kukk and, repeatedly the troika Arvo Junti, Tiit Made and Jüri Toomepuu.[14] Thankfully, there were also some who spoke out in support of the concept – MPs Rein Helme, Jüri Põld and Jaanus Betlem. Indeed, in our clearly open and flexible draft, we could perhaps have dealt with three or four of the 25 'shortcomings' that MP Peeter Lorents listed with great satisfaction. But, as I said at the time: Mr Lorents's "remaining suggestions were either already included in the concept, offered at a random level or slightly banal, like his own 'doctrine' that he launched with great enthusiasm."[15] Today, some twenty years post factum, I will spare the reader direct quotations of this debate, which degenerated to a remarkable low point in the parliamentary history of Estonia. At the time I even labeled the show 'grotesque', in *Rahva Hääl,*[16] the reprise of which

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[13] See: Verbatim report of the 2nd Session of the 7th Parliament, 16 March 1993, http://www.riigikogu.ee/?op=steno&stcommand=stenogramm&date=732268800 (accessed 5.9.2014).

[14] The intellectual level of MP Toomepuu is well characterised by his promise: "I could prepare a better document in three hours than the one Rebas managed in seven months. It's simple, really." (Allan Teras, "Tükk paberit Eestit ei kaitse," /A piece of paper will not defend Estonia/, *Õhtuleht,* 7.5.1993.)

[15] Hain Rebas, "Pokker riigikaitsega – kaardid avatud," /Playing poker with national defence – cards revealed/, *Rahva Hääl,* 20.3.1993.

[16] *Ibid*.

was issued on the 18th of March. In any event, there is no doubt that the final-year students from Tartu Treffner Gymnasium, whom I had just visited, had asked significantly more intelligent and pointed questions than did our MPs that Tuesday. That is what I thought then, and that is what I maintain today.

As we can read in the records of the Riigikogu session in question, we managed to give the opposition responses that were generally polite and factual enough. After being provoked several times by certain MPs with questions like '*why* do we even need national defence, *who* must we defend ourselves against, *who* could be our enemy here?' etc, etc, I sighed, pointed to my forehead and answered: "Our MAIN enemy here is nothing other than the prevailing post-Soviet mentality in your heads".[17] - So no, that day did not start well. I can only imagine how Herman Simm[18] and his mentors were smirking in the shadows.

As always, I left the Riigikogu with a formal little bow towards its presidium. Knowing that we had a strong majority in the hall, I had no concerns as I walked from Toompea down to the Ministry of Defence, which was located on Pikk Street at the time. However, when I arrived at the Ministry I learned, very much to my surprise, that the Riigikogu had torpedoed our concept! Instead of the expected 51 votes, we acquired only 43. This meant that eight MPs from our own government coalition had either a) deliberately sabotaged the draft prepared by the Minister/coalition of the ERSP or b) simply missed this important vote.[19] I then tried to discuss the events in the Riigikogu constructively and in detail in the media. Once again I emphasised the normal elasticity and openness of our concept. I also recommended that they be published so that readers/citizens/voters could learn first hand what the debate was about,

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[17] The records of the Riigikogu session say 'neo-Soviet mentality', but that term was and is unknown to me. It was 'post-Soviet' mentality'.

[18] High civil servant of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, who was convicted of espionage for Russia in 2009.

[19] Member of the coalition Kalju Põldvere later apologised in *Postimees* (Kalju Põldvere, "Kelle viimased päevad?" /Whose last days?/, *Postimees,* 23.3.1993), saying that he had accidentally pressed the wrong button when voting!

and to decide for themselves whether or not the blanket criticism was justified.[20] Nothing was published...

Responsibility

In this situation, I could not help but ask how this blow, how such an outcome, completely unimaginable in Western European parliaments, could have become possible. How could a remarkable majority immediately abandon a professionally prepared draft, presented as a proposition by their own coalition government? Or were there more personal considerations/weaknesses involved? Do we need to ask what our fraction's usually super-effective 'whips' – also the Prime Minister's close allies Illar Hallaste and Indrek Kannik – were doing at the session? Did they simply get themselves into a pickle? I find that impossible to believe about such well informed and capable men...

The result was still clear – our draft failed. But whose failure was it exactly? Was it the Minister's (mine), my party's, our coalition's? Or, did the MPs just use the occasion to sink the entire establishment of the national defence of Estonia as a whole, all of us who we met in Suurupi? Or – and I have to ask this as well – did the Riigikogu just shoot itself in the foot?

Or – perhaps the failure of the draft was caused *deliberately*? The fact is that it was around this time that the relationship I as an ERSP minister had with the Prime Minister's so-called 'back room' began gradually to deteriorate. So, from the point of view of the pro-active Pro Patria back room, this could well have been presented as the appropriate time and occasion to put this rather self-confident and independent Defence Minister in his place. This more conspirational version, that we have to pick up in another context,[21] helps to explain the obvious and surprising passivity of our Pro Patria fraction leaders in the Riigikogu and the failure of their professionalism.

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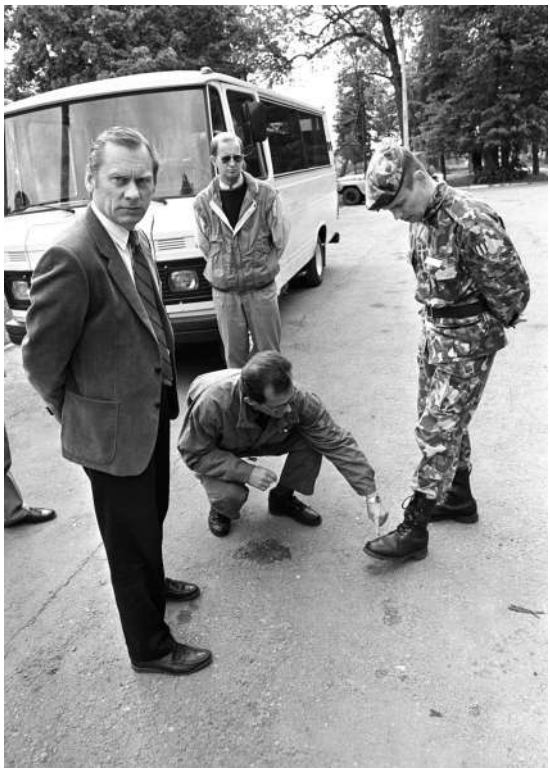
[20] Hain Rebas, "„Riigikaitse põhialuseid" saab tõepoolest paremaks muuta," /The Fundamentals of National Defence can be improved/, *Hommikuleht,* 6.4.1993.

[21] In author's memoirs to come.



Estonian Foreign Minister Trivimi Velliste and Defence Minister Hain Rebas (1st and 2nd from the left) during a visit to the Kalevi Infantry Battalion (May 1993). Peeter Langovits/Estonian Film Archives

Of course, neither the Ministry nor the Defence Forces Headquarters let the disappointing results of the Riigikogu session bother them. We carried on as we had done before and relied calmly on the same 'half-witted defence concept'. A couple of weeks later, in the western spirit of the concept, I sought out British General Garry Johnson, the Commander-in-Chief AFNORTH[22] or the NATO Allied Forces Northern Europe. He was residing in Kolsås near Oslo and I brought him to Estonia with his team of NATO generals in the following months.[23] The rest, as the Brits say, as far as Estonia and its ultimate security goal NATO are concerned, is history.

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[22] Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces Northern Europe; General Johnson held this office from 1992–1994. He then led the team that gave military advice to the Baltic States and introduced them to NATO high-level thinking.

[23] General Garry Johnson and his team arrived in Estonia on the 12th of July 1993.

Looking back and recommendations

What became of the concept? All of the defence ministers who came after me – Jüri Luik, Indrek Kannik, Enn Tupp and Andrus Öövel – worked on it for years with their teams.

The Riigikogu finally approved the 'Main Trends in the Defence Policy of Estonia', which were submitted by Minister Öövel, in 1996. One of its authors, Enn Tupp, commented that the 1996 document was nothing more than a "more verbose development of our fundamentals of national defence of 1993". "A modernising extrapolation" would be an even more precise description.

Almost twenty years later, in 2012, former Minister Tupp declared that with our concept of national defence of 1993: "[---] we were a bit ahead of time in developing the idea of our national defence, and our politicians were too blind to see our truths".[24] Tupp's poetic assessment 'blind' is figuratively correct, but only applies to certain members of the opposition. In addition to this 'blindness', some other personal characteristics came through in this transition period, such as meanness, envy, the sheep and widespread mob mentality and many other hereditary or acquired personal qualities that would interest serious social psychologists.[25] Also, the scandal-hungry Estonian media of the time, along with their Soviet era trained editors – who were generally devoid of all editorial ethics – would make interesting subjects for media researchers. And students of political science, with the capacity for reflection, are invited to examine when exactly in spring 1993 the 'back room' of Pro Patria/the Prime Minister started to move away from the ERSP and more toward the 'reasonable wing' of the Coalition Party of former communist bosses.

Finally, following from the sarcastic definition of a frog,[26] KGBist i.e., by my good old friend Prof Tönu Parming,[27] a major in the US Green

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[24] As stated, my increasing unpopularity in the Prime Minister's 'back room' must be added to the 'blindness' of the opposition.

[25] See the chapter about making someone a non-person in 1984 by George Orwell (1984).

[26] "If a man sits like a frog, moves like a frog, croaks like a frog, then he must be a frog!"

[27] Tönu Parming (1941–1998) was born in Estonia. In 1944 he and his parents escaped to Germany and later to the USA. He studied at Princeton and Yale and became a professor of

Berets, in 1992/1993 we had our own Arne Treholts[28] bossing around in the public life of Estonia. And Herman Simm was gaining momentum. All this to mean that our Security Police would have had a great deal to investigate. In 2014 General Laaneots stated the following about the events that occurred in the March 1993 Riigikogu: "Speaking of the counteraction of the politicians against you as a minister who came from the West, then irrespective of the weakness of the military intelligence of the time, I received several reports in 1991 and 1992 which stated that the KGB had established their agency in the ERSP and Pro Patria in good time, when the parties were still being formed. I informed the Security Policy of these signals. There were probably enough such people in the Riigikogu and the political parties, and in the propaganda that we did not need national defence. And the witch-hunt against you,[29] as someone who had come from the West, was also related to the activities of the special services of our 'friendly neighbour'".[30]

And so the Republic of Estonia, like a chess-horse often leaping two steps ahead and one aside, sometimes also taking a step back, like in the case of the 1993 defence concept, struggled successfully on westwards, in the direction of EU and NATO.

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sociology at the University of Maryland in 1981. He served in the US Army from 1962–1967 and fought in the Vietnam War.

[28] Arne Treholt – Norwegian politician (Labour Party), former deputy foreign minister in the bureau of maritime affairs, embassy counsellor of the Norwegian UN delegation and press officer of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mainly known as a strong "influence agent" for foreign powers. In 1985 he was sentenced to 20 years in prison for high treason and espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. He was released in 1992, lived in the Soviet Union for some time and then moved to Cyprus. (Editor's note.)

[29] There even was a *terminus technicus* for this in Mr Savisaar's Central Party, that I learnt from MP/author Jaan Kaplinski already in 1992/1993: 'rebasejaht', i.e. "fox hunting, i.e hunting for Rebas".

[30] E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014.

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Republic of Estonia on the Road Back to the West…

Background and Reality of the Israeli Arms Deal, 1992/1993

Hain Rebas

ABSTRACT

In the early 1990s not a single Western government agreed to sell arms to the newly independent Estonia. As the constitutional government of Mart Laar (1992) declared a strong interest in Western collective security, even NATO membership, Soviet weapons became unacceptable and insupportable. In contrast, a plentiful supply of highly vaunted Western arms was considered a guarantee for the Republic's continued independence and a precondition for future acceptance in Western security policy structures – and ultimately membership in NATO.

Estonian businessman Leonid Apananski had tested the waters for a weapons deal with Israel already in the autumn of 1991. After Mr Laar's government had taken office in October 1992, our negotiations and contacts with the Israeli partners continued in Tallinn, Israel and Helsinki. The contracts for a secret deal were signed in January 1993 in Tallinn. We purchased armaments for a reinforced light infantry division and they were up to NATO standard. At a cost of 60 million US dollars they turned out more expensive than Chinese or Romanian weapons, but decidedly less expensive than European equivalents. Since Estonia lacked the financial resources for such a purchase at that time, the deal became possible only due to a favourable hire-purchase method, which took into account the expected economic growth of Estonia.

The associated opportunities for increased economic, political and security cooperation with Israel, that the negotiated arms deal may have presented, were lost before they were fully envisaged. The Estonian side leaked details of the contract, thereby violating the agreement. Estonian revanchist 'former' politicians, shoddy post-Soviet media and the ill-informed public have mostly attacked

the Israeli weapons deal over the last 20 years, even resorting, at times, to anti-Semitic comments.

However, this deal was one of the most significant achievements of our first constitutional government. It was a breakthrough in arming the Estonian Defence Forces and sent a strong signal to Western security decision-makers, who were compelled to recognize Estonia as a partner to be taken seriously. I am personally proud to have contributed to landing the deal, which was endorsed by President Lennart Meri in Tallinn and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv. Even today (2014) our Israeli arms are an important element in the arsenal of the Estonian Defence Forces.

Background

As the Minister of Defence of the first post-war constitutional government, my work did not involve staffing, funding and structuring of the Ministry alone. My responsibility extended to reorganising the Defence Forces (National Defence Concept,[1] legislation, taking to task the mutinous (voluntary) light infantry company at Pullapää[2]), the dysfunctional Defence League, the 'red *polkovniks*', and procuring all kinds of equipment and material for our units. Our men basically lacked everything from socks and underwear to decent barracks, not to mention contemporary training and medical facilities and – oh, to dream! – apartments for officers. However, the most notable deficiency for the soldiers was weaponry. Only a well-armed national defence would be taken seriously.

When Mart Laar's government was appointed in October 1992, the Republic of Estonia was almost unarmed, with the exception of a couple

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[1] See Hain Rebas "Accidental or Deliberate Failure? Story of the First Defence Concept of Estonian National Defence of 1993", see this yearbook p. 217 ff.

[2] Hain Rebas, Raport minister Andi Meistri komisjonile, Tallinn, 23.8.1993; *idem*, "Eesti kaitseministri ametist lahkumine," – *Eesti Teadusliku Seltsi Rootsis aastaraamat = Annales Societatis Litterarum Estonicae in Svecia, 2000–2003, XIII* (Stockholm 2006,) 105–120; *idem*, "Kuid siiski…" Kaitseministri ametist lahkumine 1993. aastal," *Läänemaa Muuseumi toimetised* XI (2008): 132–156; Imre Kaas, *Jäägrikriisi anatoomia* (Tallinn: Pegasus, 2013).

of thousand[3] cheap Kalashnikov (AK-47) assault rifles manufactured in Romania. They were so imprecise that they were said to 'shoot around the corner'... Essential funds were lacking, too. For instance, the chief of supplies at the Ministry of Defence[4] routinely had to walk up to Toompea (the government's residence) to beg money for the Ministry's daily activities.

At the same time, we were seriously concerned about the fragile security of our fledgling state. Sergey Karaganov from our large eastern neighbour was formulating an aggressive foreign policy doctrine against Russia's 'near abroad'. Russia's Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev and Defence Minister Pavel Grachev made no attempt to hide their hostility towards Estonia. The mood around the mainly Russian-speaking city of Narva was constantly rebellious, and thousands of armed post-Soviet (now Russian) soldiers were carrying out manoeuvres in Estonia without any surveillance. The Russian 76th Guards Air Assault Division of Pskov and the *spetsnaz* units that had been training in Viljandi only recently, regrouped and continued activities just outside Estonia's southeast border. The country, and Tallinn in particular, was full of con men, mobsters from Krasnodar, Perm, and the Poultry Factory gang, agents and spies of many categories. The international metal business through 'Metallinn', supported by former KGB officers, was flourishing alongside all of the rubbish that this kind of activity attracts.

Our new government, which represented the spirit of the University of Tartu, was not prepared to tolerate this. The Constitution and referendum had given us a clear mandate to rehabilitate the state, to clean it up and to make the lives of Estonian people as normal as possible. We optimistically concluded that, to this end, we had to create a strong foundation on which we could build (as Archimedes had done in his day). We had to restore the Defence Forces of Estonia. If we had to, we would fight every possible enemy or attacker of the state. This meant that we had to secure weapons as quickly as possible: good weapons and many weapons.

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[3] Only two to three hundred Kalashnikovs were mentioned in public.

[4] Pointing out the weakness of the Ministry and especially its chief of supplies, Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces Colonel Laaneots spoke of him using the Russian word *бухгалтер* (accountant), which I understood very well, as I speak German. (Author's comment both here and hereinafter.)

This 'Israeli arms deal' topic has been the subject of heated polemics in Estonia for more than 20 years. However, unlike the debaters before me – of which there is certainly no shortage – I have tried to piece together the fragments of my recollections, the notes I took at the time, and the recollections of the individuals directly involved. Leonid Apananski, Priit Heinsalu, Ants Laaneots, Jaan Manitski, Jüri Pihl and Tiit Pruuli kindly let me profit from their recollections of the past.[5] Mart Laar also approved the text.[6] This database of sources, the contract itself (the English original) and the relevant protocols of the Riigikogu, provide a fresh angle to my account and make it possible to identify connections that have hitherto not been acknowledged. Despite this, I am not aiming for dissertation-style perfection, because archive materials and memories from the Israeli side have not been used.

Task and problems

Estonia had tried to procure weapons before the autumn of 1992, naturally. However, every modest attempt to contact the West in this regard had failed. Against this backdrop, there was no question but that our new weapons had to be 'Western', i.e. without a hint of anything Soviet – not, as they said, 'morally depreciated'. They had to be in line with the standards of NATO because we needed to demonstrate our firm desire to integrate with the West. However, Western leaders at the time generally held a

[5] Scientist and businessman Leonid Apananski was the one who actually built bridges with Israel and masterminded the weapons deal. Mathematician Priit Heinsalu was the Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence at the time. Retired General Ants Laaneots was a colonel and Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces. Economist Jaan Manitski was the Foreign Minister in Tiit Vähi's transition government in 1992 and later became a high-ranking state official. Jüri Pihl was the Director General of the Estonian Internal Security Service and later became the Minister of Justice. Journalist Tiit Pruuli was the closest adviser to the Prime Minister, historian Mart Laar, and proved to be the most operative member of his so-called back room. I would like to thank everyone for their kind support (and trust). I take full responsibility for any errors and (invalid) opinions. I have given delivered my e-mail correspondence with the persons named above to the Estonian War Museum.

[6] E-mail from Mart Laar to the author of 21 July 2014: "That's the way I remember it. Thank you for all your great work, back then and now."

pro-Russia perspective and did not entertain the notion that Russia may present a threat; nobody was prepared to sell us weapons. They all feared that this would weaken Holy International Stability. In fact, officials in Western capitals, especially in George Bush's Washington, distrusted us, largely unfamiliar 'Eastern Europeans' as we were seen, with Russian soldiers, armed to their teeth, roaming about our countryside.

Yes, we had received a lot of general and valuable military equipment, but no weapons. For example, the Prime Minister of Sweden, Carl Bildt, who was always very friendly towards us, visited Estonia as early as the 27th of October 1992. In answer to my requests, he promised to send us old Swedish winter uniforms (m/58), bicycles and skis,[7] but not the Mauser rifles of Hemvärnet[8] that were almost a hundred years old and earmarked for destruction (m/96). We were also denied the ability to purchase the old Walther PP cal. 32 handguns of the Swedish police, even though they were to be replaced.[9] The Walthers were sold far away in South America… No matter who looked at us, we were seen as a tiny, complicated and bothersome neighbour with difficult domestic and foreign problems.

Israel

But there was hope! Immediately after the government of Mart Laar took office, it became obvious that there was one Western state that would agree to sell us good, Western-style arms. That state was Israel, via its military manufacturer TAAS.[10] Estonian businessman Leonid Apananski had been given the signal in Tel Aviv, already a year before the inaugura-

[7] So-called (ironically) 'Vita blixten' or 'White Lightning'. We later discovered that the shipment of m/58 winter uniforms we received hid a number of pre-war second-hand uniforms m/39, which comes as no surprise to anyone who is familiar with the main motto of the warehouse chief of the army of any corner of the world: "Always send out as much outdated and damaged stuff as possible."

[8] The voluntary territorial national defence organisation of Sweden, similar to the Estonian Defence League.

[9] I looked into this with Jaak Jüriado and Jüri Adams of the Estonian National Independence Party in 1991 and 1992.

[10] TAAS-Israel Industries Ltd. (also Israel Military Industries Ltd. (IMI))

tion of our government.[11] He tells us (2014), that the prelude to the weapons deal began in early autumn of 1991 in the Palace Hotel restaurant in Tallinn. Old acquaintances from their time in the Academy of Sciences, Foreign Minister Lennart Meri and Leonid Apananski – both educated men who dared to think big – were having dinner. Their discussions of foreign policy concluded with their mutual understanding that the independence of Estonia could not be guaranteed by international, diplomatic recognition alone; it needed strong financial and military support. This meant economic independence, general acceptance by the world of finance, national defence capacity as recognised by our neighbours, and well-trained and well-armed Defence Forces. Apananski, a man with many international contacts, proposed that Estonia could try to procure weapons from Israel. The enthusiastic Foreign Minister found the idea appealing, if utopian.

The next chapter was written in Tel Aviv, where Apananski was permitted to meet Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin and his immediate circle via one of his acquaintances, who happened to be a family member of Rabin's. It became apparent that the opinion of leading Israelis about the future of Estonia coincided with that voiced in the Palace Hotel – free Estonia required guaranteed security in the form of arms and recognition of the world of finance. They also agreed that the USA and NATO members were least likely to provide weapons, and that Israel may be alone in extending this possibility. Despite Apananski's claim that a poor country like Estonia could not afford to purchase any large quantities of weapons, attorney Ran Gazit,[12] who had been authorised by the Republic of Estonia to enter negotiations, suggested an intriguing combination: namely, a national insurance company of Israel would pay for the transaction. Estonia could then be extended credit, i.e. the option to pay for the procurement in instalments, according to the country's future ability to make pay-

[11] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014. This long and detailed e-mail message is the main source of the overview of the following prelude.

[12] Attorney Ran Gazit was authorised by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Estonia Toivo Kuldsepp to represent the interests of the Republic of Estonia. His remuneration was paid by Mr Apananski. (E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.)

ments, a reasonable and low-risk assumption. To process the plan Estonian promissory notes were to be created. They would then be internationally recognised as securities, as they would be guaranteed by a country whose authority in the world of finance was unquestionable – Israel.

Back in Tallinn, Leonid Apananski again met with Foreign Minister Meri, who had decided to proceed with the plan, as he considered it to be consistent with Estonia's interests. It was surely evident to him that this may be the only real opportunity to procure the weapons Estonia needed. An official document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was issued, which appointed Mr Apananski the official representative of the Republic of Estonia in Israel. When he was received in the Foreign Ministry in Tel Aviv some time later, Prime Minister Rabin, via his bureau chief Eitan Haber, ordered the Israeli Ministries of Defence and Finance, the national insurance company, TAAS and other companies engaged in the military, to support Estonia's representative in any way they could.

Leonid Apananski now changed his playing field and won the support of the experienced Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia Ernst Jaakson in New York, with whom he met twice. Ambassador Jaakson was an old and cautious man and aware of the firm objection of the Americans, so he was sceptical about the success of the plan. Nevertheless, Apananski's old friend, entrepreneur and a leading politician of the Estonian Coalition Party, Riivo Sinijärv, who in 1993 himself became the Ambassador of Estonia to London and later the Foreign Minister, also supported the plan; he neither had faith in its success.

This entire prelude lasted from autumn 1991 to late summer 1992.[13] Then the results of the first constitutional presidential and Riigikogu elections in Estonia, due to take place in September 1992, were awaited. In September 1992 Lennart Meri was elected president and Mart Laar prime minister.

Meanwhile, by early June 1992, Leonid Apananski had managed to establish relations with Toomas Puura, deputy to Ülo Uluots, Defence Minister in Tiit Vähi's Coalition Party transitional government. On behalf of the Republic of Estonia, Mr Puura allegedly authorised Mr Apananski

[13] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

(using the official stationery of the Government Office) to communicate "with Authorities and Institutions of Israel for the procurement of weapons for the Armed Forces of Estonia".[14] I inherited Mr Puura from my predecessor Uluots when he left office at the end of October 1992.

My diary[15] reveals that I first met with Mr Apananski and Mr Puura by chance at Helsinki Vantaa Airport between 5.00 and 6.00 p.m. on the 19th of October. I was on my way to Tallinn to take up the position of Defence Minister. Suddenly, I saw a familiar face in the terminal – Colonel Laaneots! He was accompanied by two people I had not yet met. They introduced themselves as Leonid Apananski and Toomas Puura. They were on their way to Israel to study the Israeli arms industry and its products. General Laaneots recalls (2014): "Puura's suggestion to fly to Israel in October 1992 and take a look at their military industry (which was how he formulated it) was rather unexpected to me and came a short time before departure. He said nothing about purchasing weapons. I met Leonid Apananski for the first time right before departure."[16] In 1992 I already knew that Colonel Laaneots was an expert on weapons. When I asked Mr Puura directly during this chance meeting at Vantaa, he replied that yes, he was also an expert on weapons. "Great – let me know how it all went when you're back in Tallinn!" I invited, in conclusion of our meeting.

Apparently, Mr Puura had told the Defence Minister Uluots, that he had been dispatched by Mart Laar and that the Government Office would cover his expenses.[17] There are several reasons to doubt this.[18]

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[14] Government Office of the Republic of Estonia, 8 June 1992, No 1/6, copy in author's archive.

[15] I still have the beautifully bound DIN A4 hourly diary *Tidkalender* that I got from Sweden. I used to take rather meticulous notes of who I met, when, and sometimes also what we talked about and what conclusions we arrived at. All of the dates and times given in this article are taken from the diary.

[16] E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014.

[17] Ülo Uluots, "Mälestused" */Memoirs/* (serial), *Rahva Hääl,* autumn 1993; "The visit had been approved in advance by candidate Prime Minister Mart Laar", Toomas Puura, Presentation on Visit to Israel, 6 December 1992, copy in author's archive. Mr Apananski, for instance, covered his own travel expenses. (E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014).

[18] To Tiit Pruuli's knowledge, Toomas Puura did not receive any authorisation or recommendations for travelling to Israel before Mart Laar took office on 22 October 1992. (E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014).

After taking office in Tallinn at the end of October 1992, I soon suspected my inherited deputy of corrupt transactions with regards to both the huge real estate and property left behind by the Russian army and with weapons from Finland. When I encountered him again in the Ministry (he had never bothered to inform me of his return or of the outcome of his mission), I asked him to deliver a proper written report about his Israel visit. His report was poor – one page sparsely filled with handwritten text. I asked him for a new, detailed report with all documents, conclusions and proposals enclosed, "by 3:30 pm tomorrow, on my table".[19] Going through it with the author he immediately revealed his dilettantism about weapons. In fact, Colonel Laaneots with his very characteristic grimace had already managed to tell me as much on the 6th of November.

Colonel Laaneots had presented a long and matter-of-fact report with some modest ideas and progressive proposals. In Israel they had been introduced to the companies and products of TAAS as well as to weapons and equipment of Soviet origin that had been taken as booty from the Arabs and kept in warehouses after conservation. The possible purchase of weapons was only discussed during the last two days of the visit. Mr Puura had asked the Colonel to think about what the Estonian Defence Forces would need. Colonel Laaneots then drew up an *ad hoc* list, considering the weapons and equipment required for one light infantry division (*ca* 11,000–12,000 men). Money was not yet mentioned.[20] In the meantime, Mr Apananski had also visited the Ministry, leaving the impression of a well-informed and professional partner. According to the Prime Minister's diary, his first meeting with Mr Apananski had taken place on the 4th of November.[21] However, President Lennart Meri had already informed the young Prime Minister about the possibility of a weapons deal with Israel. From this point onwards we enjoyed the strong support of the Prime Minister.

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[19] Hain Rebas to Toomas Puura (official), Tallinn, 9 December 1992, copy in author's archive.

[20] E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014.

[21] E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

At the same time, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence Priit Heinsalu announced sardonically that Mr Apananski, who in addition to owning Revalia Bank also owned two insurance companies at the time, had offered him the opportunity to secure everything – property, equipment and staff – concerning the Defence Forces, for a certain percentage. To put it directly, Mr Apananski had allegedly lured him with an excellent opportunity to earn quite a bit on the side.[22] Actually, there was nothing sensational about such an offer at the time.[23] But the more we thought about the idea of buying weapons from Israel/TAAS, the more appealing became – it was like a hot cinnamon roll you just could not resist.

The 'Israel issue' was coordinated among others at the government session held on the 15th of November 1992.[24] On the following day, Mr Apananski and Colonel Laaneots discussed the plan with Prime Minister Laar.[25]

On the 19th of November I had a longer meeting with Colonel Laaneots and Mr Apananski during which the main topic of our conversation was, of course, 'Israel'.[26] The topic was gradually heating up.

A delegation from TAAS arrived in Tallinn on the 3rd of December 1992. We had a meal at Rataskaevu Restaurant. The Republic of Estonia was represented by Colonel Laaneots, Adviser to the Ministry Colonel Priks, Secretary General Heinsalu, Mr Apananski and Jaan Manitski, an old friend from Gothenburg who had been the Foreign Minister in Tiit

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[22] Priit Heinsalu, then Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence, recalls: "The rumour circulating in the Ministry and the General Staff, probably leaked from the Security Police, was that four or five men had been offered bribes in relation to the weapons procurement. Apparently, only one of them took the bait." (E-mail from Heinsalu to the author of 4 July 2014).

[23] The point of this article is not to reveal possible cases of corruption from 1992/1993. The relevant authorities of Estonia failed to do so then, and today it would be a largely hopeless and pointless endeavour from a legal point of view. Says Jüri Pihl, who was the Director General of the Security Police at the time: "[---] there were attempts to deceive the young Republic of Estonia, which had just regained its independence, and the businessmen involved had their own interests that weren't exactly in line with good business practice, but we didn't have anyone better at the time." (E-mail from Pihl to the author of 13 August 2014).

[24] Diary 92.

[25] E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

[26] Diary 92.

Vähi's transition government and whom I had invited to come along, [27] and I myself. Back then Mr Manitski was one of the very few people in Estonia who had a background in major international finance. The Israelis were represented by Dan-Erik Melamed-Lemkow, attaché of the Israeli Navy to Stockholm and the representative of TAAS in Northern and Eastern Europe (a man with a Swedish background). The 'company', in the form of Mr Apananski and lawyer Ran Gazit, operated as the energetic engineers of the transaction. I managed to establish a personal connection with Melamed-Lemkow. We were about the same age; he came from Stockholm, and I from Gothenburg. The conversation at the restaurant was clearly a probing and preparatory one. Namely, we in Estonia had decided to grab this opportunity with both hands. Now we wanted to find out how far we could go, how far we dared to go.

As expected, we initially discussed broader matters, such as the history and politics of Israel and Estonia. Only after establishing some mutual understanding and familiarity did we get to the main topic – the weapons. We discreetly discussed possible quantities and delivery options and similarly tentatively touched upon money and payment methods. Fortunately for us, the Israelis were interested and seemed gradually to begin to trust us. I dare to venture that the experience I brought to the ministerial role – as a university professor in Sweden, Germany, Canada and Estonia – served in part to advance our relationship. I had taught topics such as the history of the European Jewry and the conflict between Israel and Palestine – the war of 1948 and of 1956, the so-called Six-Day War of 1967 and the so-called Yom Kippur War of 1973. Similar to Prime Minister Mart Laar, an historian, I was also well informed about the tragic fate of Jews in Estonia.[28] We later discovered that our informed and sympathetic background and the clearly Western European stance of our government paid off in subsequent negotiations.

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[27] We both belong to the Estonian Students Society (EÜS) and were on the board of the Estonian Student Body of Gothenburg in the 1960s.

[28] See Raoul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994); the articles of Peter Puide from early 1990 in the Swedish and Swedish-Estonian media; Kopl Jokton, *Juutide ajaloost Eestis* (Tartu: TÜ trükikoda, 1992).

The Israelis insisted that both sides had to be most discreet or the transaction would be called off. Of course we agreed. They were feeling the cold breath of Big Brother from across the pond on their necks, and we on our side knew only too well who from the East would be hell-bent on sinking the deal.

Israel was discussed again at the government session of the 8th of December.[29] We also gave the Ministry of the Interior (border guards and police/security police) an option to order weapons and other equipment from Israel. Our primary objective was to fully equip one light infantry division, i.e. more than 10,000 men, with weapons from TAAS. No, we saw no reason to be shy or modest.

On the 9th of December Leonid Apananski and Jaan Manitski visited the Prime Minister to once again discuss the Israeli weapons deal.[30] It should be noted that at its session of the 10th of December, the government allocated 500,000 Estonian kroons for 'Chinese weapons'.[31] Among other items, we bought 3,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles and ammunition from China. It was only natural that we procured weapons and equipment from other countries as well to the extent we were able.

On the 11th of December Colonel Laaneots came to the Ministry in Pikk Street with a list of weapons he had mostly chosen himself, their quantities and the official price list of TAAS. Together we headed to Toompea to give detailed explanations to the Prime Minister.[32]

An important ceremony of the Jewish community in Tallinn was held in the History Museum at 1.00 p.m. the same day[33] and I went there on my own initiative to represent the Republic of Estonia. This came as a surprise and maybe even a shock to the older generation who had gathered there.[34] Of course the government had to gain and maintain the support of the local Jewish community. At the ceremony I again met the Israeli

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29 Diary 92.

30 E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

31 Diary 92.

32 Ibid.

33 I cannot remember the reason – it could have been Hanukkah.

34 My long friendship with Jakob Kaplan and Elhonen Saks dates back to this day.

Estonian Defence Minister Hain Rebas (on the right) and Danish Defence Minister Hans Hækkerup in the NATO Headquarters (Brussels, 1993). Private collection of Hendrik Praks

representation and also the Swedish Military Attaché, Colonel Sundkvist, a not insignificant figure in the context of this topic and article.[35]

At 10.00 a.m. on the 14th of December my diary notes "Puura", and at 2.00 p.m. "Puura, Heinsalu, Põder".[36] With the support of the Secretary General and the Ministry's lawyer, I invited my deputy – on suspicion of serious corruption – to leave the Ministry of his own accord that very afternoon. He complied. At 5.00 p.m. Mr Apananski, Mr Manitski and I arrived at the Prime Minister's office on Toompea.[37] Once again, we collec-

[35] Due to my Swedish military background (P 7, I 13, Fst Und/Säk: South Skåne Regiment, Dalarna Regiment, Military Intelligence and Security Department of the Supreme Commander Headquarters) I thought of Colonel Sundkvist as a colleague, 'one of us', which is what he also proved to be.

[36] Diary 92.

[37] The diary of Tiit Pruuli confirms the same. (E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014).

tively scrutinized every detail of the pending Israeli/TAAS weapons deal, which now had reached its decisive stage. We also touched upon the formal problems related to the dismissal of my Deputy Minister. Finally, late in the afternoon, we agreed with the Prime Minister that the maximum amount for which we could order weapons was to be 60 million US dollars.

Things now escalated considerably. On the 15th of December I entered two personal telephone numbers of Mr Apananski and one personal number of Colonel Sundkvist in my diary. At 6.00 p.m. that evening I flew to Helsinki with Colonel Laaneots, Mr Apananski and Mr Manitski. There we were first taken to the Estonian Embassy and then to the Hotel Hesperia. I stayed in room 852.[38] The next morning we were to hold a confidential meeting with the TAAS delegation at the Hotel Inter-Continental.

Preparations

The next question should be: how did Estonia prepare for this major political event that was aimed at breaking out of a vicious post-Communist circle, an event that could even be called historical? Were we really as naïve and helpless as we were depicted in many speeches and writings from those days and later?

My answer is that we did well, even very well. In any case we achieved the absolute best that was possible in Estonia at the time. In the meantime I had kept the President of the Republic *á jour* with the developments every two or three weeks during our late teas at Kadriorg Palace.[39] This is also where I regularly received the characteristically flamboyant feedback of Lennart Meri.

First of all, the *team*. There was no doubt that Colonel Laaneots, with his international background and battle experience, was the the Estonian who knew the most about the weapons produced in the world, and who was probably also the most knowledgeable about the arms trade. We

[38] Diary 92.

[39] Lennart Meri and I had been friends since 1979.

should note that US Colonel Aleksander Einseln, our first Commander of the Defence Forces, had not arrived in Estonia at this point. Also, as all of his subordinates knew, Colonel Laaneots was 'crazy about weapons', i.e. he had a personal interest in, even passion for, weapons. I felt very secure next to such a technical expert.

It is noteworthy that I did not take along anyone from my own Ministry – where staffing was still incomplete – as a financial expert. Instead, I invited former Foreign Minister Jaan Manitski, who, prior to arriving in Estonia from Sweden, had amassed a great fortune with international transactions for himself – and for the Swedish pop band ABBA. I had complete trust in him and in his abilities from the time we met in Gothenburg in the 1960s, when he graduated from the city's highly regarded Handelshögskolan. His education of course included international commercial law. Concluding, I could not imagine a more capable team then, nor could I imagine one now (in 2014). Furthermore I knew that we had the solid support of Kadriorg (the President) and Toompea (the government). This spurred us on and boosted our energy.

Secondly, Leonid Apananski. Of course he was a businessman with significant personal interests. As a person, he was always punctual, business-like, even friendly. It was later that I discovered that he had quickly established relations in the governing Israeli Labour Party, even in the government, and knew a family member of legendary Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In other words, Mr Apananski was a capable and intriguing person, but completely unfamiliar to me. In the interests of national security, and also to cover my own back, I ordered two background checks on him from two different sources – one from the Estonian Security Police, and the other from the Israelis. I presumed that if the latter – the world champions in intelligence – found nothing suspicious about him, then we too could carry on working together. Israeli Attaché Melamed-Lemkow gave me that reassurance.

The background check done in Estonia was prepared by Director General of the Security Police Jüri Pihl, who personally delivered it to me in the Ministry. We went through it together over a cup of coffee. There was nothing very sensational in it, and above all, no three letters acronyms... I smiled and decided to ask Pihl later about his statement

that Mr Apananski "in the past had financed the trips abroad of many leading Estonian politicians". I wondered: whose trips, why and for what purpose? This document, signed by Mr Pihl, is probably still gathering dust in a safe or archive of the Ministry of Defence. In the end my possible concerns were satisfied by the reports that Mr Apananski did not appear to have anything obviously suspicious about him. In other words, we were dealing with a professional in international economic matters. However, I rejected his friendly offer to pay the travel expenses of our delegation to Helsinki: "The expenses of the delegation of the Republic of Estonia will be paid by the Republic of Estonia," I confirmed.

Thirdly, *weapons and their prices.* Naturally, we did not only look at the quality, indicators and compatibility of the weapons and other equipment offered by TAAS; we also looked at the prices. To get a better overview we certainly compared them to the weapons and prices of other producers. I remember well sitting in my office, surrounded by all kinds of colourful catalogues and price lists. But as this was still relatively unfamiliar territory, I wanted additional assurances, and so I contacted the Swedish Attaché, Colonel Sundkvist, as 'one of ours'.[40] I asked him to quietly investigate the quality and prices of TAAS's weapons and tell me his findings. That is exactly what he did.

So, all three of us – the Defence Forces Headquarters or Colonel Laaneots personally, the Ministry, in other words I myself, and Colonel Sundkvist – arrived at the same conclusion: the weapons, i.e. all these Uzis, Galils, Negevs, MAPATS and whatever they were called, complied with NATO standards and were of high-quality.[41] The main weapon, the Galil assault rifle, was a modification of the bulky AK-47 or Kalashnikov of the Russians.[42] If the mechanism of the Galil could handle the dust

[40] Myself, Colonel Sundkvist and Carl Bildt's special envoy Lars Peter Fredén (see his books *Förvandlingar: Baltikums frigörelse och svensk diplomati 1989–1991* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2004) and *Återkomster: svensk säkerhetspolitik och de baltiska ländernas första år i självständighet*, 1991–1994 (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006)) agreed that we as a principle were not primarily working for special, ecxlusive national interests of Sweden or Estonia, but at considerably broader common and overlapping goals – getting life in the Baltic Sea region back to normal.

[41] Colonel Aleksander Einseln, who arrived in Estonia later, was very sceptical about MAPATS.

[42] The Galil was much bulkier than the American M16, but more accurate than the Kalashnikov.

and sand of the Sinai desert, it could certainly handle wet and melting snow in Estonian forests. And every soldier knows that just like engines, weapons also have to be oiled differently in different conditions! We soon learned that Israel had delivered its weapons all over the world, including the highly quality-conscious Switzerland and South Africa, but of course not to Arab countries. In terms of Israeli arms I could not even imagine anything below the highest level, as Israel is almost constantly at war and adjusts its weaponry according to the changing times and improvements of its enemy.[43] The knowledge that their enemies used Soviet or Russian weapons added a certain spice.

The only negative aspect of the Israeli/TAAS weapons was the price: they seemed to be horrendously expensive. In any case, we dared to hope for a decent discount because of the large quantity we were going to order and because of all the accompanying off-sets and spin-offs we were thinking of.

Goals and mutual interests

Our negotiations with the TAAS delegation revealed that the Israelis were mainly interested in four things in Estonia. Firstly, Estonian forests and forest products – since they do not have the kind of ancient woods we do. Their population was growing strongly at the time due to the inflow of immigrants and they needed facilities, structures and houses, i.e. logs. Here, Estonian children who had finally been released from Soviet conditions, needed vitamins and healthy food. We sometimes even discussed

[43] I hereby disagree with the official confidential opinion of Auditor General Hindrek Meri of 4 August 1995 ("Loe riigikontrolör Hindrek Meri salajast kirja valitsusele aastast 1995," / Read a secret letter from Auditor General Hindrek Meri to the Government from 1995/, *Eesti Ekspress*, 15.6.2012, http://ekspress.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/loe-riigikontrolor-hindrek-meri-salajast-kirja-valitsusele-aastast-1995.d?id=64544584 (accessed 5.9.2014).), that "some of the weaponry is unsuitable or unusable due to our climatic conditions". I regret that I was away from Estonia in 1995 and that Hindrek Meri did not consult me about this. Besides, he failed to consider the actual and security policy situation in 1992 and 1993 in his bureaucratic and anachronistic presentation.

primitive barter deals – Estonian forests for the Israelis for Jaffa oranges and other fruits and vegetables for us.

Secondly, our Israeli partners had noted with concern that hostile Islamist organisations were getting closer to Europe through Russia. Apparently, Islamist cells were already present in Riga. Tallinn would then have been an excellent base for Israeli counter-intelligence. Thirdly, they were naturally hoping for foreign policy support from Estonia in the UN and elsewhere. The fourth aspect was the opening of a new eastern market via Tallinn, especially for the export of weapons. Exporting Estonian oil shale technology to Israel also seemed possible at the time. These, however, were topics for the Prime Minister and other ministers to discuss.

There have been claims in the media that the Israelis demanded, probably for Yad Vashem and the Wiesenthal Centre, archive materials about the crimes against humanity committed in German-occupied Estonia (1941–1944). Nobody ever requested such materials from me.[44]

So our major strategic decisions had been made: Estonia and its fledgling defence forces had to integrate with the West as quickly as possible; Israel/TAAS (who had their own specific interests in Estonia) were our only option for procuring western-style weapons; and cooperation between the Estonians and Israelis kept moving towards ever more interesting projects.

As our trust in each other increased, we found a principal payment system that satisfied both parties, i.e. the multi-annual credit or hire-purchase solution that the Israelis had proposed. No amounts had yet been discussed. We did not expect any pleasant surprise in ths regard. At the same time, we pinned our hopes on Estonia's economic growth that had been forecasted for the coming years, as it would reduce the debt burden every year.

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[44] Years later, I heard that the materials of the notorious Klooga concentration camp that were kept in the Estonian History Museum had been sent to Israel. They can now be seen in the permanent exhibition of Yad Vashem. (E-mail from Toomas Hiio to the author of 20 June 2014). In 1993, the Israelis requested material about Evald Mikson, but were denied. (E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014).

Alongside weapons, we also requested instructors to teach our soldiers how to use them, as was customary. And whenever weapons instructors arrive, tactics instructors are not far behind. All of our existing tactics instructors came from the incondite Soviet army. We now needed junior and senior officers used to western-style warfare, who would first show us how to place these new weapons in position and then how to use them as a system in mutual cooperation, in defence and attack, from platoons up to brigades. This way, with the help of Israel, we would have taken a huge step forward in training our Defence Forces.

And speaking of expensive weapons, it is also necessary to maintain and repair them as required and to produce (cheap) ammunition, spare parts and other simpler products for ourselves. In these areas at least we wanted to be self-sufficient from the very beginning. This is why the Ministry of Defence planned to restore Arsenal – the pre-war Estonian military industry. The Israelis promised to help us with their expertise in this venture as well.

Throughout this time Leonid Apananski and Ran Gazit worked as tireless and inventive liaison officers between Estonia and TAAS, until our entry into the contract, and even thereafter.[45]

And last but not least, with the tactics instructors present, why not invite instructors in border-guarding and anti-terrorism? We definitely needed them. Because who knew what was in store for us? The Israelis were, and still are, among the top players in the world in these areas. For this reason, and on my initiative, we invited the former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Forces and present member of the management of TAAS General Dan Shomron to Estonia. He was a legend who in 1976 had brilliantly commanded the release of the hijacked Israeli plane and hostages at Entebbe Airport in Uganda. General Shomron visited Estonia from 21–23 March and met with the President and Prime Minister. Unfortunately, his presentation for our officers seemed to have no visible impact on them.[46]

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[45] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

[46] See Google and Wikipedia, for example: "Entebbe" and "Dan Shomron"; "[Situation is Critical] Assault On Entebbe Full Documentary," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v

In sum, I maintained then, as I repeat today (2014), that we had done our homework as well and exhaustively as we could, considering the conditions in Estonia at the time. We arranged the best possible team, with everyone's roles well defined and coordinated, and both Toompea and Kadriorg supported us. Our partners were also seriously interested in further cooperation. We were feeling good as we went into the battle of negotiations in Helsinki.

Negotiations in Helsinki: Wednesday, the 16th of December 1992

Over brunch at the InterContinental in Helsinki, it took us a couple of hours to prepare a contract that was more or less fit for signing. Colonel Laaneots showed remarkable grit and professionalism. This is how he remembers the events: "The negotiations with the representatives of TAAS were difficult. They started by telling me that most of the heavy weapons on the list I'd sent Israel would be left out, as the amount for purchasing them was too small. This concerned howitzers, 120-mm mortars and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. I still tried to stick to procuring complete weaponry and equipment (communication devices, flak jackets etc.) for 11,000 to 12,000 men. It was hard work, but we more or less achieved it after battling it out for several days. Our partners were not happy with us; I reckon they thought their profit was too small."[47]

=TTEkQcYS0w8 (accessed 5.9.2014); see also the feature film "Operation Thunderbolt" (Israel, 1977), YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFeDt0eVcTE (accessed 5.9.2014).

[47] E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014. Laaneots also wrote: "They tried to make up for it later (i.e. in spring 1994) by shipping 50 used 23-mm anti-aircraft cannons to Estonia. Fortunately, we opened it immediately and started complaining at the levels of both the General Staff of the Defence Forces and the Ministry. In order to avoid scandal, TAAS promised to immediately send us new cannons and we could keep the old ones as a gift." This outcome did not really come as a surprise. (See also reference number 7.) The warehouse managers of the Israeli army saw our impressive order as a golden opportunity to freely rid themselves of their scraps. Mr Apananski added in explanation of the circumstances: "The price of the Russian anti-aircraft cannons ZU-23-2 in the contract was just the price of delivery, so they were basically free. After the public scandal broke, I met with Mr Rabin and convinced him that ordering new

In the meantime Mr Apananski was manoeuvring in the background, discreet and steady as always. In addition to the general national goal, i.e. the successful completion of the weapons transaction to improve Estonia's international reputation and create Estonian securities in the format of promissory notes, he of course also had certain personal interests. However, as professionals, we did not stick our noses in his wallet. At home, Mr Apananski seemed to have two significant interests, which he also repeatedly presented to the Prime Minister: the privatisation of international Viru Hotel, and some real estate left behind by the Russian army.[48] It is to be noted that my dismissed Deputy Minister had tried to deal with the same properties. Neither of them got what they wanted. However, Mr Apananski later claimed with some degree of satisfaction that with our weapons deal he earned "crazy profits, also in the material sense", but even more so in terms of international advertising. "The transaction boosted my reputation considerably. I made many profitable business agreements after it."[49]

The Israelis were professional in Helsinki and their attitude towards us was "interested, but restrained"[50] – they were friendly but stubborn.[51] At first, they hadn't even understood why their political leaders had ordered them to deal with us – after all, we were so far away, and moreover, we had been part of their former enemy, the Soviet Union. But step by step trust grew and the suspicions of the Israelis regarding the Estonian government were allayed.[52]

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cannons and delivering them to Estonia would be cheaper than getting smeared with the lies published by the Estonian media. He agreed. TAAS ordered 50 new cannons from Bulgaria and delivered them at its own cost." (E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.)

48 E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

49 Astrid Kannel, "Leonid Apananski teenis Iisraeli-Eesti relvatehingult tohutut kasu," /Leonid Apananski earns huge profits on Israeli-Estonia weapons deal/ (interview), *Sõnumileht,* 2.11.1995.

50 E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

51 The Israeli delegation consisted of Vice President of Marketing for TAAS Razi Dotan, Vice President of TAAS to Northern Europe Zvi Urbach, Sales Manager Yoram Bar-am and our old acquaintance Attaché Melamed-Lemkow. They were all former officers of the Israeli armed forces.

52 E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

TAAS did not agree to sell us the US-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, as they were subject to an American resale ban. We would have been unable to afford them in any case. In the area of air defence, we had to settle for a couple of Strelas (which may have been privately procured in the meantime) and the 23-mm Sergeys,[53] which the Israelis had taken as trophies and which were very familiar to our men.

Thanks to Mr Manitski's successful negotiation spurt, we even managed to gain a few percent off the total price. Yes, the weapons ended up being more expensive than the familiar Chinese, Bulgarian and Romanian ones, but cheaper than the Western European, i.e. German, Belgian and British equivalents – meaning that the final price landed more or less at the same level as the US weapon prices. We had no choice anyway.

Signing and what happened next

The contract for purchasing weapons between the Republic of Estonia and TAAS was approved after new and even tougher negotiations on the night of the 6th of January and signed in the White Hall in Toompea on the 7th of January 1993. I can see from my diary that I had a meeting with Foreign Minister Trivimi Velliste[54] at 5.00 p.m. the previous day. It is of course easy to reconstruct the topic of our conversation in retrospect. I would like to emphasise that this was also a completely new transaction for Israel – their first big business deal in a post-Soviet country using a credit system that was also new to them. This means that we, the new government of the poor Estonia, were trusted both politically and economically. This in itself must be seen an achievement.

Upon signing my name on the bulky contract, which consisted of seven parts, on the one hand I felt both pride and joy: look, we succeeded, we did it! On the other hand, I was somewhat alarmed by the mammoth amount for which I was to be responsible until 2000. Fortunately, the

[53] Official name ZU-23-2.

[54] Diary 93. Of course, there is no mention of a document that was signed in this diary, kept by the secretary of the Ministry since 1993. It was top secret, after all.

Government Office was to be in charge of all future payments. There was no money for this in the budget of the Ministry of Defence. As always, signing such a significant contract was followed by a formal dinner, in this case with the Prime Minister and the Israeli delegation.[55]

As I have already mentioned, the contract was strictly classified. However, due to our negligence its content was quickly leaked, partly via Kuku Radio and partly via our Ministry of Foreign Affairs,[56] and the US newspaper the Philadelphia Inquirer. Its revealing article was followed by a stern diplomatic note from Russia to the United States, who sent an inquiry to Israel. The latter replied coldly that TAAS was an independent company and operated in its own business interests.[57] On the morning of the 9th of January 1993 Rein Lang's Kuku Radio spoke about negotiations "to purchase a large batch of weapons from Israel, intermediated by Leonid Apananski".[58] Yes, we were embarrassed. The attitude of TAAS towards us after this blunder was obviously 'reserved' for quite some time.[59]

On the 3rd of February we were still playing poker with the Estonian public about the weapons deal. We and the Prime Minister neither confirmed nor denied the allegations that Estonia was planning to buy weapons from Israel. I kept emphasising that we would of course buy them if they could be sold us and we could afford them.[60] However, two days later, on the 5th of February, the Government paid the first instalment of 5 million dollars to TAAS.

Reiterating the content and details of the contract and the almost hysterical attacks we were subjected to in Estonia seems pointless, and

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[55] Also e-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

[56] Foreign Minister Trivimi Velliste of Pro Patria did not respond to any of the three queries I sent him. The nondescript response of his official Eerik-Niiles Kross in USA claiming that everything was already known in Washington has been preserved. (E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014).

[57] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

[58] E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

[59] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

[60] Aarne Mägi, "Eesti peab relvaostukõnelusi mitme riigiga," /Estonia in talks with several countries to buy weapons/ (interview), *Päevaleht,* 3.2.1993; Kalle Muuli, "Läbimurre Läände: Eestile 50 miljoni dollari eest Iisraeli relvi?" /Breakthrough to the West: 50 million dollars' worth of Israeli weapons for Estonia?/, *Postimees,* 4.2.1993.

responding to them so long *post festum* even less sensible.[61] But – boom! Suddenly, all over we had all these big, albeit unknown, security policy experts in both the Estonian media and the Riigikogu, crawling out of the woodwork with their vivid imaginations and 'knowledge'. And we suddenly had all these exceptional specialists on international weaponry! But there were exceptions as well.[62] Sometimes we even received some support, but the cheering of our supporters was hardly heard amid such loud noise. This racket – irresponsible in regard to the state and its people, as well as *ad hominem* – lasted for weeks and occasionally even signalled a latent anti-Semitism.[63]

For quite some time, this politically-inspired reaction seriously interfered with our partnership with TAAS. It also jeopardized all promising cooperation opportunities with Israel in the future, and – it was all triggered by our own people.

Also, the Government Office of our poor state did not turn out to be the most reliable maker of payments.[64] As the signatory of the contract, I complained to the Prime Minister on the 7th of June 1993: "I see it as my duty to report that the payment orders from the Government Office

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[61] All records of the Riigikogu, newspapers and magazines from those days are available online and in libraries and archives.

[62] I am pleased to recall the expertise of Sulev Hallik (Sulev Hallik "Kaitseminister Hain Rebas: asi liigub, ja see on pinnuks silmas nn. endistele ja ringkondadele väljaspool Eestit," / Defence Minister Hain Rebas: Things are moving and it's a thorn in the side for the so-called 'former' and circles outside Estonia/ (interview), *Pühapäevaleht*, 6.3.1993), Juhan Paju (Juhan Paju, "Paar sõna kaitseministri kaitseks," /A few words in defence of the Defence Minister/, *Lääne Elu* 2.3.1993), Peeter Tali (Peeter Tali, "Kaitseminister Hain Rebas: kaitsejõud vajavad intelligentseid inimesi," /Defence Minister Hain Rebas: Defence Forces need intelligent people/, *Postimees*, 2.3.1993), Mihkel (Michael) Tarm (Mihkel Tarm, "David prepares for Goliath. An interview with the new Estonian minister of defence, Hain Rebas," *Talinn City Paper* Nr 6, Winter 1993) and Mihkel Tiks (Mihkel Tiks, "Kas Eesti suudab ennast kaitsta?" /Can Estonia defend itself?/ (interview), *Rahva Hääl* 23.7.1993 and 24.7.1993).

[63] In the style of George Orwell's classic novel *1984* (1948), there were obvious attempts to stomp the Defence Minister (and others) into the ground and to turn him into a non-person. For example, the management of Estonian Television boycotted me from October 1992 to May 1993. They let people attack and revile me, but offered no chance to respond, to explain what was going on in Estonia's national defence and what we were planning to do. At the time, I spoke more about Estonian national defence on Swedish, Finnish and German TV than on ETV.

[64] E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

to Israel are chronically late. This means that *ca* 1.8 million of taxpayers' money has already been spent on default interest to the bank that intermediates the payments. I am truly indignant, as I have pointed this out before. The fact that the payment due on 20 May was late by 17 days means that once again we 'gift' 897,164.79 kroons to the bank. Why? Whose fault is this? Who keeps squandering the money of the taxpayers of the Republic of Estonia?"[65] I received no response. And so Mr Apananski again had something to iron out in the bureau of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

It has been discussed and debated whether the government's maintaining silence and keeping the contract a secret actually gave the opposition ammunition?[66] Without a doubt, the storm of criticism and vilification of the contract – and those who signed it – still dominates in the Estonian media. Yes, it is easy to speculate, especially *post factum.* But secrecy was the non-negotiable preconditions of the contract. Without it, nothing would have worked. We can therefore affirm that by staying silent, the government suffered a loss at the tactical media level, but won (despite numerous obstacles) in long-term strategic terms. Namely, the weapons we ordered arrived and stayed.

Moving on: spring/summer 1993

Despite the heated arguments around the contract, Prime Minister Mart Laar himself pushed its ratification through in the Riigikogu in spring 1993. I am personally grateful to him for doing so. There is no doubt that he was better at these verbal street fights than all of the expatriate Estonians who were in Tallinn at the time.

Our Estonian Air pilots flew the first set of weapons to Estonia on the 17th of May. It had to be done in secret, as it was against all international security rules. We were in a rush, and a bit scared as well. An ordinary passenger plane was used to conceal the transaction (it was

[65] Original in the Prime Minister's archive, copies in the archives of the Ministry of Defence and the author. See also Raivo Palmaru, "Põhja-Eesti Panga saladused," /Secrets of the North-Estonian Bank/, *Eesti Sõnumid,* 30.8.1995, 1–2.

[66] Mart Laar, *Eesti uus algus* (Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2002), 160.

filled with weapons and ammunition!) and it arrived in Estonia following complicated and dangerous airways. This operation, which was diligently, if regrettably, made public by *Eesti Ekspress,* was also followed by an unpleasant exchange of diplomatic notes.[67] Then, on a nice summer evening, we organised a dinner for our brave pilots as a modest expression of our gratitude. I was also impressed by the inventiveness and flexibility of Mr Apananski in coming up with and organising this mode of transport.[68]

We showcased the new weapons to the Prime Minister and the press on the Aegviidu training range just a week later, on the 22th of May. It was a lovely early summer day. The Prime Minister's smile was as bright as the sun. The new weapons worked, everything was fine, the onlookers were excited. The Prime Minister held a mini-Uzi gently in his arms like it was a baby, and the somewhat reluctant Defence Minister too had to try a mini-Uzi. However, a terrible accident occurred at the end of the event – a cadet was killed because he and his chief had both been negligent. By this point I had already left the training field with the Prime Minister, but the incident certainly marred an otherwise successful day. A few weeks later, on the 10th of June, officers invited me to try the new Galil sniper rifles from 400 metres at a shooting range near Tallinn. They were very much OK.

Then, in his usual energetic manner, and on the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of the 13th of June 1993, Mr Apananski organised the visit of one of our most impressive delegations to Israel in June 1993. I can see in my diary that I met with Mr Apananski at 2.00 p.m. on the 30th of June.[69] What else could we have talked about except Israel? Our delegation consisted of Prime Minister Laar, Minister of Economic Affairs Toomas Sildmäe, Ambassador Alar Olljum, the 'Special Assistant to the Foreign Minister in Relations to Israel' Leonid Apananski and Adviser to the Prime Minister Tiit Pruuli.

Pruuli wrote: "The role of Apananski in preparing the visit cannot be underestimated. He came to see us (i.e. in the Office of the Prime Minis-

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[67] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

[68] It is usual for people who invent and put together big business plans (so-called consultants) to earn good consultation fees.

[69] Diary 93.

ter. *Author*) several times to discuss which business people we could meet with [---]. He advised us to work with attorney Avi Pelossof, who communicated directly with the Head of Rabin's Bureau Haber [---]."[70] *Post festum,* Leonid Apananski rated Pruuli's inventiveness and agility equally highly.[71]

The programme prepared for the Estonian delegation was packed with meetings. The Estonian Prime Minister visited the President, the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Knesset, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Trade and Economic Affairs. The delegation also visited the Ministry of Defence and had a meeting with the management of TAAS. An agreement was made about the formation of a joint workgroup of the Ministries of Defence, which was obviously about the production of ammunition. Introducing new types of telephones to Estonia and building wind generators on the blustery coastline of Estonia were also discussed. And finally, a cultural contract was entered into and signed by the Prime Ministers.[72] Plans were made to invite the Estonian Defence Minister with a workgroup to Israel in August 1993 to launch the formation of an Estonian rapid reaction unit with the help of Israel – something our Defence Forces definitely needed.[73]

And what came of all this? In hindsight, we might seriously ask why this all went to waste – why did all these excellent plans came to nothing apart from the weapons transaction?

In early August 1993, having been disavowed three times by my superiors,[74] I resigned as Defence Minister in relation to the so-called Pullapää crisis. I am therefore not responsible for the subsequent phases[75]

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[70] E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

[71] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014. Avi Pelossof was a family member of Yitzhak Rabin.

[72] E-mail from Pruuli to the author of 15 July 2014.

[73] When I sought to present this promising scheme to Acting Minister of the Interior Kaido Kama a few weeks after my resignation, he did not even bother to see me.

[74] By Prime Minister Mart Laar, Acting Prime Minister Trivimi Velliste and the Chairman of my own ERSP party Ants Erm, all in relation to the Pullapää crisis. See reference number 2.

[75] Regarding the weapons and their quality, see Toe Nõmm, "Eesti sõdurid ei pea oma varustust häbenema," /No need for Estonian soldiers to feel embarrassed about their equipment/ *Eesti Ekspress,* 9.11.2011.

and complications[76] of the weapons deal. Nor will I make any more comments about the related media battles. However, I was and I still am convinced that the first strikes in January and February 1993 against our nicely progressing cooperation with Israel emanated from three directions. Firstly, they came from the evident enemies of our state, the so-called 'formers' (former Communist bosses), who still missed the Soviet Union and the journalists and editors that were still loyal towards them. Secondly, some of our *über*-nationalists from another corner of the world loudly joined this destructive game, especially as they happened to carry their own weaponry company in their back pocket. As the third hostile group I would mention the mass of people who always jump on every bandwagon. Together they delivered a fatal blow against the cooperation between Estonia and Israel with their exceptionally loud anti-Israeli noise ('Jewish guns' etc.) when the so-called 'trophy weapons' arrived in spring 1994 .[77] Of course, there were exceptions, decent and understanding reactions, but they hardly came through.

Our relationship with Israel was ended for good that spring by the defiant opposition of the Prime Minister and the new Commander of the Defence Forces, General Aleksander Einseln from the US. He had been against our relationship with TAAS from the very beginning. As he was leaving the Aegviidu training range after the showcasing of the TAAS weapons in May 1993, he provocatively declared that the American M14 (used in the Vietnam War) was the best infantry weapon.[78] The result was that after spring 1994 there were no further developments in relations between Estonia and Israel other than the already agreed upon weapons, payments and – court cases. However, foreign banks gradually began to

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[76] Experts were not surprised that such larger quantities of weapons and amounts of money led to friction, disagreements, mutual accusations and court cases. This is a tedious daily occurrence in the big world, which is why international arbitration tribunals have been established.

[77] See the brief and constructive explanation given by Colonel Laaneots, reference number 47. Apananski: "Some may think that getting 50 new anti-aircraft cannons to Estonia was a massive victory for us, but the end of the development of any further business relationships between us was the result of Estonia's arrogance and impudence (to put it mildly)." (E-mail of Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.)

[78] E-mail from Apananski to the author of 22 July 2014.

finance Estonian private businesses and open lines of credit, incl. for the companies belonging to Mr Apananski.[79]

Summary

Yes, Estonian politicians failed to turn the support of Israel into an internationally transparent opportunity. Because of the counteractions of 'homespun and inexperienced, often petty and rivalling men', we did not manage to develop the planned wide-ranging contacts with Israel. [80] I had no doubts then and I am still convinced that our eastern neighbour was constantly meddling and interfering in every way possible.[81]

Still, our Israel arms deal allowed us to fully equip a light infantry division and make a security policy breakthrough to the West. Namely, people in Western capitals now began taking us more seriously and gradually started to sell, lease and even donate weapons to us.[82] We certainly built a strong foundation for the development of our Defence Forces with the Israeli weapons deal. The state's security, defence capacity and

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[79] *Ibid*.

[80] E-mail from journalist Marica Lillemets to the author of 4 July 2014.

[81] In spring 1993 the Head of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs Olav Fageland Knudsen spoke about 60 officials in the headquarters of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) whose main task was to keep an eye on the Baltics. We can only guess how many thousands of agents this successor of the KGB dispatched to the Baltics and how many hundreds of them were active in Estonia and Tallinn. On the 13th of March 1993 Stockholm's *Dagens Nyheter* quoted the chief of information of the SVR Juri Kobaladze, who allegedly said that "we're very interested in what's going on in the Baltics". See Hain Rebas, "Vad väntar sig de baltiska staterna av Europa?" *Kungl. Krigsvetenskapsakademiens handlingar och tidskrift = The Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences proceedings and journal* 4 (1994): 70, 57–72. E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014: "[---] I informed the Security Policy about these signals as well. There were probably enough such people in the Riigikogu and the political parties, and the propaganda that we didn't need national defence and the witch-hunt against you as someone who had come from the West were also related to the activities of the special services of our 'friendly neighbour'."

[82] Then Prime Minister Mart Laar also writes: "[---] it was a real breakthrough that opened up opportunities to procure weaponry from the West for Estonia and also for the other Baltic States." [Laar, *Eesti uus algus*, 160.]

the people's will to defend their country all increased. Perhaps, as Prime Minister Mart Laar claims, it also hastened the withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonia.[83] In any case, the transaction led to the recognition of Estonia in the world of finance and was an important stage in the developing relationships of Estonia and NATO.

The transaction would never have succeeded without Leonid Apananski's efficient and inventive bridge-building with Israel, without the weapons expertise of Colonel Laaneots, without the strong backing of Prime Minister Mart Laar and without a decisive Defence Minister. We should also note that neither the Latvians nor the Lithuanians managed a breakthrough transaction like this. But we did! And let us not forget the patrons of our brave joint venture, President Lennart Meri and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Moreover, the fact that the contract was professionally prepared in both economic and legal terms – in large measure due to the expertise of Jaan Manitski – was confirmed by a London Court of International Arbitration ruling in 2003. It resolved a long dispute between the parties and the Republic of Estonia won back 1.75 million dollars.

Finally, I am obliged to conclude that the Israeli/TAAS weapons that we procured in the face of a loud public outcry have served our men well, both at home and on foreign missions. Jüri Pihl, Director General of the Security Police at the time, wrote (2014): "The purchase of weapons from Israel was a new beginning for our Defence Forces, the Estonian Border Guard and the police".[84] General Laaneots summarises (2014) the events concisely and briefly, as befits a military man: "[---] The purchase was necessary, it gave the Defence Forces all the essential weapons and equipment they needed and allowed them to progress in their development."[85]

Shortly after our weapons deal the first representatives of the NATO Political Committee and its generals, led by AFNORTH Sir Garry Johnson, arrived in Tallinn, on the 25th of June and on the 12th of July, respec-

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[83] Laar, *Eesti uus algus,* 160.

[84] E-mail from Pihl to the author of 13 August 2014.

[85] E-mail from Laaneots to the author of 29 June 2014.

tively.[86] There is no doubt about it that our so-called Israeli weapons deal remains one of the most significant security policy successes in the history of the restored Republic of Estonia.

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[86] The first to visit us from 12-14 July was British General Sir Garry Johnson, Commander-in-Chief of NATO AFNORTH or the Allied Forces Northern Europe, whom I had invited to visit us from his headquarters in Kolsås near Oslo. Of course, we also discussed our Israeli weapons deal. See more: Hain Rebas, "Accidental or Deliberate Failure? The Story of Estonia's Defence Concept of 1993", see this yearbook p. 217 ff.

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Two Histories of World War II

Ants Laaneots

ABSTRACT

The domineering opinion during the Cold War, especially in the domestic and foreign propaganda of the Soviet Union, was that Hitler started World War II by attacking Poland and that Germany's attack against the USSR in summer 1941 was nothing but deceitful aggression against the peace-loving socialist nation. Although the pact made between the Soviet Union and Germany on the 23rd of August 1939 was not denied in the Soviet Union (what was denied, however, was the existence of its secret protocol), it was presented as an attempt by the Soviet Union to buy time and avoid war. The attack against Poland in 1939 was treated as reunification of the Western-Ukrainian and Belarusian nations with their compatriots. What really happened was that eastern Polish territories, which had been placed under the influence of the Soviet Union with the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, were seized as a result of the military attack launched by the Red Army on the 17th of September 1939. Conquering the Baltic States and Bessarabia in summer 1940 was presented as domestic socialist revolutions. These countries had also been placed under the influence of the Soviet Union with the secret protocols of the same pact. The Soviet Union forced the Baltic States to surrender and Romania to give up Bessarabia by threatening military action. The Baltic States were then occupied with the support of the weapons of the Red Army and the Baltic Navy and incorporated into the Soviet Union.

The archive documents that became accessible after the collapse of the Soviet Union have helped to prove that specific plans for a preventive attack against Germany had been prepared by spring 1941. One of the reasons for the massive losses suffered by the Red Army in 1941 was the fact that Germany managed to hit it with its attack before the Red Army had completed its preparations for attack.

World War II, which lasted from 1939 to 1945, was one of the most tragic events of the past century and its aftermath can still be felt today. Much has been written about the causes, course and consequences of the war in the almost 70 years that have passed since its occurrence, and these writings contain various analyses of the war as one of the bloodiest and most tragic events in human history that still lacks an unbiased common denominator. Unfortunately, political views have left their mark on the studies of the outbreak, course and results of the war. Two different visions have been presented to the international public. On one side is the more or less realistic approach of the democratic world that is based on documents and puts the blame on two totalitarian states in Europe – Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, because both of them had the ambition to rule the world, or at least Europe. On the other side is the official interpretation of history by the Soviet Union, which is still popular in Russia and regards the USSR as the victim and Germany as the aggressor. The book "Falsifiers of History", edited and partially re-written by the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, was published in 1948 and became the basis of the official approach to the Second World War by the Soviet Union.[1] It was used during the Soviet era and the positions it represents are still widespread in Russia. Moscow has consistently accused the West, especially the Baltic States, of falsification of history. The information war where the latter are also accused of nationalism and fascism strengthened suddenly after former KGB officer Vladimir Putin was elected the President of Russia in 2000, and it has become particularly hysterical in the last decade when Putin and his team started restoring Russia's control over post-Soviet countries. This is evident in Russia's new doctrine;[2] foreign and internal policies; the mass media aimed at giving disinformation to the international public, its own people and the Russians living in

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[1] *Фальсификаторы истории (историческая справка): по поводу опубликования Гос. департаментом США архивных материалов Герм. м-ва иностр. дел «Нацистско-советские отношения 1939–41 гг.»*, Советское информационное бюро (Ленинград: Госполитиздат, 1948).

[2] Виталий Аверьянов и Роман Багдасаров, *Новая русская доктрина: Пора расправить крылья* (Москва: Яуза, 2010).

the Baltic States; and the frequent defamation campaigns against Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

On the 20th of May 2009, the President of the Russian Federation Dmitri Medvedev signed the decree "Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests". The Commission's tasks included "[---] development of guidelines for the presentation of the truth and real historical facts to the public and counteraction to the politicised interpretation of these facts".[3] President Medvedev's decree unleashed another one of Russia's propaganda campaigns in support of the Stalinist approach to the history of World War II. Its main arguments are as follows:

- the peace-loving Soviet Union never planned to 'export' the socialist revolution to Europe with the support of the bayonets of the Red Army, later the Soviet Army. Using force against neighbouring countries and occupying them in the 1930s and 1940s was necessary in order to ensure the state's security;
- Stalin was not one of the architects of World War II – he made every effort to prevent it;
- the joint campaign of Stalin and Hitler against Poland was not a war as far as the Soviet Union was concerned – it was "the liberation campaign of the Red Army for reuniting the people of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine, who were suffering the oppression of Poland, with the big and friendly family of the Soviet nations";
- the Red Army did not attack Finland in November 1939 in order to conquer the country, and what occurred was "a local armed conflict between the USSR and Finland", which was not a part of World War II.
- The Soviet Union did not occupy Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; these nations wanted to get rid of capitalist bloodsuckers and volunteered to join the Soviet Union;

[3] Елена Новоселова, "Правда о войне и мире: Как государство собирается бороться с фальсификацией истории," *Российская Газета (Федеральный выпуск)*, 20.5.2009.

- World War II was a conflict between imperialist countries and the Soviet Union had nothing to do with – it only fought against Germany in the Great Patriotic War after the latter had suddenly attacked it;
- Stalin and the General Staff of the Red Army did not plan a strategic offensive against Germany in 1940–1941; they simply tried to increase the defence capability of the Soviet Union as much as possible;
- the Red Army was considerably weaker in 1941 than the German Wehrmacht and not prepared to fight off this unexpected aggression. This was the cause of the military catastrophe in the first stage of the war as well as the mass casualties and material losses;
- the Red Army and the NKVD (*Народный комиссариат внутренных дел* – the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs – author's note) never committed any crimes against humanity in the Great Patriotic War. On the contrary, they were the noble liberators of European nations from Hitler's occupation.

As the archives of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR were closed during the Soviet period, many researchers, incl. West-European ones, adopted certain positions of the Stalinist approach to history. However, many of them doubted its objectivity. It's true that a limited amount of second-rate confidential material, which concerned military planning in the Soviet Union from 1939–1940, was published in the 1950s when Nikita Khrushchev was the leader of the USSR, but this material didn't give a comprehensive overview of how Stalin and his henchmen planned to conquer the world or what their military activity was like at the time. The first person to question the official approach of the Soviet Union to the history of the Second World War, especially the preparation and initiation of the war as well as the main culprit, was former officer of the Main Intelligence Directorate (*Главное разведывательное управление* – GRU) of the USSR Viktor Rezun-Suvorov, who defected to the West. He compared known historical facts and figures with the official data of Russia and came to the conclusion that the latter had been falsified. He published his findings in

the well-known book "Icebreaker"[4] and in his later works. The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the short period of openness and democracy in Russia that followed in the 1990s led to the partial opening of the archive of the Russian Ministry of Defence that contained the most confidential documents about the Second World War. This allowed the historians who managed to access the archive (Pavel Aptekar, Mikhail Meltyukhov, Tatyana Bushuyeva, Mark Solonin, Boris Sokolov, Dmitri Khmelnitski, Alexander Gogun, Yuri Felshtinsky, Alexander, Lev Lopukhovski, Vladimir Beshanov, etc.) to reveal a large extent of the truth about the military affairs of the Soviet Union from 1939–1940.

The seeds of the Second World War were sown by the consequences of the First World War, when the Russian Empire disappeared and power was seized by the Bolsheviks, who dreamt of a socialist revolution and a worldwide Soviet Union. In 1918, their leader Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin explained his ambitions as follows: "Russia will now become the first country where the socialist order has been established. [---] But it's not about Russia alone – I spit at it, my dear comrades – it's only a stage we're going through on our way to world revolution".[5] The 5th All-Russian Congress of Soviets approved the constitution of the state on the 10th of July 1918. Its Article 3 stipulated as follows: "Bearing in mind as its fundamental problem the abolition of the exploitation of men by men, the entire abolition of the division of the people into classes, the suppression of exploiters, the establishment of a socialist society, and the victory of socialism in all lands.[---]".[6] The international union of communist parties – the Communist International (Comintern) – was formed for the establishment of the worldwide Soviet Union. It was managed from Moscow and its task was to 'export' the socialist revolution. One example

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[4] Виктор Суворов, *Ледокол; День «М»* (Москва: АСТ, 1998).

[5] Георгий Соломон, *Среди красных вождей: лично пережитое и виденное на советской службе* (Париж: Мишень, 1930), т. 1, 15.

[6] *Конституция (Основной Закон) Российской Социалистической Федеративной Советской Республики (принята V Всероссийским Съездом Советов в заседании от 10 июля 1918 г.) (прекратила действие)*, Сайт конституции Российской Федерации, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1918/chapter/2/#block_1200 (accessed 1.7.2014).

of such an 'export' was the failed coup d'état attempt organised by Comintern in Estonia on the 1st of December 1924.

Stalin considered himself a disciple of Lenin and a follower of Lenin's ideas about a world revolution and a worldwide Soviet Union. In the 1930s he finally worked out his strategy for the next period in history:

- World War II was the precondition for a successful communist world revolution – western countries needed to clash with each other, fight each other. The Soviet Union was to remain neutral during the first stage of World War II;
- the war between western countries had to last as long as possible to ensure the warring sides used up their resources to the full.

That's when the Red Army was to get involved in the war.[7]

The Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War, was very harsh on Germany and created the necessary preconditions for the country's radicalisation, revanchism and the Nazis coming to power in 1933. In the 1920s the leader of the Nazis Adolf Hitler expressed their credo in his book "Mein Kampf": "When we speak about new lands and territories in Europe, the first thing we do is look at Russia and also the countries situated in its neighbourhood and dependent on Russia".[8]

Once their global goals were clear, both dictators commenced the feverish militarisation of their countries in order to achieve them. The Soviet Union, which Stalin had turned into a slave camp, was more successful in this. The Red Army grew from 631,000 soldiers in 1930 to 1,033,570 soldiers in 1934. The number of aircraft increased from 1,149 to 4,354 and the number of tanks from 92 to 7,574. On the eve of the Second World War, the Red Army had accumulated 1,931,962 soldiers, 10,362 aircraft and 21,110 tanks.[9] The achievements of the German Wehrmacht,

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[7] Виктор Суворов, Андрей Буровский и др., *Союз звезды со свастикой: Встречная агрессия* (Москва: Яуза Пресс, 2011), 165–166.

[8] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (München: F. Eher, 1933), 742.

[9] Михаил Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина. Советский Союз и борьба за Европу: 1939–1941 (документы, факты, суждения)* (Москва: Вече, 2000), 349, 358, 359, 600 (Tables 27, 28, 30, 31).

which was preparing for a war with Poland, were considerably more modest in 1939: 1.343 million soldiers, 4,288 aircraft and 3,419 tanks.[10]

The might of the Red Army grew and Stalin, who had become disillusioned with the abilities of Comintern in the second half of the 1930s, decided to change the policy that was to help him achieve his goal of a world revolution. This policy relied increasingly more on the idea of using weapons or threatening the use of weapons to export socialism. The intentions of the red dictator become clear in the speech he delivered to the members of the Politburo of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the 19th of August 1939. Assessing the international situation, Stalin announced: "[---] the question of peace or war is reaching a critical phase for us. If we entered into a treaty of mutual assistance with France and England, Germany would give up Poland and start looking for a *modus vivendi* with the West. A war will have been prevented, but further events may be dangerous for the Soviet Union. If we accept Germany's proposal to enter into a pact of non-aggression, it will of course attack Poland and both France and England will then have to intervene. [---] In these conditions we have many chances to remain uninvolved in the conflict and we can hope for a favourable opportunity to enter the war. [---] The outbreak of a war in Europe will open a wide playing field for the Soviet Union to develop the world revolution. Therefore, it is in the interests of the Soviet Union, the homeland of workers, that a war breaks out between the Reich and the capitalist Anglo-French bloc. [---] We must do all we can to ensure that the war lasts as long as possible and exhausts those involved in it. [---] This is why we have to agree to enter into the pact offered by Germany and make sure that the war, once declared, lasts for as long as possible."[11]

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact or the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union gave Hitler the green light to attack Poland. The pact had a secret protocol, where the two imperialist states divided Eastern Europe into Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence.

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[10] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс*, 83.

[11] Лев Лопуховский и др., *Великая Отечественная катастрофа-3* (Москва: Яуза, Эксмо, 2008), 406–407.

Finland, the Baltic States (except Lithuania) and the territory of Poland east of the Narew, Vistula and San rivers were entered into the Soviet sphere of interest. In return, Germany was given a safe opportunity to start a war against Poland, free hands to operate in Western Europe and a two-year contract for the delivery of strategic materials from the Soviet Union worth 180 million German marks, which was essential for Berlin.[12] If Stalin had told German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop on the 23rd of August 1939 that Germany would have the Soviet Union to deal with if it attacked Poland, the attack would probably have been called off and the Second World War would not have occurred. However, Stalin had his own issues with Poland – he hated that country. He had been in the Red Army when it went to conquer Poland in 1920 under the commandment of Mikhail Tukhachevsky and was convincingly defeated by Marshal Józef Piłsudski. The Soviet leaders did all they could to encourage Germany to start the war by supporting it in any way they could, but not forgetting their own interests when Eastern Europe was divided into spheres of influence. According to those who were with Stalin when he signed the pact, he started dancing around after the German delegation had been ceremoniously led out the door, and rejoiced: "I deceived him. I deceived Hitler [---]." [13] Stalin really had deceived Hitler. Just two weeks after signing the pact, Hitler found himself engaged in a war on two fronts, i.e. in a situation where Germany was certain to lose the war.

Germany attacked Poland on the 1st of September 1939. It's known that Hitler feared a repeat of Germany's sad experience from the First World War, i.e. a war on two fronts. However, the appeasement of the western countries in the Munich Agreement and their passivity during his Sudetenland affair in 1938 had convinced Hitler that the United Kingdom and France would not start a war over Poland. This was later confirmed by several high-ranking German officials and military leaders. For example, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop said: "Hitler did

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[12] *СССР – Германия 1939: Документы и материалы о советско-германских отношениях в апреле-сентябре 1939 г.*, кн. 1, сост. Юрий Фельштинский (Нью-Йорк: Телекс, 1983), 49, 61–63.

[13] Суворов, *Ледокол; День «М»*, 53.

not count on England starting a war over Poland."[14] One of the most talented commanders in the Reich, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, said: "Hitler was convinced that the West will once again decide not to grab its weapons at the deciding moment. He explained his opinion in great detail. [---]".[15] There are many witnesses who say that Hitler and the persons close to him were shocked and dismayed after finding out on the 3rd of September 1939 that the United Kingdom and then France had declared war on Germany. The leaders of the Third Reich knew that Germany was not ready for a massive war against a coalition of countries and made several attempts to secure an armistice with England.

Stalin joined the Polish campaign on the 17th of September. A 620,000-strong Red Army group, supported by 4,800 tanks, despicably attacked the Polish Army from behind as the latter was desperately trying to fight off the Wehrmacht. A great example of the 'brothers in arms' relationship between the Soviet Union and Germany was the joint victory parade held on the 22nd of September 1939 in Brest, which had just been seized from Poland, where General Heinz Guderian, Commander of the XIX Army Corps of Germany, and Brigadier Semyon Krivoshein, Commander of the 19th Light Tank Brigade of the Red Army, stood together on the podium as the hosts of the joint parade.[16] The two totalitarian states shared the loot in a very brotherly manner. The Soviet forces were busy plundering the occupied territory until the 5th of October 1939. There are no exact figures, but it's known that the 5th Army alone took 64 locomotives, 70 passenger cars and 1,130 freight cars, 534 flat wagons, 609 coal wagons, 104 tank wagons and large quantities of various goods (sugar, grains, flour, railway materials, iron, coal, horses, cattle, etc.) in 2,174 railway cars.[17] The loot taken by the Red Army from the Polish Army consisted of more than 900 artillery guns, 10,000 machine

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[14] Иоахим фон Риббентроп, *Между Лондоном и Москвой: Воспоминания и последние записи* (Москва: Мысль, 1996), 145.

[15] Эрих фон Манштейн, *Утерянные победы: Воспоминания фельдмаршала* (Москва: АСТ, 1999), 27.

[16] General Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 96.

[17] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 132.

guns, over 300,000 rifles, *ca* 300 aircraft, 19 tanks, over 150 million cartridges and a million artillery shells.[18] The Germans captured 420,000 and the Red Army 454,700 Polish soldiers.[19] When it became apparent that most of the Polish officers captured as prisoners of war could not be used in the interests of the Soviet Union, 15,131 of them were shot by the NKVD in Katyn alone in spring 1940.[20] Polish soldiers were also executed in many other Soviet prisons and prison camps at the same time. The winners formalised the final division of Poland on the 28th of September 1939 during the second visit of the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop to Moscow to sign the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. This treaty also had a secret protocol where the division of the spheres of influence was changed a little: Germany relinquished Lithuania to the 'Soviet sphere of influence' and in return, received the province of Lublin and parts of the province of Warsaw in Poland.

This joint initiative of Hitler and Stalin is best characterised by the speech of Stalin's right hand, Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union Vyacheslav Molotov during the fifth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the 31st of October 1939: "The rulers of Poland boasted about the strength of their state and the capacity of their army. It became apparent that all that was needed was an initial attack of the German Army and, after that, the attack of the Soviet Army; in order to leave nothing of this monstrous bastard of the Treaty of Versailles. [---] As we know, neither the English nor the French guarantees helped Poland. We still don't know what these guarantees were even about."[21] Molotov's *Schadenfreude* was justified. The inactivity of the western countries that had declared war on Germany on the third day after the start of the war was more than peculiar. It was betrayal from Poland's point of view. Colonel General Alfred

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[18] Вячеслав Молотов, *О внешней политике Советского Союза. Доклад представителя Совета Народных Комиссаров СССР и Народного Комиссара Иностранных Дел товарища В. М. Молотова на заседании Верховного Совета СССР: 31 октября 1939 года* (Москва: Госполитиздат, 1939), 9.

[19] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 132.

[20] Наталья Лебедева, *Катынь. Преступление против человечества* (Москва: Прогресс, 1994), 215–216.

[21] *СССР – Германия 1939: Документы и материалы*, 116–117.

Jodl, Chief of Operations Staff of the Supreme Command of the German Armed Forces, later admitted: "[---] we were never, not in 1938, not in 1939, capable of withstanding concentrated attacks by these countries. The only reason that we were not defeated is that some 100 English and French divisions, faced by 23 German divisions in the West, remained totally inactive."[22] The state of Poland was wiped off the map of the world.

Speaking about the Führer, his 'brother in arms', Stalin said in his speech of November 1939: "As a result of his stupidity, Hitler gave us the chance to build bases against him [---]. Economically, Hitler depends solely on us and we will direct his economy in such a manner that a revolution breaks out in the warring countries. A long war will lead to a revolution in Germany and France [---]. War will make Europe weak and an easy prey for us. People will accept any regime that comes after war. [---]"[23] The next stage of Stalin's plan was based on the assumption that Germany was going to attack the Western countries – France and the United Kingdom. The war was supposed to lead to long-term conflict between these countries, weakening the largest countries of Western Europe considerably and creating the opportunity for the Soviet Union to intervene. This would have been followed by a mission of the Soviet Red Army to the West, the 'liberation' of Europe from the so-called capitalists and other 'bloodsuckers', and the establishment of Soviet power on the continent. Stalin started implementing his plan with determination.

The Kremlin rushed to take over the loot it gained from the pact with Hitler. In September 1939, it was the turn of the three small Baltic States. Estonia became Stalin's first target, as the Red Army needed a passage from the Gulf of Finland to the Baltic Sea, which was of strategic importance in the upcoming war. Finland and Estonia could close it with their coastal batteries if necessary. At first, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov came out with an ultimatum demanding that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania allow the Soviet Union to establish its bases and contingents of 20,000 to 25,000

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[22] Василий Фомин, *Фашистская Германия во второй мировой войне: сентябрь 1939 г. – июнь 1941 г.* (Москва: Наука, 1978), 101.

[23] Татьяна Бушуева, "…Проклиная попробуйте понять," *Новый мир*, 12 (1994), http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/1994/12/knoboz03.html (accessed 1.7.2014).

men in their territories. During his meeting with Estonian Foreign Minister Karl Selter, he announced: "The Soviet Union needs to expand the security system of its state and in order to do this, it needs an exit to the Baltic Sea. If you don't want to sign a treaty of mutual assistance with us, we will have to find other ways of guaranteeing our security, which may be considerably harsher and more complicated. Please don't make the Soviet Union use force to achieve its goals."[24] A massive army group was concentrated on the borders of the Baltic States to support this claim. On the 26th of September 1939, the People's Commissar for Defence of the USSR issued his command no. 043/op, which ordered the Chief of the Leningrad Military District to "forthwith start concentrating troops on the Estonian-Latvian border and to finish that operation on the 29th of September 1939. The following were prepared to act against Estonia: the Separate Rifle Corps of Kingissepp in the direction of Narva (35,448 men and 243 tanks) and the 8th Army in the direction of Petseri-Tartu (100,797 men and 1,075 tanks). The 7th Army (169,738 men and 759 tanks) was positioned on the border of Latvia and Lithuania faced the 3rd Army (193,859 men and 1,078 tanks). In total, the Red Army had concentrated 437,235 men and 3,635 tanks on the borders of the Baltic States by the 28th of September 1939."[25]

The task of the troops operating in the direction of Estonia was "to deliver a powerful and decisive blow at Estonian troops". This was to be done as follows:

a) the Kingissepp Group had to rapidly advance on Rakvere, Tapa and Tallinn;
b) the 8th Army had to destroy the enemy troops and advance on Tartu and further on, jointly with the Kingissepp Group at Tallinn and Pärnu, allocating one Armoured Brigade and the 25th Cavalry Division for protection of its wing in the direction of Valga should the Latvian troops come to assist the Estonian troops. They had to attack in the Valga-Riga direction;

[24] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 179.
[25] *Ibid.*, 181.

c) the 7th Army had to secure the operations of the Leningrad Military District from the Latvian border. In case the Latvian troops come to the assistance of Estonian troops, the 7th Army will advance, by a rapid and decisive strike along both banks of the Daugava River in the general direction of Riga.[26]

The Baltic States capitulated without resistance and agreed to sign the treaty of the bases. Estonia suffered further humiliation and guilt towards Finland when the Soviet Air Forces, in a serious breach of the treaty of the bases and the neutrality of Estonia, started bombing Finnish cities from its airfields in Estonia during the Winter War. The Baltic States were fully occupied under the threat of tanks and guns in June 1940. A 'socialist revolution' was carried out in Estonia with the assistance of imported communists and under the leadership of Member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Andrei Zhdanov. A puppet government approved by Zhdanov was handed the power. The next stage in the Soviet scenario was elections with no choice, which took place simultaneously in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the 14th and 15th of July. The puppet parliaments declared their countries Soviet republics and under the pressure of Moscow, rapidly adopted new constitutions that were copies of the one of the Soviet Union. The rapid sovietisation of the Baltic States followed, culminating in them 'voluntarily joining' the Soviet Union in the first weeks of August 1940.[27]

Terror was the most characteristic feature of Stalin's system. It soon arrived in the Baltic States as well. Mass arrests started. Thousands of people were arrested for political reasons and executions by shooting started at the change of 1940 and 1941. The Red Terror culminated in the deportation carried out in 1941. The NKVD organised mass deportation of 'enemies of the people' in all three Baltic States in the early morning of the 14th of June 1941. 10,000 innocent people from Estonia, 15,000 from

[26] *Ibid.*, 180.

[27] Andres Kasekamp, *Balti riikide ajalugu* (Tallinn: Varrak, 2011), 163.

Latvia and 18,000 from Lithuania were deported to Siberia in the course of this operation.[28] Many of them never saw their homeland again.

The Soviet dictator's luck ran out in Finland. High on his success in Poland and the Baltic States, Stalin decided to finalise the occupation of the small country Hitler had so generously 'donated' to him with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. He was going to achieve this with four armies that had 425,640 men, 2,289 tanks, 2,876 artillery guns and mortars, and 2,446 aircraft in 24 divisions. Finland managed to come up with 265,000 men, 534 artillery guns, 26 tanks and 270 aircraft.[29] According to plans, the operation of the Red Army that started on the 30th of November 1939 was to end with the conquest of Finland three weeks later. It was supposed to be a present for Stalin on his 60th birthday, which was 'officially' on the 21st of December 1939.[30] The Soviet leadership was also planning the immediate sovietisation of Finland. In order to do this, they quickly established a pro-Soviet puppet government in the resort town of Terijoki which was headed by Secretary of the Executive Committee of Comintern Otto Ville Kuusinen. But the small and determined nation of 3.5 million put up a strong, cold-blooded resistance against the armed forces of the attacking Soviet empire, whose population was 172 million. The offensive of the Red Army was stopped and the war started to drag on. The Finns managed to defend their independence in a desperate fight in the Winter War, which lasted 105 days. The Red Army's losses were huge. According to military historian Mikhail Meltyukhov, the losses of the Red Army in the Winter War were as follows: 131,476 men killed in action or missing in action (incl. 39,369 missing in action), 264,908 men wounded or sick (incl. 17,867 with cold injuries), and 6,116 prisoners of war: 402,500 people in total, although some Russian historians believe that even this number is not final. The unrecoverable losses of the Red Army in terms of weapons and equipment were: 406 aircraft, 653 tanks and 422 artillery guns.[31]

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[28] *Ibid.*, 165.

[29] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 153.

[30] Historians (Edvard Radzinski et al.) confirm that Stalin was actually born on 6 (18) December 1878.

[31] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 164.

Marshal Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim writes in his memoirs that Finland's losses were 24,923 men killed in action, missing in action and dead of wounds, and 43,557 wounded, i.e. 68,480 soldiers in total.[32] According to the calculations of Finnish historians Jari Leskinen and Antti Juutilainen, the number of casualties was higher – 26,662 people.[33] Also, another 876 Finnish soldiers were captured by the Red Army as prisoners of war. This means that Finland lost 71,095 servicemen at most, i.e. *ca* one-fifth of their entire field army.

Germany's military campaign in Western Europe started on the 10th of May 1940. The commanders of the French Army, still basking in the glory of winning the First World War and followers of outdated military doctrine, expected the Wehrmacht to act in a manner similar to the Schlieffen plan of a couple of decades back, i.e. a strike from the north via the Netherlands and Belgium, and concentrated most of its troop in the northern part of the country. The British Expeditionary Forces were also stationed there. Paris did not worry about defending the eastern border. They were certain that the impenetrable Maginot Line, which had 35 divisions and was *ca* 400 km long, 20–25 km wide and stretched from Basel to Luxembourg, would prevent any invasions by the German troops from the east. However, the young German generals who were inspired by the so-called deep operation and blitzkrieg strategy convinced Hitler to launch an armoured offensive across the Ardennes mountains. The commanders of the French and British armies considered the latter impenetrable by armoured vehicles. The German Panzer Divisions moved quickly through the Ardennes and on the 13th of May, crossed the Meuse River at Sedan, on the right wing weakly defended by the allied forces, and headed towards the sea. The blitzkrieg of the Wehrmacht was extremely successful. General Heinz Guderian's tanks reached Pas de Calais on the 20th of May, cutting off all the southern and southwestern communication lines of the allied troops stationed in Belgium. On the 14th of June the German units were already in Paris. The British Expedition-

[32] Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim, *Mälestused* (Stockholm: Välis-Eesti, 1952), 49, 112.

[33] *Talvesõda: 1939/1940. 105 päeva Soome rahva kangelaslikku võitlust*, compiled by Jari Leskinen ja Antti Juutilainen (Tallinn: Varrak, 2002), 770.

ary Forces trapped in the besieged port of Dunkirk managed to evacuate their people by sea after Hitler gave a halt order to his troops but had to leave all of their equipment, heavy weapons and other materials behind. The armistice, which effectively marked the capitulation of France, was signed between Germany and France on the 22nd of June at Compiegne, in the same railway car where the armistice between the Entente and Germany had been signed in 1918.[34] The Vichy government, which was a puppet of the Germans, stepped into office in the unoccupied Southern France. Hitler now owned almost all of Europe.

Taking advantage of the fact that the Führer and his troops were busy occupying Western Europe, Stalin decided that it was also time for the Soviet Union to expand its territories. On the 23rd of June 1940 Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov told the German Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Union was planning the annexation of Bessarabia (Moldova) and Northern Bukovina, because Ukrainians were allegedly living in the latter. Moscow was expecting Germany to support this annexation. The territorial claims of the Kremlin were a complete surprise for the Germans. The shocked Führer had no choice but to give his consent, thereby effectively betraying his ally Romania. The military preparations of the Red Army for the occupation of these territories had started in 1940. The plan for invading Bessarabia was approved in Moscow on the 14th of June. The Southern Front of the Red Army was created for the campaign. It consisted of 32 infantry divisions, two motorised infantry divisions and six cavalry divisions; 11 tank brigades, three paratrooper brigades and 30 artillery regiments. The units were stationed on the Romanian border immediately after the approval of the operation plan. The Red Army occupied Bessarabia and Bukovina on the 28th of June. This was immediately followed by the NKVD's repressions in the occupied territories. Approximately 30,000 people were taken from Moldova to Siberia and Kazakhstan during the mass deportations of the 12th–14th of June 1941, which were organised by Stalin.[35]

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[34] Базил Генри Лиддел Гарт, *Вторая мировая война* (Москва: Воениздат, 1976), 73–93.

[35] The deportations were carried out in territories seized from Romania in summer 1940. The number therefore also includes the people deported from Northern Bukovina (pres-

Stalin's hunger for new territories was immense. In November 1940, the Soviet Union submitted its new proposals about the re-division of Eurasia to Berlin. They sought Hitler's approval for the final solution of the 'issue of Finland in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence', i.e. occupation of the country; the establishment of a Soviet navy base in the Bosporus or Dardanelles region; recognition of the entire area south of Batumi and Baku up to the Persian Gulf as an area of central territorial interests of the Soviet Union; and ensuring that Japan waived its concession rights to coal and oil on northern Sakhalin.[36]

One of the biggest myths that the contemporary neo-Stalinists are trying to sell to the world is that all the actions of the Red Army before the outbreak of war in June 1941 were defensive. Scientists (Mikhail Meltyukhov, Mark Solonin, Vladimir Beshanov, Valeri Danilov and others) ascertained that the General Staff of the Soviet armed forces started planning a war against Germany as early as October 1939 and that this process lasted until the middle of June 1941. As we know, Hitler gave the order for the development of Operation Barbarossa, aimed against the Soviet Union, on the 21st of July 1940. The General Staff of the Red Army developed several variants of the strategic plan for its offensive against Germany. Unfortunately, historians have so far been unable to access the strictly confidential documents concerning the operation and instead have had to settle for the summaries of these documents prepared by the General Staff for Stalin and Molotov, but these summaries do contain the most important points of the military plans. The preparation of the military operation plan was extremely confidential. It was handled by a small group of the leading officers of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, incl. its Chief, Lieutenant General Nikolai Vatutin, and his deputies,

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ently Chernivtsi Oblast), which had been annexed to the Ukrainian SSR, and from Southern Bessarabia (Budjak, Izmail Oblast from 1940–1941 and 1944–1954, later the southern part of the Odessa Oblast). This operation did not concern Transnistria, the former Moldavian ASSR of the Ukrainian SSR. See: Павел Полян, *Не по своей воле… История и география принудительных миграций в СССР* (Москва: О.Г.И – Мемориал, 2001), http://www.memo.ru/history/deport/index.htm (accessed 17.4.2014).

[36] Марк Солонин, *23 июня. «День М»* (Москва: Яуза, 2009), 487–488.

Major Generals Aleksandr Vasilevsky (later promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union) and Andrei Anisov.

Work on the plan became particularly intense in the summer of 1940 and in the second half of the year. Russian historian Mark Solonin claims that the first document about the plan of attack against Germany that was made public during Khrushchev's 'thaw' was the "Presentation of the People's Commissar for Defence of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), J. Stalin and V. Molotov about the fundamentals of the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and the East from 1940–1941".[37] According to the presentation, the military operation plan prescribed Belarus-Warsaw and Belarus-East Prussia as the main directions of the strategic offensive of the Red Army. Marshal Semyon Timoshenko, People's Commissar for Defence of the Soviet Union, was allegedly unhappy with the decision to carry out the main strike in the Belarus-Warsaw direction. He demanded an additional analysis and moving the main strike south, to Ukraine.

In any case, the second, flexible variant of the strategic offensive plan was completed in the General Staff by the 18th of September 1940. This prescribed the application of the main forces of the Red Army in both the northern (Belarus) and southern (Ukraine) directions, depending on the situation at the time. These two aforementioned military operation plans became known as the 'northern variant' and the 'southern variant'. The top commanders of the Red Army presented the plan to Stalin and Molotov on the 5th of October 1940. After the discussion that lead to the approval of the decision to strike the main blow of the operation in the southern or Ukrainian direction, the General Staff was ordered to lay down the details of the plan. The amended 'southern variant' was approved as the main one on 14 October, but it was also decided to prepare the 'northern

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[37] *Докладная записка наркома обороны и начальника Генштаба Красной Армии в ЦК ВКП(б) И.В.Сталину и В.М.Молотову «Об основах стратегического развертывания Вооруженных Сил СССР на Западе и Востоке на 1940–1941 гг.»*, Виктор Суворов, Марк Солонин и Андрей Буровский, *Правда Виктора Суворова: Окончательное решение* (Москва: Яуза Пресс, 2009), 46.

variant' properly as well.[38] The compilations of the detailed documents of both plans had to be completed by the 1st of May 1941.

However, work on the plan did not end here. The General Staff of the Red Army practiced both the northern and southern variant of the military operation plan in its strategic war games from the 2nd–6th and 8th–11th of January 1941. In the first war game, the Red Army carried out its offensive from Belarus in the northwestern direction, i.e. towards East Prussia. The main direction of the strategic offensive in the second war game was from Ukraine to Southern Poland and then to Hungary and Romania in order to cut Germany off from its allies and main sources of raw materials and fuel. The games prescribed no defensive action for the troops in the future war. The Red Army's offensive against East Prussia failed in the course of the war game, but the northwestern direction proved to be a great success. The variant of Southern Poland, i.e. the southern variant, was finally approved as the main direction of the future offensive as a result of the war games.[39] Army General Georgy Zhukov, who had been appointed the new Chief of the General Staff on the 1st of February 1941, started overseeing the specification of the documents of the military operation plan according to the results of the war games.

The plan of the military campaign was finalised by the 15th of May 1941. Historians learnt about its existence in the document "Considerations of the Plan for Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the Event of War with Germany and Its Allies", which was made public during the 'thaw'.[40] The 'first strategic task' of the Red Army according to the plan was to move the troops more than 300 km deep into the territory of German-occupied Poland, to crush the main troops of the Wehrmacht positioned there and to conquer Poland and East Prussia. The plan was to strike the main blow with the forces of the Southwestern Front from the Lviv region in Ukraine in the direction of Kraków-Kato-

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[38] *Докладная записка наркома обороны и начальника Генштаба Красной Армии в ЦК ВКП(б) И.В.Сталину и В.М.Молотову «Об основах стратегического развертывания Вооруженных Сил СССР на Западе и Востоке на 1941 год № 103313»*, Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 372.

[39] *Ibid.*, 372–373.

[40] Солонин, *23 июня. «День М»*, 489.

wice, and to cut Germany off from its southern allies. The Western Front that was located in Belarus in the north had to strike an additional blow with its left wing in the general direction of Siedlce–Dęblin to engage the Warsaw grouping of the Wehrmacht in battles and to support the Southwestern Front in the destruction of the Lublin grouping. The planned duration of the operation was 30 days. The following forces of the Red Army were allocated for the performance of the task: 303 divisions (198 infantry, 61 tank, 31 mechanised and 13 cavalry) in the army and 218 aviation regiments in the Air Forces.[41] The first strategic task of the offensive was to be followed by the second, i.e. the conquest of Germany.

On the 5th of May 1941, Stalin delivered a speech to the best graduates of the higher military education institutions of the Soviet Union. His message was this: the Soviet Union is now strong and its armed forces are equipped with the newest technology and armament. The state has to move from a defensive policy to an offensive policy in order to guarantee its security. An offensive strategy, which is backed-up by the powerful military equipment of the Soviet Union, must be used against aggressive Germany. Stalin's speech became the basis of the nationwide ideological work and propaganda that started immediately after its delivery and was aimed at preparing people for the impending war.

A meeting that lasted the entire day was held in Stalin's office in the Kremlin on the 24th of May 1941. In addition to Stalin the meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Molotov; People's Commissar for Defence Marshal Timoshenko; Chief of the General Staff Army General Zhukov; his First Deputy, Chief of the Operational Directorate Lieutenant General Vatutin; Chief of the Main Directorate of the Soviet Army Air Forces Lieutenant General Pavel Zhigarev; commanders of all five military districts by the western border; and members of their military councils and air force commanders of the military districts. The meeting was extremely confidential. Existing information suggests that the plan for an offensive against Germany was discussed with Stalin one more time, after which he approved it. Commanders of the military districts, i.e. wartime fronts,

[41] Солонин, *23 июня. «День М»*, 491–492.

were given explanations of their tasks and the necessary documents for the military operation plan.[42] The plans were so confidential that the People's Commissar for Defence Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff Zhukov sent a special directive to the commanders of military districts, which warned them that "you, the member of the military council (the political commissar – author's note) and the chief of staff of the district are the only ones who can know"[43] about the preparations for the pre-emptive strike.

The historians who have accessed the archived documents (M. Meltyukhov, M. Solonin, B. Sokolov, B. Petrov, V. Kiselyov, V. Danilov et al.) unanimously agree that all of the plans developed by the General Staff in 1940 and 1941 were plans for strategic offensives, not defence. There was no strategic nor operational defence planning in the General Staff or elsewhere, which means that there was no such thing as a strategic defence plan for the Soviet Union in 1941. Developing such a plan wasn't even discussed before the start of the war on the 22nd of June 1941.

The subsequent events demonstrated that Soviet troops were concentrated and deployed in Ukraine and Belarus, the starting points of the offensive, according to the plan of the 15th of May 1941. All of these actions were shrouded in secrecy. The German intelligence had to be kept in the dark about the concentration of troops. The units moved to the border at night. Stalin demanded that the main means of transport of the troops – the railway – operate according to the usual peacetime regime, but this slowed down the deployment of new units. The Soviet Army had to finalise its preparations for the war by the 15th of July 1941. This meant that the war could start either in the second half of July or in the beginning of August.

The fact that the Red Army was preparing for a strategic offensive and there were no preparations for defence either at the strategic or the operational level was also convincingly confirmed by the placement of the Soviet troops on the 22nd of June 1941, exactly as prescribed in the version of the operation plan of the 15th of May 1941. Five fronts formed on the basis of peacetime military districts were to take part in the operation:

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[42] *Ibid.*, 179–180.

[43] Виктор Суворов, Марк Солонин и др., *Нокдаун 1941. Почему Сталин «проспал» удар?* (Москва: Яуза Пресс, 2011), 196.

- the Northern Front (22 divisions) against Finland whose task was to defend the Port of Murmansk, the city of Leningrad and the Kirov railway (Leningrad-Murmansk), and to guarantee full control of the Gulf of Finland. This meant that at least the southern coast of Finland had to be occupied;
- the Northwestern Front (23 divisions) in the Baltic States against East Prussia, whose task was to create a strong defence in the directions of Riga and Vilnius and on the western coast of the Baltic Sea, Saaremaa and Hiiumaa to prevent amphibious landings by the enemy. Once the conditions were favourable, go on the offensive and conquer the Suwałki region, then strike a blow in the direction of Insterburg and Allenstein (now called Chernyakhovsk and Olsztyn), thereby forcing the enemy's forces in East Prussia into battle;
- the Western Front (53 divisions) in Belarus against northern Poland and the southern part of East Prussia. The task: take a defensive position on the right wing of own front and prevent the enemy's offensives in the direction of Lida and Białystok. When the Southwestern Front goes on the offensive, use its left wing to strike in the general direction of Warsaw-Siedlce-Radom, crush the Warsaw grouping of the enemy and conquer Warsaw. This was to be followed by joint action with the Southwestern Front to destroy the enemy's grouping in the Lublin-Radom region, reach the Vistula River and conquer Radom;
- the Southwestern Front in Ukraine was the strongest (123 divisions) and operated in the direction of the main strike of the operation. The task: besiege and destroy the main forces of the enemy positioned east of the Vistula River with concentric strikes by the armies of its right wing from the Lviv region. At the same time, crush the enemy's forces in the Kraków and Sandomierz-Kielce directions with a strike on the left wing from the Sieniawa-Przemyśl-Lutowiska line, and conquer the Kraków, Katowice and Kielce regions. Thereafter, develop the offensive in the northern and northwestern directions to completely crush the northern

grouping of the enemy's troops and conquer the entire territory of the German-occupied Poland and East Prussia;
- the Southern Front (27 divisions), formed immediately before the start of the war on the basis of the Odessa Military District, had to carry out a defence operation against Romanian and German troops in the 700-km area it was covering and be ready to go on the offensive from the Chernivtsi and Chișinău regions to crush the right wing of the Romanian troops, conquer Iași and develop the offensive in the direction of Ploiești.[44]

The main forces of the two protagonists of the impending war, the Western and Southwestern Fronts, were concentrated into two powerful striking fists: the northern one was located in Belarus not far from Białystok and the southern one in the Lviv region of Ukraine. A second strategic echelon consisting of 77 divisions was positioned behind the first strategic echelon of the Red Army.[45] However, only 17–20 divisions reached the locations determined in the plan of the offensive by the 22nd of June 1941. The Red Army hadn't finalised the concentration of its troops yet. Whole armies from the second strategic echelon were still on their way.

Although Stalinist history speaks about the massive superiority of the German troops in June 1941, facts indicate otherwise. On the 22nd of June the Red Army had 190 divisions on the Western Front and considerably more heavy weapons and equipment than the Wehrmacht: 15,687 tanks compared to Germany's 4,171; 59,787 artillery guns compared to Germany's 42,601; and 10,743 aircraft compared to Germany's 4,846. The Germans only outnumbered the Red Army in terms of personnel – the Red Army had 3,289,851 people, the Wehrmacht 4,306,800.[46] The massive superiority of his forces in terms of heavy weapons and military aircraft probably explains why Stalin was knocked for six by the shock that awaited him on the 22nd of June. He was certain that Hitler, well aware of the technical superiority of the Soviet troops, would not dare to strike

[44] Солонин, *23 июня. «День М»*, 489–491.
[45] *Ibid.*, 200.
[46] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 478.

first. However, the Führer knew both instinctively and based on intelligence information that if he didn't strike first, Stalin would do it soon. Hitler simply pre-empted Stalin by attacking on the 22nd of June 1941.

It was relatively easy for the Wehrmacht to break through on the wings of the Red Army's combat forces, whose massive quantities of people and technology were piled up in small areas of land and still preparing for their offensive, to surround them and destroy them or paralyse their resistance with air strikes and artillery gun fire. The attempts of the top leadership of the Red Army to implement the plan described above (as there was no other plan) and organise badly coordinated counterattacks against the Germans with their massive mechanised and armoured forces, were completely inappropriate to the situation. They all failed. Soviet propaganda has spoken much about the patriotism of the Soviet people and their love of their fatherland. The conduct of the Red Army servicemen facing the German troops in the summer of 1941 revealed that they had no motivation to defend their homeland, which had been turned into a concentration camp by Stalin. Entire units of the Red Army let themselves be captured as prisoners by the enemy or simply scattered.

The situation on the fronts in September 1941 was so catastrophic that Stalin asked British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to send forces to assist the Red Army and to land 25–30 divisions in Arkhangelsk or bring them to the southern part of the Soviet Union via Iraq.[47]

According to Russian historian (retired) Major General Vladimir Gurkin, the human losses of the two sides between the 22nd of June to the 31st of December 1941 were as follows:

- the Red Army: 802,191 killed in action; 3,906,965 missing in action (mainly prisoners of war and deserters – author's note). Total: 5,979,134 people.
- German troops: 273,816 killed in action; 802,705 wounded; 57,245 missing in action. Total: 1,133,766 people.[48]

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[47] Winston S. Churchill, *The grand alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 462.

[48] В. В. Гуркин, "О людских потерях на советско-германском фронте в 1941–1945 гг.," *Новая и новейшая история*, № 3 (1992), http://vivovoco.astronet.ru/VV/PAPERS/HISTORY/DEAD.HTM (accessed 1.7.2014).

Common parade of Wehrmacht and Red Army in Brest at the end of the Invasion of Poland. At the centre Major General Heinz Guderian and Brigadier Semyon Krivoshein (22nd of September 1939). Heinz Guderian, Panzer Leader, 96. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996

Propelled by the euphoria of his first victories, Hitler ordered a reorganisation of the Wehrmacht as early as the 14th of July 1941 to prepare for war against England and the United States after crushing the Soviet Union.[49] The Führer's grandiosity still prevented him from realising that the attack against the Soviet Union was his biggest mistake. Even if Operation Barbarossa had been a success, the 150–160 German divisions would never have been able to conquer this giant state and maintain control of its 22.5 million square kilometre territory. Crisis hit the military campaign of the Third Reich in autumn 1941. In November, Germany was facing serious military and economic problems. Colonel General Friedrich Fromm, who was the Commander in Chief of the Reserve Army and had a complete overview of the existing human resources and the situation in the military industry, reported to Hitler on the 25th of November that the state of the country's military industry was catastrophic and advised him to sign an armistice as soon as possible. On the 29th of November 1941, Reich Minister for Armaments and Ammunition Fritz Todt told the Führer openly that the war had already been lost in military and economic terms. Ending the war in Germany's favour was only possible with political solutions.[50] Then came Germany's first big defeat under Moscow in December 1941. The Führer's 'Eastern Campaign' had failed.

The huge Red Army was already standing on the banks of the Elbe and the Danube in April 1945. Stalin had completed a part of his plan to export the socialist revolution to Europe. We can only assume what might have happened in Europe if Stalin had managed to be the first to go on the offensive in 1941. The only serious obstacle he encountered was the Wehrmacht of Hitler's Germany, the country that had fallen out with almost all Western European countries and the US. Otherwise, the western border of the great Soviet Union may have run along the eastern coast of the Atlantic.

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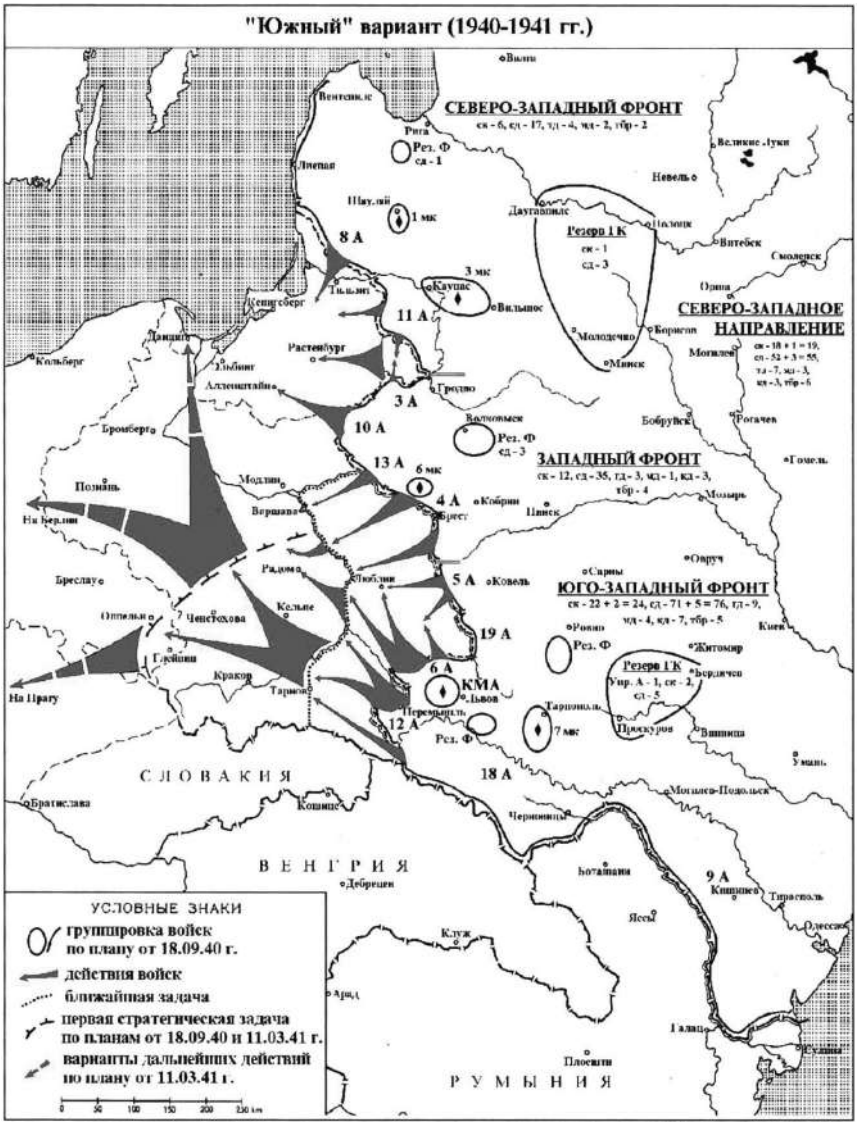
[49] Мельтюхов, *Упущенный шанс Сталина*, 513.

[50] Клаус Рейнгардт, *Поворот под Москвой: Крах гитлеровской стратегии зимой 1941/1942 гг.* (Москва: Воениздат, 1980), 219.

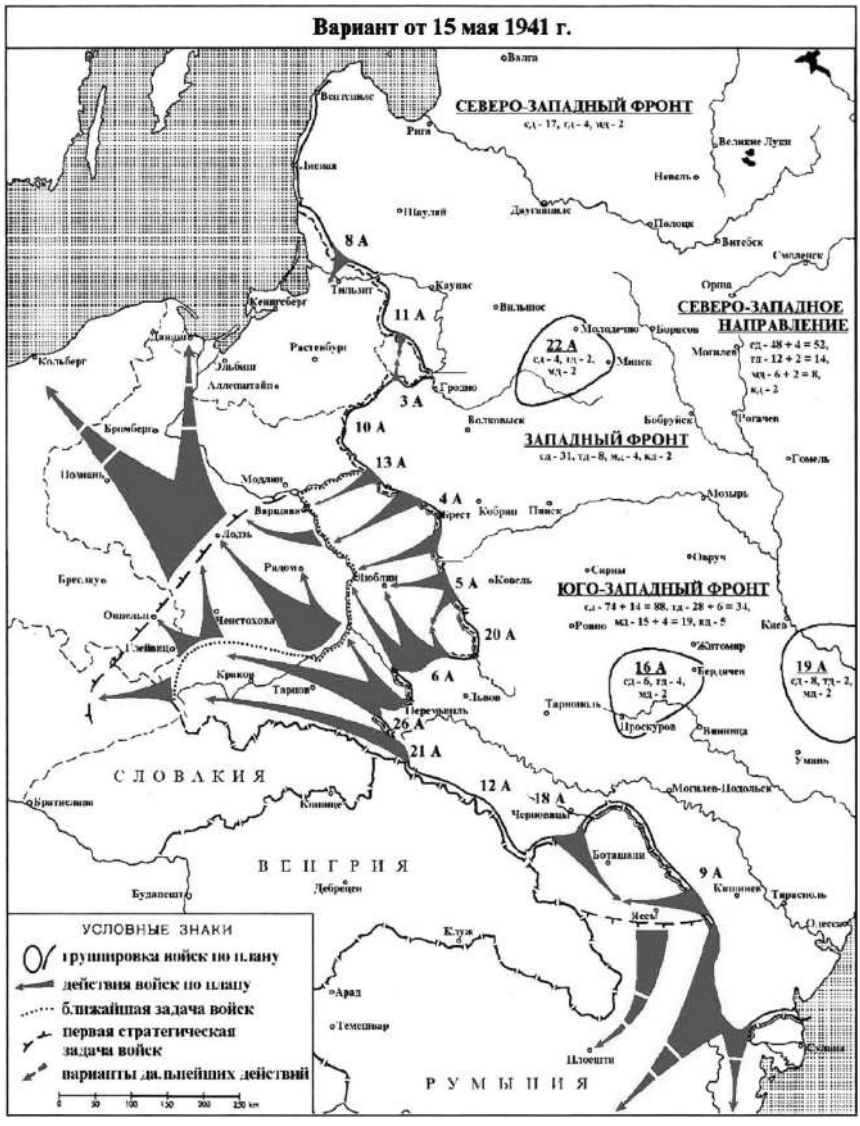
Approximately 50 million people lost their lives in World War II. More than half of them – 27 million – were residents of the Soviet Union. The economies and infrastructures of tens of countries were destroyed. The main organisers of this catastrophe were Hitler and Stalin, the dictators at the head of two totalitarian states, both with ambitions to rule the world. The pathetic 'non-intervention' and 'appeasement' policy of the large countries of the West contributed to everything these two did to start the war. Whilst the defeated Germany had the guts and the integrity to admit its guilt and try to compensate the other nations for the suffering caused to them by the Reich, the Soviet Union and its successor Russia keep justifying the crimes committed by Stalin and his regime against neighbouring nations. Hitler and National Socialism were given a fair trial in international court and the world, but neither Stalin nor Stalinism have been held accountable for their actions yet. The Russian nation, which suffered the biggest losses in the war, still hasn't given a fair assessment of his crimes either.

Looking at the authoritarian and quick-to-arm Russian Federation, intent on restoring the empire, and the complacent Western Europe, which is focussed on enjoying the good life, drowning in minute, everyday concerns and losing its defensive capability, we cannot help but wonder whether the events related to World War II could reoccur in the future. Will we be witnessing Munich No. 2, Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact No. 2 or the second Yalta, where the fate of small countries is decided behind their backs? Can the potential aggressors of today be reined in? Does Europe have enough unity and desire for the practical implementation of collective defence?

The 'northern variant' of the Soviet plan of attack (1940). Михаил Мельтюхов, Упущенный шанс Сталина. Советский Союз и борьба за Европу: 1939–1941 (документы, факты, суждения), *Schemes. Москва: Вече, 2000.*



The 'southern variant' of the Soviet plan of attack (1940–1941). Михаил Мельтюхов, Упущенный шанс Сталина. Советский Союз и борьба за Европу: 1939–1941 (документы, факты, суждения), *Schemes. Москва: Вече, 2000.*



Final variant of the strategic offensive plan of the Red Army – 15 May 1941. Михаил Мельтюхов, Упущенный шанс Сталина. Советский Союз и борьба за Европу: 1939–1941 (документы, факты, суждения), *Schemes. Москва: Вече, 2000.*

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