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INDEPENDENCE WARS IN NORTH-EASTERN EUROPE AND BEYOND

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Cover photo: Field Court Martial of the 2nd Division in January 1919. Chairman of the court Sub-Captain Karl Riigov is sitting in the middle. Photo by Johannes Niilus. Estonian National Archives (RA), EFA.107.4.2783

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Introduction

Toomas Hiio

At the end of May 2019, the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum and Estonian Military Adademy organised the conference *Independence Wars in North-Eastern Europe and Beyond* in Tartu. The conference commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Estonian War of Independence. In addition to Estonia, several other nations were fighting their wars of independence at the same time, but the majority of them were unable to break away from the crumbling empires and establish national statehood. First and foremost, Soviet Russia, the successor of tsarist Russia, was able to consolidate itself after a bloody civil war, but in doing so releasing its grip on the Baltic countries, Finland and Poland.

Soviet propaganda claimed until the end of the communist empire that the workers, poor peasants and progressive intellectuals of the national minorities of the Russian empire achieved proper self-determination and independence only in the brotherly family of the Soviet nations. However, neither the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, comprising Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia established in the early 1920s, nor the Central Asian Soviet republics, which were established a little later, became internationally recognized statehoods. In 1945, Ukraine and Belarus became founding members of the United Nations due to the international situation at the time, but they only gained actual statehood after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Hence, the conference agenda did not only include the issues related to the Estonian War of Independence. The speakers came from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Germany, Russia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The presentations covered events in all the Baltic states and Poland, as well as in Central Asia and Transcaucasia in those turbulent years. Several presentations focused on the fate of soldiers, including foreign volunteers fighting in the Baltic countries, prisoners of war in

Germany and also on relations between soldiers and civilians during wars of independence.

Although the presentations were to be published in the Estonian Yearbook of Military History in 2020, their publication was postponed for various reasons. Meanwhile in 2020, a new two-volume comprehensive study of the Estonian War of Independence was completed at the initiative of the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum, financed by the ministry of defence and compiled by Lauri Vahtre,[1] replacing the two-volume publication of the late 1930s.[2] An abbreviated version of this study will be published in English in the near future. Therefore, the lack of a contemporary comprehensive study of the history of the Estonian War of Independence has been addressed and it will be further refined by keeping in mind an international readership.

Some of the conference speakers did not want their presentations to be published, mostly because they were based on the studies which had been published before. This yearbook comprises the articles written on the bases of four presentations. Research Professor Vasilijus Safronovas of the University of Klaipėda, Lithuania, writes about the formation of the Lithuanian army and the experiences of the soldiers who had participated in the World War I in the Armed Forces of Tsarist Russia, as well as about the distinctions of volunteers and the conscripted. Emeritus Professor of Military History Lars Ericson Wolke of the Swedish Defence University, Stockholm, writes about a small unit of Swedish volunteers which fought in the Estonian War of Independence in 1919 and about the fate of its members. Research Assistant Thomas Rettig of the Chair of East Euro-

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[1] *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu (History of the Estonian War of Independence)*, I, *Vabadussõja eellugu. Punaväe sissetung ja Eesti vabastamine* (*The Prelude to the War of Independence, Invasion of the Red Army and Liberation of Estonia)*, written by Peeter Kaasik, Lauri Vahtre, Urmas Salo et al., compiled and edited by Lauri Vahtre; II, *Kaitsesõda piiride taga ja lõpuvõitlused (Defensive War Beyond the Borders and Final Fights),* written by Peeter Kaasik, Lauri Vahtre, Urmas Salo, compiled and edited by Lauri Vahtre, Eesti sõjamuuseumi – kindral Laidoneri muuseumi toimetised (Proceedings of the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum) 10 (1–2) (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020).

[2] *Eesti Vabadussõda 1918–1920 (Estonian War of Independence 1918–1920)*, parts I and II, compiled by August Traksmaa, edited by Mihkel Kattai jt (Tallinn: Eesti Vabadussõja Ajaloo Komitee, 1937 and 1939).

pean History of the University of Greifswald, Germany, analyses the role of warlords in the continuation wars and wars of independence in the aftermath of World War I using the example of Pavel Bermondt-Avalov West Russian Voluntary Army, active in Latvia. Professor Khachatur Stepanyan of the Chair of World History and its Teaching Methods of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan, Yerevan, Armenia writes in his article about the failure of Armenia's independence aspirations between the Soviet Russia of Vladimir Lenin and the Turkey of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and about the Armenian uprising of February 1921.

In recent years, the repressions and terror of both sides during the Estonian War of Independence have caught the attention of a number of Estonian history researchers. This is not a new topic, as it was touched upon already during the war of independence and later. Memorials were set up in memory of the victims of the Red Terror after the War of Independence, whereas the White Terror was one of the leading topics of the Soviet propaganda and the official approach to history in the studies of the Estonian War of Independence throughout the Soviet era. It goes without saying that for the Soviets, it was not Estonia's independence war but a class war as a part of the Russain civil war and struggle against foreign intervention.

In both cases, it was stigmatizing the enemy to a greater or lesser extent which is obvious during and after the war. Even a century later, an impartial view on the issue may cause misunderstanding and resentment. Unlike in the past, today it is possible to use the materials of both sides as far as they have survived, as well as memoirs and historical research of the topic is possible. In addition, the researchers have at their disposal the studies of historians on the Red and White Terror in Estonia's neighbouring countries.

Toivo Kikkas's studies are based on the proceedings of the penal institutions of both sides – the field courts martial of the Estonian army and the Extraordinary Commissions (so-called Cheka) of the Soviet Russia. Ants Jürman tries to identify the victims of terror of both sides in the eastern part of Viru County, in Narva and Ivangorod. He concludes that this was one of the regions with a large number of victims, suffering the

most between the bolshevist revolution of 1917 and the end of the Estonian War of Independence at the beginning of 1920.

Regardless of the publication of a comprehensive study of the Estonian War of Independence and a biographical reference book of the cavaliers of the Estonian Cross of Liberty[3] as well as a a review of the monuments of the Estonian War of Independence[4] and a number of other smaller studies on the history of the War of Independence, the research of this field is far from being complete. The war ended more than a hundred years ago but yet more and more sources become apparent in the archives of Estonia and other countries, whose digitization in the last decades makes them more available. An opportunity to process large volumes of information fast brings out new interconnections, unnoticed so far and puts new fields of research on the agenda. Last but not least, the birth of each new generation of historians brings along a new look at the past influenced by the knowledge which has been saved earlier as well as the different view created by the present and the future. Hence, the current yearbook makes for an interim conclusion in the research of the Estonian War of Independence, but it is definitely not the last time when the Estonian Yearbook of Military History writes about the Estonian War of Independence.

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[3] Jaak Pihlak, Mati Strauss and Ain Krillo, *Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid (Cavaliers of the Estonian Cross of Liberty)*, compiled by Jaak Pihlak (Viljandi: Vabadussõja Ajaloo Selts, Viljandi Muuseum, 2016).

[4] Mati Strauss, Ain Krillo and René Viljat, *100 aastat Vabadussõja mälestusmärke (100 years of the War of Independence Monuments)*, compiled by Mati Strauss (Keila: Vabadussõja Ajaloo Selts, 2023).

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The War Is Not Over? On the Continuity and Discontinuity between the Great War and the War of Independence as Experienced by Lithuanian Soldiers

Vasilijus Safronovas

Peter Holquist, Roberth Gerwarth and other historians argue that, for Eastern Europe, the Armistice of Compiègne, signed in November 1918, did not mean an end of fighting and violence but a 'continuation and transformation' of the world war. However, a precise definition of the viewpoint is important when it comes to continuity. Is it from the perspective of soldiers, civilians or war refugees? For example, many of the Lithuanian veterans of World War I did not fight in the Lithuanian War of Independence from 1919 to 1920. The exceptions included officers, non-commissioned officers, and medical doctors. As a consequence, most of the Lithuanian army in 1920 was comprised of men who had not fought in World War I. In the war experience of the majority of Lithuanian soldiers, the Lithuanian War of Independence was not a continuation of World War I.

Introduction

In 2002, Peter Holquist published a book on the interaction between the First World War and the Russian Revolution. He claimed that "the war and revolution […] were not two discrete events but rather points along a common continuum."[1] According to Holquist, "the Russian Revolution served as a major precipitant for the wartime 'remobilization' after 1917

[1] Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution. Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

that took place across Europe."[2] He therefore suggested that the wars that broke out in Europe after 1918, especially the Russian civil wars, could be described as "a 'continuation and transformation' of the world war."[3] The continuum of crisis—this is what Holquist called the entire period of 1914–1921 in Russia.

Although Holquist's book dealt with events in the so-called Don Territory, he was followed by a number of historians who examined the military conflicts of the early 20th century in another region, the post-imperial area that various authors referred to as "borderlands" (Oskar Halecki), "bloodlands" (Timothy D. Snyder), "shatterzone" (Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz), "lands between" (Alexander V. Prusin), the "European rimlands" (Mark Levene) or the European "Middle East" (Lewis Namier). For instance, when writing about "war after the war" in this region, Peter Gatrell emphasised "the close connection" between the Great War and subsequent revolutionary challenges, civil wars and "'dirty wars' fought by irregular troops and distinguished by the use of force against civilians."[4] In Ireland, a team of historians led by Robert Gerwarth at the University College Dublin and the Trinity College raised the question of whether the Great War really ended in November 1918. They rightly concluded that for much of Eastern Europe the period known in the West as the "post-war" period, "was even more violent than the war years, with more than 4 million deaths as a result of revolutions, wars, and civil wars between 1917 and the early 1920s."[5] In his last book, Robert Gerwarth referred to the inhabitants of the region as "the vanquished",[6] while Jay Winter now claims that there was in fact a second Great War in Central and Eastern Europe that began in 1917 and ended in 1923, a new stage of the Great War that was qualitatively different from the previous

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[2] *Ibid*., 2.

[3] *Ibid*., 3–4.

[4] Peter Gatrell, "War after the War: Conflicts, 1919–23" – *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 567.

[5] The Limits of Demobilization, 1917–1923: Paramilitary Violence in Europe and the Wider World, Final Report Summary, last update 9 March 2016, URL: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/240809/reporting>.

[6] Robert Gerwart, *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

one.[7] What all these arguments have in common is that they share the same goal—to try to establish an approach according to which the violence in much of Europe did not end in 1918, in fact, in some countries in the region, such as Estonia, it really only started in 1917; and that there was continuity between the Great War and the subsequent wars for the establishment of national states and their borders in the post-imperial area.

However, when it comes to the question of continuity, it is very important to be clear from whose perspective we see it—that of the soldiers, the civilians or the refugees, those who lost something in the war or those who were able to benefit from it? In this article, I want to show how important it is to assess the differences in perspective by selecting two categories of people who experienced the violence in a particular way, soldiers of Lithuanian origin who fought in the Great War and soldiers who fought for the Lithuanian national state in the years 1919 to 1920.

Indeed, two books recently published by Oxford University Press[8] have inspired the development of my argument. The authors of these books, Tomas Balkelis and Jochen Böhler, examine war and paramilitary violence in Lithuania and Poland respectively. Both authors argue for a continuity between the Great War and subsequent national wars one argument they make for this continuity is that demobilisation did not take place there. They claim that in many cases the soldiers of the imperial armies simply switched their uniforms.

Of course, there are a number of arguments that support this statement. However, the lack of demobilisation was not equally typical of all the newly founded states of Central and Eastern Europe. The first Polish legions in the Habsburg Imperial Army were created in 1914. In response, the Romanov Empire also allowed the raising of Polish units (the Puławy Legion was the first to be formed in 1914). In the summer of 1915, the formation of Latvian rifle battalions in the Russian Army began. During

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[7] Jay Winter, "The Second Great War, 1917–1923," *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar* vol 7 no 14 (2018): 160–179.

[8] Tomas Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921. The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

the Great War, both Polish and Latvian national units fought in the area that later became the territory of the Polish and Latvian national states, respectively. Unlike the Latvian riflemen, many of whom were withdrawn into the depths of Russia by the Bolsheviks in 1918, some of the organised Polish troops remained in the area of the future Poland, fought for the national interests and eventually joined the Polish Army. That is why Böhler is accurate in claiming that the demobilisation did not take place and for many Polish troops active service neither began nor ended in 1918. Balkelis, however, is not precise in his attempts to show such continuity in Lithuania. In several chapters of the book, he points out that thousands of demobilised veterans of the Great War switched their uniforms and were re-mobilised into the nascent Lithuanian national army and paramilitary formations.[9] Balkelis provides some examples to illustrate his argument, but does not elaborate on the extent of the phenomenon. Thus, the reader may get the wrong impression that the same people fought in the Great War and in the three subsequent wars for Lithuanian independence. This article reconsiders his argument and tries to shed more light on the question of continuity between imperial and national armies by looking at the Lithuanian case.

How to form an army? The role of the Great War veterans in Lithuanian defence

Unlike Latvians or Poles, Lithuanians were not allowed to form their national units in the Russian armed forces until after the February Revolution of 1917, at a similar time to Estonians and Ukrainians. The entire area of future Lithuania was still occupied by the German Army at that time. Consequently, Lithuanians serving as Russian soldiers could only establish their own military units in the rear areas. They emerged in Kyiv, Smolensk, Valka/Valga, Rovno/Rivne and elsewhere.[10] Of all these units,

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[9] Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making*, 9, 77, 111.

[10] For more on the Lithuanian national units see Vytautas Jokubauskas, "An Army never Created: Lithuanian National Units in Russia and their Veterans Organisation in Lithuania in the Interwar Period" – *The Great War in Lithuania and Lithuanians in the Great War: Experiences and Memories*, ed. Vasilijus Safronovas (Klaipėda: Klaipėda University Press, 2017), 101–122.

Veterans of the First World War in the ranks of a Lithuanian national unit in Russia. The headquarters of a Lithuanian Detached Battalion in late 1917—early 1918. Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA), P-19269

only the Lithuanian Detached Battalion[11] in Vitebsk (as part of the 3rd Finnish Rifle Division) was formed before the Bolshevik coup. All other units were formed afterwards, so they belonged to the Russian White Movement and were treated as enemies by the Bolsheviks. The Red Army tried to draw the soldiers of the Lithuanian national units to its side. In addition, some units (e.g. two Lithuanian squadrons of the 17th Cavalry Division) became German prisoners of war. As a result, most of these units were disbanded in the spring of 1918. All this prevented them from fighting on the territory of future Lithuania or for Lithuanian national interests. Despite the hopes of their organisers that the national units would form the basis of the future Lithuanian Army,[12] the veterans of

[11] In Russian: Особый литовский батальон III Финляндской стрелковой дивизии.

[12] Cf. Ladislovas Natkevičius, *Lietuvos Kariuomenė* (New York: Lithuanian Development Corporation, 1919), 11.

the Great War did not reach their homeland in an organised form. Of all the national units, only the Lithuanian Detached Train Battalion[13] managed to return from Rovno to Vilnius in August 1918, more or less organised.[14] The situation in Lithuania was thus completely different from that in Poland, where some Polish units that had been created in Russia and France during the Great War were essentially absorbed into the Polish Army in 1918 and 1919.

The return of the ex-Russian Army soldiers to what later became Lithuania took several years. Although there is insufficient data on the course of this process, a small part of the Great War veterans, namely those who had served in the Lithuanian national units, filled in questionnaires containing some information about their experiences of military service in the late 1930s.[15] Quantitative analysis of these questionnaires shows that although 62.75 per cent returned as early as 1918, the process of their return from the frontlines, rear areas, garrisons and prisoner-of-war camps continued in the following years: another 17.68 per cent returned in 1919, 6.25 per cent in 1920, 9.62 per cent in 1921 and 2.47 per cent in 1922. Individual veterans continued to return in the following years until 1931.

In the meantime, when Germany began to withdraw its military units from the areas it had occupied in the east in late 1918, these areas were invaded by the Bolshevik armies. The Lithuanian state, which the Lietuvos Taryba (Lithuanian Council) had proclaimed in December 1917 and again in February 1918, had already come into being by this time. Its armed forces, however, were still being built. In fact, the first Prime Minister, Augustinas Voldemaras, did not consider the question of defence as something of the highest priority. In the course of November and December 1918, three regiments, two Lithuanian and one Belarusian, and the

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[13] In Russian: Отдельный литовский обозный батальон.

[14] Pranas Briedulis, "Mano atsiminimai. Iš Rovno lietuvių karių gyvenimo," *Karo archyvas* 4 (1928): 182–191.

[15] At present, the questionnaires are kept in the Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas in Vilnius [Lithuanian Central State Archives, hereafter LCVA], f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 3 to 29 and 46. The results of the quantitative analysis of 1,320 forms are published for the first time in this article. 1,216 of 1,320 veterans indicated the exact year of their return.

General Staff and a commandant's office were officially created in Vilnius. But the army was disastrously short of weapons, ammunition, uniforms and, above all, men. By early January 1919, the National Defence had barely 100 officers (karininkai) and no more than 700 rank and file (kareiviai) in its ranks.[16] This force was unable to resist the advancing Bolshevik Western Army. Therefore, in late December 1918, all three units, proudly called regiments, were transferred to Alytus, Kaunas and Hrodna.

While the National Defence was still being organised, in some areas men joined together to form paramilitary formations. This was not entirely uncoordinated, but in many cases they emerged autonomously. The very first of these formations emerged at the end of 1918 near the former border between the provinces of Kurland and Kaunas (Kovno). The members of these formations acted as partisans both in the areas under the control of the German military contingent (control was, of course, conditional, but that was what the Germans believed) and in the areas invaded by the Red Army.

At this stage, the Great War veterans made an important contribution. They were actively involved in leading men who knew how to handle weapons. The brothers Aleksandras and Povilas Plechavičius, former officers in the Russian Army, organised partisan activities around Seda in north-western Lithuania. Jonas Bartasevičius, another Russian officer, was the organiser of a paramilitary formation in Pašvitinys, northern Lithuania, in early 1919. These are but some examples. Among those who joined the National Defence in 1918 were also many veterans. These included the later generals Jurgis Kubilius, Mykolas Velykis, Pranas Liatukas, Jonas Galvydis-Bikauskas, Vincas Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, Julius Čaplikas and

[16] The Lithuanian Army numbered 144 officers and 2,676 rank and file on 1 January 1919. But these figures seem exaggerated, because the army only began to grow rapidly in the first days of January. Cf. Vytautas Jokubauskas, *"Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia ir paramilitarizmas. Tarpukario Lietuvos atvejis* (Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2014), 354; Vytautas Lesčius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerijos Leidybos centras, 1998), 248, 322; Gintautas Surgailis, *Pirmasis pėstininkų didžiojo Lietuvos kunigaikščio Gedimino pulkas* (Vilnius: Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejus, 2011), 20–21; Gintautas Surgailis, *Antrasis Lietuvos didžiojo kunigaikščio Algirdo pėstininkų pulkas* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2014), 13–21.

Vladas Nagevičius, Colonel Kazys Škirpa and other prominent officers of the future Lithuanian Army, as well as some active organisers of Lithuanian national units in Russia such as Stasys Butkus or Petras Gužas.

In the first months of 1919, the contribution of the Great War veterans to Lithuanian defence increased even more. There were a number of reasons for this. After a change of government, the government faced challenges that made the issue of defence a critical one. Newly appointed Prime Minister Mykolas Sleževičius and Defence Minister Mykolas Velykis appealed to the people encouraging their voluntary enlistment into the National Defence on 29 December 1918.[17] A week later, on 5 January 1919, the government ordered the recruitment of all its officials who had experience of serving in the Russian Army as officers and military clerks. On 15 January 1919, the mobilisation of the remaining officers and staffers up to 45 years of age was announced.[18] In the wake of this mobilisation and due to intensive volunteering in January, the armed forces grew to about 270 officers and about 4,000 rank and file by early February.[19] It is almost certain that all of these officers and a small part of the privates were veterans of the Great War. In the spring of 1919, however, the enlistment of the Great War veterans for the National Defence seems to have reached its limits. Even though some paramilitary formations, including former Russian army officers, were co-opted into the army during 1919, the introduction of conscription transformed the army and led to a rapid change in the main body of soldiers. Through the compulsory recruitment of men born between 1894 and 1901 and the mobilisations of individual categories of the population in Lithuania, which continued throughout 1919–1920, the Lithuanian Army grew to about 46,000 men by December 1920.[20] As the Lithuanian Army continued to grow and the role of the paramilitary formations increasingly diminished, the share

[17] "Į Lietuvos piliečius," *Lietuvos aidas*, 29 December 1918, 2.

[18] *Lietuvos įstatymai. Sistematizuotas įstatymų, instrukcijų ir įsakymų rinkinys*, sur. Antanas Merkys (Kaunas: A. Merkys and V. Petrulis, 1922), 325–327.

[19] Cf. the contradictory estimates of Vytautas Lesčius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė nepriklausomybės kovose 1918–1920* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2004), 39; Jokubauskas, *„Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia*, 354.

[20] Cf. Lesčius, *Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920*, 424–429 and Jokubauskas, "*Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia*, 354.

The first public oath of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Kaunas, 11 May 1919. Vytautas the Great War Museum (Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejus, VDKM), Fa-23058

of the veterans of the Great War in the ranks of Lithuanian servicemen declined considerably.

The share of re-mobilised soldiers in the Lithuanian Army in 1919–1920

No historian has yet attempted to estimate how many Great War veterans were in the Lithuanian armed forces during what was later called the War of Independence. Indeed, this is a complex question, the answer to which depends heavily on what exactly counts as the War of Independence.[21]

[21] Tomas Balkelis is critical of the concept of 'independence wars'. Cf. his attempts to view the military conflicts in Lithuania after the Great War as "a single multidirectional war rather than a series of 'liberation', 'civil' or 'revolutionary' wars": Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-*

The Lithuanian armed forces were involved in three different conflicts, including the war with the Red Army, military encounters with the West Russian Volunteer Army and the war with Poland. It was not until the mid-1920s that the entire period of the three conflicts was labelled by local authors as the "struggle for independence" (*nepriklausomybės kova*), "fights for independence" (*nepriklausomybės kovos*) or the "wars of independence" (*nepriklausomybės karai*). But the end of these wars brought some confusion. After the intervention of the League of Nations Military Control Commission in November 1920, peace was not concluded. Although both sides had ceased military action, Lithuanians continued to encounter Poles in the so-called neutral zone, a creation of the Military Commission, until this zone ceased to exist in February–May 1923. Moreover, the personnel strength of the Lithuanian Army continued to increase, reaching its peak in December 1921 – January 1922. Demobilisation commenced in the spring of 1922 and lasted until the end of 1923. All this can be taken as an argument for the claim that the war, the violence, the military actions and the individual operations actually ended in 1923.[22] However, when it comes to the question of how many soldiers were actually involved in both conflicts (i.e. the Great War and the national wars), the extent of the involvement becomes an important criterion. The military encounters in the neutral zone were indeed a small-scale conflict with rather inconsiderable forces involved. An additional argument is the fact that men who had already served in the Russian Army were released from compulsory service in the Lithuanian Army from 1921 onwards (see below). Therefore, it seems more logical to follow the "traditional" approach toward the end of the "Lithuanian wars" in this article. In 1922, the Lithuanian Army recognised the period from 5 January 1919 to 1 December 1920 as the period for military action.[23] Although

Making, 7, 96. For more on the role of these wars in the domestic memory landscape, see Vasilijus Safronovas, "Who fought for national freedom? On the significance of the Great War in interwar Lithuania," *Acta Baltico-Slavica* 42 (2018): 189–215.

[22] Cf. Jokubauskas, "*Mažųjų kariuomenių*" *galia*, 24; Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making*, 1–2, 156.

[23] According to the General Staff, the war with Bolshevist Russia lasted from 5 January 1919 to 5 January 1920, the encounters with the West Russian Volunteer Army from 26 July 1919 to

military encounters and violence occurred both before and after these dates, the end of the wars was apparently equated here with the decision of the Military Commission of 29 November 1920. The Lithuanian press did not consider this decision as the end of the conflict, but the General Staff had announced on 4 December 1920 that it would no longer issue public reports, as "the cessation of military action has taken place".[24] This makes the end of 1920 an 'appropriate' time to estimate how many men with experience from the world war were in the enlarged Lithuanian Army that participated in the three wars that followed.

The round figure of 46,000 men (see above, size of the Lithuanian Army in December 1920) chosen for the estimates in this article needs further explanation. Not all of these men took part in military action (nor were all the Great War veterans front-line soldiers). Over the course of two years, 1919 and 1920, the army changed constantly. For example, non-commissioned officers who had previously served in the Russian Army were mobilised on 15 January 1919. Their demobilisation was announced on 26 February 1920, but a few months later, on 21 October 1920, there was a new mobilisation of NCO's born between 1885 and 1900.[25] In theory, this means that not all NCO's who were in the army before February 1920 were still there in December. Unsurprisingly, many men were listed as casualties, most of whom were irrecoverable. Estimates of total casualties ranged from 5,500 to 7,600.[26] Desertion from the Lithuanian Army is another factor that makes every estimate imprecise. To top it all off, para-

15 December 1919, and the war with Polish troops from 18 April 1919 to 1 December 1920: *Įsakymas Kariuomenei*, 11 April 1922, 1.

[24] Cf. "Generalinio Štabo pranešimas," *Laisvė*, 5 December 1920, 1 and *Lietuva*, 5 December 1920, 1.

[25] *Lietuvos įstatymai*, 327, 330, 333.

[26] According to official figures from the General Staff, 1,980 Lithuanian soldiers died in 1919 and 1920 (of whom 984 died in combat, 133 from wounds and 863 from disease) and 2,463 were injured (Vladas Ingelevičius, Juozas Ūsas, Kazys Oželis et al., "Karo sanitarijos tarnyba 1918–1928 m.," *Mūsų žinynas* 45 (1928), 521, 525–526, 530). The controversy stems from different estimates of missing soldiers and prisoners of war, ranging from 1,024 to 3,147: cf. Ingelevičius, Ūsas, Oželis et al., "Karo sanitarijos tarnyba", 520; Vytautas Jokubauskas, Titas Tamkvaitis, "Du karo istorijos šaltiniai iš Lietuvos tarpukariu" – *The Unending War? The Baltic States after 1918*, eds. Vytautas Jokubauskas, Vasilijus Safronovas (Klaipėda: Klaipėda University Press, 2018), 181.

Partisans of the Joniškėlis Battalion in 1919. LCVA, A049-P046

military formations organised by armed partisans and riflemen played an important role in all three wars. As a rule, however, they were not considered part of the Lithuanian Army. But there were exceptions, e.g. the partisans from Joniškėlis area who were co-opted into the army and formed the basis of the 9th Infantry Regiment in 1919. In view of all these factors, I have deliberately chosen a figure representing the Lithuanian Army at the time, when it had been rapidly growing for the last three months:[27] many men who were drafted into the army in those months simply did not have the opportunity to take part in military action. However, if they are included in the number for further calculations, they "represent" in a

[27] The army was increased from 34,736 men on 1 October 1920 to 46,481 men on 1 January 1921: Jokubauskas, *"Mažųjų kariuomenių" galia*, 354.

sense all those who took part in the war but were not in the army at the end of 1920 for the reasons mentioned above.

In the following part of this section I will present the Lithuanian army of 1919–1920, divided into three different categories, and try to give estimates of the share of Great War veterans in each of these categories.

The volunteers

'Lithuanian Army volunteer' was actually an ambiguous term. The men considered themselves volunteers because they voluntarily joined the National Defence, but it was also a legal status conferred after the fact under Lithuanian law. The government published precise criteria for the recognition of volunteers in 1928, and the recognition procedures based on these criteria dragged on for several years. According to these procedures, many men who had voluntarily joined the Lithuanian Army in 1919 and even in 1918 were not recognised as volunteers. Ladas Natkevičius, a prominent organiser of Lithuanian soldiers in the Russian 12th Army,[28] who had volunteered for the Lithuanian National Defence as early as November 1918, is a notorious example.[29] The main reason for this is that by the time such volunteers were accepted into the ranks of the Lithuanian armed forces, the government had already issued orders for their mobilisation or conscription. Men who fought in the irregular forces also faced difficulties in gaining recognition. Only 17 partisans were declared to be 'creators-volunteers',[30] although some estimates claim that in rural districts where paramilitary formations were active the level of involvement reached 0.3 to 1.5 per cent of the total population.[31] This explains the discrepancy in estimates between 10 to 15 thousand men who joined the Lithuanian Army as volunteers in 1918–1920.[32] Assuming

[28] The Lithuanian Dragoon Detachment (actually two squadrons of the 17th Cavalry Division) in Valka/Valga was formed after being detached from the 20th Finnish Dragoon Regiment (in Russian: 20-й драгунский Финляндский полк) of the 12th Army in December 1917.

[29] See the questionnaire filled by Natkevičius: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 18, l. 7.

[30] Lionginas Leknickas, "Dėl kūrėjų savanorių skaičiaus," *Karo archyvas* 11 (1939), 306.

[31] Cf. Petras Gudelis, "Dėl vasaros rytų partizanų," *Trimitas* 13 (1935), 224–225.

[32] According to the highest estimate, there were 14,939 'creators-volunteers' in Lithuania: Kalpas Uoginis, "Nepriklausomybė ir savanoriai," *Karys* 2 (1970), 37. Apparently this number

that there were 46,000 men at the end of 1920, ten thousand volunteers made up 22 per cent of the Lithuanian armed forces.

How many veterans of the Great War were there among the volunteers? The question can be answered on the basis of some well-documented cases. A recently issued biographical guide of Lithuanian Army volunteers from a single rural district suggests that only 15 out of 154 volunteers from the Pumpėnai area in north-eastern Lithuania were veterans of the Great War.[33] This is 10 per cent, although we must bear in mind that some of the descriptions in the guide lack accurate biographical data. Another guide contains biographical data on 286 participants in the wars for Lithuanian independence from the Švenčionys area in eastern Lithuania, of which 60 bios (21 per cent) contain records of service in the Great War.[34] However, the latter guide lists not only volunteers but also those who were mobilised into the Lithuanian Army. If we ignore this category, we get a rate of almost 15 per cent.

It seems beyond doubt that the soldiers of the former Lithuanian national units would have volunteered to join the Lithuanian Army the moment they returned to the area controlled by the Lithuanian national government. A deliberate decision in this matter is what can be expected from men who joined the national units at a time when there was no national state. However, of the 1,220 cases explicitly documented in the

includes rejected applications. Before 1 February 1938, the Lithuanian Army Staff had recognised 9,995 former soldiers as 'volunteers', 3,407 applications had been rejected, and another 70 men had lost this status because of their criminal misdemeanours: Leknickas, "Dėl kūrėjų savanorių," 306–307. A similar figure comes from another source: 9,981 applications from former soldiers were granted before 12 April 1937; another 200 applications for recognition were still pending: Petras Ruseckas, *Savanorių žygiai: nepriklausomybės karų atsiminimai*, vol 1 (Kaunas: Lietuvos kariuomenės kūrėjų savanorių sąjunga, 1937), 58. In 2010, an almost complete list of men recognised as volunteers by the Lithuanian government was published on the website of the private publisher Versmė. It is based on the files of the Lithuanian Central State Archives and contains 10,354 names. See Lietuvos kariuomenės kūrėjai savanoriai (1918–1923), accessed 20 Nov. 2019, URL <http://www.versme.lt/sav_a.htm>.

[33] Algimantas Stalilionis, Vykintas Vaitkevičius, *Laisvės ir Tėvynės ginti: 1918–1920 m. Pumpėnų valsčiaus savanoriai* (Vilnius: Pumpėnų kraštiečių asociacija "Pumpėniečių viltys", 2017).

[34] Jonas Juodagalvis, *Švenčionių krašto savanoriai 1918–1920* (Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2005).

Volunteers of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, January 1919. LCVA, P-19034

above-mentioned questionnaires, only 391 report subsequent service in the Lithuanian Army; of these, 208 were volunteers. The estimate is thus 17 per cent. According to testimonies,[35] the only national unit whose soldiers (at least the majority) were able to return to Lithuania in an organised manner in 1918 was the Lithuanian Detached Train Battalion. But that did not make the battalion's veterans an exception: only 16 per cent of them subsequently volunteered for the Lithuanian Army.

All this shows that the share of the Great War veterans among the volunteers was hardly more than 10 to 17 per cent. The majority of the young men who joined the Lithuanian armed forces as volunteers had no previous experience of military service in the Russian Army.

[35] Briedulis, "Mano atsiminimai," 189–190.

The conscripts

Conscripts are another category of soldiers that made up the bulk of military personnel. According to data from 1 January 1921 (the closest date to December 1920), there were 33,780 conscripts in the Lithuanian Army.[36] Their number increased steadily in 1919 and 1920, reaching 18,975 on 15 May 1920, 20,380 on 1 September and 24,188 on 12 October.[37]

What was the share of the Great War veterans among the conscripts? The question can be answered by examining the different age groups that were subject to conscription. According to the Russian Conscription Statute of 1912,[38] the compulsory enlistment into military service was applied each year to one age group of men, namely those who were twenty years old on January 1 of the year of conscription. During the Great War, the age limit was lowered and the last three call-ups in August 1915, May 1916 and February 1917 involved nineteen-year-olds. Consequently, the last call-up of conscripts announced in Russia in February 1917 concerned those born before 1 January 1898.[39] However, the call-up of those born in 1897 was initiated immediately before the February Revolution in Russia. The course of events following the revolution strongly influenced the results. This is also evident from the questionnaires distributed

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[36] "Žinios apie naujokus priimtus kariuomenėn," 1 January 1921, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 143 ap.

[37] "Žinios apie pašauktus, priimtus, paliuosuotus ir nestojusius naujokus, gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 15 May 1920, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 126; "Žinios apie naujokus gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 1 Sept. 1920 – *Ibid.*, 128; "Žinios apie priimtus naujokus iki 1920, 12 spal.," 12 Oct. 1920 – *Ibid.*, 132.

[38] Ob izmenenii Ustava o Vojnskoj Povinnosti: Vysočaiše utverždennyj odobrennyj Gosudarstvennym Sovetom i Gosudarstvennoju Dumoju zakon, 23 ijunja 1912 g (Об изменении Устава о Воинской Повинности: Высочайше утвержденный одобренный Государственным Советом и Государственною Думою закон 23 июня 1912 г), *Polnoe sobranije zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. Sobranije tret'e (Полное собрание законов Российской империи. Собрание третье)*, vol 32 (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennaja tipografija (Государственная типограффия), 1915), no. 37417.

[39] Cf. *Rossija v mirovoj vojne 1914–1918 goda (v cifrax) (Россия в мировой войне 1914–1918 года в (цифрах))* (Moscow: Central'noje statističeskoe upravlenie (Центральное статистическое управление), 1925), 17; Nikolai Golovin (Николай Головин), *Voennye usilija Rossii v mirovoj vojne (Военные усилия России в мировой войне)*, vol I (Paris: Tovariščestvo ob"edinennyx izdatelej (Товарищество объединенных издателей), 1939), 77–80, 84–86.

to veterans of the Lithuanian national units. Of the 1,184 men who had served in the Russian Army and indicated their year of birth, 763 (64 per cent) were born in the years 1890–1896, another 353 (30 per cent) in the period 1871–1889 and only 68 (6 per cent) were born between 1897 and 1903.[40] The group of 47 veterans born in 1897 is two to four times smaller than groups of those born between 1890 and 1896.

These data can be compared with information on the number of conscripts of specific age groups who joined the Lithuanian Army (see table below):

Table 1. Conscription of age groups born in 1894–1901[41]

Call-up	Year of birth	Number of conscripts (1 Januar 1921)
August 1920	1894	357
August 1920	1895	349
September 1919	1896	6,232
February 1919	1897	5,319
February 1919	1898	5,666
September 1919	1899	7,011
September 1919	1900	7,730
August 1920	1901	1,116
TOTAL		33,780

The distribution of conscripts by age group shows that those born in 1898 and younger accounted 64 per cent of the men called-up (21,523). Apart from a few individual cases, these men hardly had any experience of service in the Russian Army. Those born in 1894 and 1895, who theoretically could have been Russian soldiers during the Great War, were among

[40] In 1915 the territory of the future Lithuania was occupied by Imperial Germany, but already before 1915 many Lithuanians lived outside this territory in Russia. In 1915, hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of the territory of future Lithuania fled from the arrival of the Germans and lived as refugees in Russia. It can be reasonably doubted that those born in 1898–1903 really served in a national unit (the youngest of them would have had to be 15 years old in 1918). But that's what the questionnaires say.

[41] Source: "Žinios apie naujokius priimtus kariuomenėn," 1 January 1921, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 143 ap.

those called up at the end of 1920 and accounted for only 2 per cent of all conscripts. As to the men born in 1896, they were called up for active service in the Lithuanian Army on 27 September 1919. But a month later, when conscription had already begun in six out of 20 districts,[42] the government decided to make an exception for those who had served in the Russian Army.[43] Although the amendment, issued on 28 October 1919, affected only those born in 1896, men of other age groups who had already served in the Russian Army were also exempted from conscription in the Lithuanian armed forces from at least 1921.[44] This is evidenced at least by several filled questionnaires from veterans of the national units born both in 1896 and earlier (1895, 1894).[45] Consequently, those born in 1897 were almost the only category subject to both Russian and Lithuanian conscriptions. But the Russian conscription of 1917, which referred to those born in 1897, was in fact to affect relatively few Lithuanian-speakers, namely those who had either been displaced by the war in 1915 to various places throughout Russia or were already living there before the "great retreat". In 1917, the areas with the highest density of Lithuanian-speakers were under German occupation.

If we take one-third of the nineteen-year-olds called up in 1917 (let us assume that one-third was the actual result, see above why) and add about the same number of men of other age groups, we arrive at a figure of no more than 3,500 conscripts in the Lithuanian Army who could have been soldiers in the Great War. Most of the conscripts were too young for such an experience and most of the former Russian soldiers avoided the Lithuanian Army due to exemptions introduced by the Lithuanian governments during conscription.

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[42] See "Šaukimas kariuomenėn vyrų, gimusių 1896, 1899 ir 1900 mt. paskelbtas Rugsėjo m. 27 d. 1919 mt. (Įsakymas Lietuvos Kariuomenei Nr. 157 § 1)," LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 120.

[43] *Laikinosios Vyriausybės Žinios*, no 15, 24 November 1919.

[44] See report on the situation as of February 1921 ("Žinios apie naujokų ėmimo darbo eigą už vasarį m. 1921 m." LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 98) and subsequent reports in the same file.

[45] For the year 1894, see filled questionnaire: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 14, l. 8. For the year 1895, see: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 46, l. 61. For the year 1896, see: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 14, l. 23; b. 16, l. 65, 70; b. 17, l. 112, 141.

The mobilised men

Apparently, the share of the Great War veterans was highest in the third category of military personnel. However, this category, which included the men mobilised in January 1919 and later, was quantitatively insignificant (about four per cent). It seems that the Lithuanian government was interested in the total number of men who could handle weapons. This could be the reason why it asked every man born between 1870 and 1900 to enlist himself at the local commandant's office. In 1920, a total of 20,388 men who had previously served in the armies of other countries were registered by these offices, which existed in every district of Lithuania.[46] However, the government had never made full use of this "reserve", as the mobilisations concerned only certain categories—veterans of the rank of officers and non-commissioned officers, former military clerks; physicians, veterinarians, feldshers (mid-level medical employees) and pharmacists; as well as men of a certain age (born between 1892 and 1901) who had either completed at least four grades of school or were high school students. In many cases, these men were indeed re-mobilised Great War veterans. But it was their occupation and/or level of education, and not their military training per se, that could lead to their continued active service.

Here are some specific examples. Petras Tarasenka was a teacher before he was mobilised in the Russian Army in September 1915 and was promoted to *praporščik* (ensign, wartime junior officer) in 1916. After demobilisation in 1918, he began teaching and studying history in Pskov. He returned to Lithuania in July 1919 and, as a former Russian officer, was immediately re-mobilised into the Lithuanian Army, where he remained on active service for thirteen years.[47] The story of Pranas Saladžius, later colonel and commander of the Lietuvos šaulių sąjunga (Lithuanian Riflemen Union), the largest paramilitary association, was almost identical.

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[46] "Statistiko[s] žinios apie kariškius tarnavusius svetimų šalių armijose gimusius tarp 1870–1900 m. užsiregistravusius apskričių komendantūrose," [1920], LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 125.

[47] Cf. Daiva Steponavičienė, *Petras Tarasenka (1892–1962) (Biografinė apybraiža)* (Vilnius: Pilių tyrimų centras "Lietuvos pilys", 1996); Vytautas Jokubauskas, "Karininko Petro Tarasenkos tarnyba Lietuvos kariuomenėje," *Lietuvos archeologija* 41 (2015), 170–171.

Another graduate of Panevėžys Teacher Training College in 1912, he became a *praporščik* while serving in the Russian Army during the Great War. In July 1919 he was re-mobilised into the Lithuanian Army and remained on active duty as an officer until 1940.[48] The experience of re-mobilisation was also shared by Stasys Raštikis, later commander of the Lithuanian armed forces. After returning to Lithuania in spring 1918, he wanted to become a Catholic priest, entered the Kaunas Priest Seminary, but was mobilised into the Lithuanian Army in March 1919 as a former Russian officer.[49]

It would be wrong to assume that all the officers and non-commissioned officers, physicians, veterinarians, feldshers, and pharmacists who had taken part in the Great War were drawn into the subsequent wars on their return to Lithuania. Only a handful of them, however, were spared. These included disabled men, people who fulfilled other important tasks for the state (e.g. as government officials), and those who only returned to Lithuania after 1920.

The government clearly preferred qualified men. This interest was evident not only in the course of the mobilisations but also in the enlistments. Although it was highly unlikely that the February 1919 conscription, which affected men born in 1897 and 1898, concerned former officers (the officer would have had to be quite young at the time, 21–22 years old), the very first Conscription Instructions of 10 February 1919 explicitly stated that officers, NCO's and former staffers who had served in other armies were not exempt from service in Lithuania.[50]

In turn, many demobilised Russian Army rank and file who came back to Lithuania after the Great War apparently thought they had already done their duty and began their reintegration into civilian life. The government did not show much interest in calling them up. Another explanation for their weak participation could be the fact that the prospect of serving in the Lithuanian Army was definitely not overly popular.

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[48] See the questionnaire filled by Saladžius: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 50.

[49] Cf. the questionnaire filled by Raštikis: LCVA, f. 1446, ap. 1, b. 21, l. 45 and his memoirs: Stasys Raštikis, *Kovose dėl Lietuvos*, d. 1: *Kario atsiminimai* (Los Angeles: Lietuvių dienos, 1956), 107–136.

[50] *Laikinosios Vyriausybės Žinios*, no 4, 5 March 1919.

Although the share of conscripts who did not show up dropped from 37.6 per cent in mid-1919 to 19.2 per cent at the end of 1920,[51] it was still high for a country at war.

Similar experience, but different soldiers

During the 1923 census of the Lithuanian population, the enumerators tried to find out how many veterans of the Great War there were in the country. They filled in the so-called war participant forms, relying on the information provided by the war veterans themselves or, in the case of the deceased, missing and unaccounted for, by their closest relatives. This endeavour definitely did not show how many Lithuanians had taken part in the Great War. What it did show, however, was the exact number of veterans who had served in various armies during the Great War and were resident in Lithuania (excluding the Territory of Memel) in January 1923. Of the 64,628 forms filled out in during the census for war veterans, 11,173 were filled out for those who had died in the war.[52] This means that the number was 53,455. Excluding the relatively small part of Lithuanians who served in the US, British or German armies, that leaves about (probably more than) 50,000 veterans of the Russian Army—officers, NCO's and privates who had gained military experience in the Great War and returned to the future territory of Lithuania after 1918.

This article will not provide a similarly accurate and trustworthy number how many of them continued their service in the Lithuanian armed forces after their return. However, some summarising figures can be suggested, based on the considerations outlined above. Among the volun-

[51] Based on my own calculations from: "Žinios apie pašauktus, priimtus, paliuosuotus ir nestojusius kariuomenėn naujokus gimusius 1897 ir 1898 metuose," 27 September 1919, LCVA, f. 929, ap. 5, b. 3, l. 123; "Žinios apie pašauktus kariuomenėn naujokus gimusius 1896, 1899 ir 1900 metuose," [late 1919] – *Ibid*., l. 124; "Žinios apie pašauktus, priimtus, paliusuotus ir nestojusius naujokus, gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 15 May 1920 – *Ibid*., l. 126; "Žinios apie naujokus gimusius 1896, 97, 98, 99 ir 1900 m.", 1 September 1920 – *Ibid*., l. 128; "Žinios apie nestojusius naujokus," 8 October 1920 – *Ibid*., l. 134; "Žinios apie naujokus nestojusius kariuomenėn," 1 January 1921 – *Ibid*., l. 146.

[52] *Lietuvos gyventojai. Pirmojo 1923 m. rugsėjo 17 d. visuotino gyventojų surašymo duomenys* (Kaunas: Centralinis statistikos biūras, 1926), lxvi.

Soldiers at the graves of those who fell for the independence of Lithuania in Širvintos, Eastern Lithuania, in the 1920s. VDKM, Fa-19677

teers, the number of Great War veterans probably ranged from 1,035 (10 per cent) to 1,760 (17 per cent). The average is 1,400. Among conscripts, the number of Great War veterans hardly exceeded 3,500. It was probably even lower. As for mobilised men, 1,500 Great War veterans is probably a fairly accurate figure. If we add these numbers together, we arrive at 6,400, which corresponds to 13 per cent of the veterans who served in the Russian Army during the Great War and lived in Lithuania at the beginning of 1923, or 14 per cent of the entire Lithuanian Army at the end of 1920.

Even assuming that these estimates are speculative, it is obvious that the Lithuanian Army at the end of 1920 was dominated by men who had not experienced the Great War as soldiers. The share of Great War veterans was very high among officers, NCO's and former surgeons. A considerable amount (about one-third) of those who had served in the Lithuanian national units also continued their service in the Lithuanian Army. Of course, the officers and veterans of the national units shared their experiences with the conscripts as their commanders, instructors and mentors, but this hardly led to a common experience of the Great War and the wars for Lithuanian independence among the conscripts.

Concluding remarks

About one-seventh of all the First World War veterans who ended up in Lithuania joined the Lithuanian armed forces and/or had experience in fighting for Lithuanian independence. Officers in particular were re-mobilised relatively quickly. For the lower ranks of the military, on the other hand, the turn of 1918–1919 meant either the end or the beginning of their military experience. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Lithuanians who fought in the ranks of the imperial armies in the Great War and those who fought in the Lithuanian national wars were basically two different combat parties.

It follows that if we look at it through the eyes of those who actually fought, the turn of 1918–1919 was a major turning point not only in the 'West' of Europe, but also in some 'Eastern' parts of the continent. Many civilians indeed experienced both wars as a time of violence, deprivation, extraordinary situations, loss and misery. But, as at least the Lithuanian materials show, we cannot say the same for the military. The veterans in Lithuania had a good reason to consciously separate the two wars, and not only because they fought for the empire in one and for the national state in the other. The main reason for this separation was that these were different veterans with distinct experiences. Only a small part of the Lithuanian soldiers could see the national wars as a continuation of the military experience they had gained during the Great War. For most soldiers, the national wars brought new experiences, as they had shared the experiences of the civilian population during the Great War.

All this goes some way to explaining the later development of different mechanisms for creating social status for these two types of veterans. Before 1937, there were several veterans' associations in Lithuania that included the veterans of the Great War, but none of them was established for the purpose of uniting these veterans solely because they were veterans of the Great War. The establishment of the Association of Army Predecessors (Kariuomenės pirmūnų sąjunga) changed the situation somewhat, but it too united only Great War veterans who had also belonged to the Lithuanian national units. At the same time, the creation of the special status of Lithuanian Army volunteers and the granting of

benefits and privileges to them gained great momentum as early as the 1920s. Although the volunteers were not the largest category of soldiers participating in the three national wars, their voice was well represented and heard in public. Like many other participants in the Lithuanian war of independence, they would probably not understand the contemporary historians' proposals to link the two conflicts and show the continuity between them.

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Idealists or Adventurers? The Swedish volunteers in Estonia in 1919

Lars Erikson Wolke

Swedish volunteers fought alongside the Finns and the Danes in the Estonian War of Independence. Sweden had been neutral in World War I, but some 1,000 Swedish volunteers had fought in the Finnish War of Independence in the first half of 1918. Many of those Swedish fighters were among the volunteers who came from Finland to Estonia in 1919. 'The Swedish corps' – in fact a company – spent nearly half a year in Estonia and was disbanded in the beginning of June 1919. The unit did not play a significant military role; for the most part, it attracted the attention of the Swedish public with several scandals. There were quite a few volunteers who did not return home. Some men joined the Estonian Army, but some also ended up in Russian White Guard units, as well as in Latvia or Lithuania. Major Carl Mothander, the commander of the Swedish volunteers, is known in Sweden, Estonia and Finland thanks to his memoirs. Captain Einar Lundborg became a pilot after returning to Sweden. He is renowned for rescuing the Italian Arctic explorer, Umberto Nobile, from an ice field in 1928.

In 1915, Germany made an attempt to convince Sweden to join her against Russia on the eastern front. The bait was the prospect of future Swedish influence in Finland and the Baltic countries, or 'the Baltic provinces' as the Germans put it. The proposal was rejected in Stockholm, but the Germans had understood that Sweden's had genuine strategic interest for the political development on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea.[1]

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[1] Torsten Gihl, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia,* IV*, 1914-1919* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & söners förlag, 1951), passim; Wilhelm M. Carlgren, *Neutralität oder Allianz: Deutschland Beziehungen zur Schweden in den Anfangsjahren des ersten Weltkrieges* (Stockholm: Alm-

When Finland declared its independence from Russia in December 1917 the Finnish ambitions were highly supported in Sweden, but the Swedish government did not want to get deeply involved in Finland, especially not after outbreak of the war between the Finnish government and the Red guards in January 1918. The situation was made more complicated by the fact that the Swedish government consisted of a coalition between liberals and social democrats, and the latter were divided in their opinions about the Civil War in Finland. However, some 1,100 Swedish volunteers fought on the White side during that war, most of them in a Swedish brigade. This is an important background for understanding the Swedish policy towards Estonia in 1919.

Sweden and Finland 1918[2]

Directly at the outbreak of the hostilities in Finland in January 1918 an intense propaganda in favour of the White side started in Sweden. Swedish and Finnish contacts had taken place for several years and the government in Vasa had also began to buy tents, blankets, medicine and other supplies in Sweden. But the Swedish government, a coalition between liberals and social democrats, did not allow shipments of weapons and ammunition from Germany to White Finland crossing Swedish territorial waters. However, some of these shipments took place anyway and were even escorted by vessels from the Swedish navy, in order to protect them from attacks by ships of the Russian Baltic navy. This whole escort operation took place with the active support of the Swedish minister of naval affairs Erik Palmstierna, a social democrat.

While the Swedish government to a large extent regarded the war between Whites and Reds in Finland as a struggle about social issues and reforms, many others in Sweden, mainly within the sphere of the political

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qvist & Wiksell, 1962), passim; Wilhelm M. Carlgren, *Sverige och Baltikum. Från mellankrigstid till efterkrigsår. En översikt* (Stockholm: Publica, 1993), 11–20.

[2] This part is, when nothing else is said, based upon Gihl, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia IV,* 339-391; Tobias Berglund & Niclas Sennerteg, *Finska inbördeskriget* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2017).

right, regarded the war as a Finnish fight for independence from Russia. In these circles the sympathy for the white Finland was strong.

Among the social democrats – although the party majority belonged to the reformist part of the party - many felt sympathies for their Finnish social democratic comrades, although they did not accept revolt against the legal government. During the whole war leading Swedish social democrats tried, in vain, to mediate between the White government and the rebellious Reds in Finland.

During the spring of 1917 the radical left wing broke away from the Swedish Social Democratic Party and formed Sweden's Social Democratic Leftist Party, which in 1921 developed into a Soviet-loyal Communist Party as a section of the Comintern, from which all free thinking was excluded. In these circles the sympathies for the Red side in Finland were strong, and some also wanted to see a similar development in Sweden as in Finland.

In the elections in Sweden during the autumn 1917 the Social Democrats got about a third of the votes, while the Liberals and the Right got around a quarter each. Two farmer's parties got eight percent altogether, and about that many were won by the Leftist Socialists. Neither in the Riksdag nor among the popular opinion were there any widespread sympathy for a violent transformation of the society, although political and social tensions were very high also in Sweden, particularly from the spring of 1917 to the late autumn of 1918.[3]

At the same time there were deep sympathies for Finland, which had deep historical reasons. Until the Russian conquest in 1809 Finland had for 650 years been an integral part of Sweden and for many in Sweden, all over the political spectrum, the emotional feelings for Finland were still deep. The fact that Finland also had a large minority of Swedish-speaking people also played an important role in the feelings.

Estonia had of course also been a part of the Swedish Empire, but 'only' for 150 years (160 years formally speaking),[4] and also here there

[3] Aleksander Kan, *Hemmabolsjevikerna. Den svenska socialdemokratin, ryska bolsjeviker och mensjeviker under världskriget och revolutionsåren 1914–1920* (Stockholm: Carlssons bokförlag, 2005); Carl Göran Andrae, *Revolt eller reform: Sverige inför revolutionerna i Europa 1917–1918* (Stockholm: Carlssons bokförlag, 1998).

[4] Province of Estonia (Estland) during 1561–1710/1721, Livonia (Livland) from 1629–1710/1721 and Saaremaa (Ösel) from 1645–1710/1721.

was a small Swedish-speaking minority. But the differences between Finland and Estonia were still significant, which explains the differences in the Swedish commitment for the efforts of the two states towards independence.

Since Sweden, on 4 January 1918, recognised Finland's independence, and when fighting broke out at the end of that month, a Swedish volunteer brigade with a total of 1,100 men was formed and served with the White side during the war. Many Swedish officers also worked in the staffs of the White army and thus contributed to its professional skill. Among other operations the Swedish brigade participated in the hard battles for Tampere (Tammerfors) that fell into the hands of the White army on 6 April 1918.

A problem in the relations between Sweden and Finland was the question of the Åland islands, its Swedish-speaking population trying, without success, to unite with Sweden. At the turn of February and March of 1918 a Swedish expeditionary force landed on Åland, where the tsarist-Russian garrison had formed soldier's soviets, while Estonian, Latvian, Polish and Ukrainian soldiers in the garrison began to organise their own units with their national flags.

The main task for the Swedish forces was to protect the Swedish-speaking population on the Åland islands if violence would break out. That mission was accomplished but after some days the situation was complicated when a German naval task force arrived and landed German army troops on Åland. In that situation the Swedes decided to withdraw their forces, so they would not be drawn into a fighting with the Germans and thus become part of the ongoing World War.

The non-Russian soldiers of the former tsarist garrison were evacuated by the Swedes, while the Russian were captured by the Germans. Eventually, all these soldiers were repatriated, along different routes, back to their native countries.

Even if the Swedish Åland operation had a humanitarian purpose, there was in Finland, both among the White government in Vasa as well as among the Reds in Helsinki, a growing suspicion that the government in Stockholm had a hidden agenda concerning Åland. Among the Swedish-speaking population on Åland there had been strong efforts to

convince the Swedish government that the islands should be transferred from Finland to Sweden.

Any official Swedish politics striving for that goal can't be traced in 1918, although the minister for naval affaires, the social democrat Erik Palmstierna obviously had that ambition. However, Sweden under the social democrat Hjalmar Branting's time as a premier from 1920 had the ambition to annex the Åland islands via negotiations, but Finland's resistance was absolute. The question was finally settled in favour of Finland in the League of Nations in 1921.[5]

The Question of Support for Estonia

In late September 1918, Jaan Tõnisson, then representative of the Republic of Estonia in Scandinavia, met Sweden's foreign minister Johannes Hellner (liberal) and the minister of the navy Erik Palmstierna (social democrat). Tõnisson pledged for Swedish military assistance – at least two army regiments – to control Estonia's internal security until the new republic had been able to build up a defence force of its own. Tõnisson stressed on the threat from the Russian Bolshevik units in Petrograd. The Swedish forces, he thought, should improve calm and order until an Estonian legislative assembly had been elected.

During October and November 1918 Tõnisson made several attempts to convince Sweden's government of the necessity of a military involvement in Estonia. Similar suggestions also came from the United States and Great Britain. Even the provisional Russian government – via its Foreign Minister Mikhail Ivanovich Tereshchenko – joined this 'activist' camp.

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[5] The Åland question is analysed in Berglund & Sennerteg, *Finska inbördeskriget,* 216–241; Lars Ericson (Wolke), "Politiska flyktingar eller krigsfångar? Behandlingen av de estniska, lettiska, polska och ukrainska soldaterna på Åland vårvintern 1918" – *Meddelande* 53, *Armémuseum* 1993 (Stockholm: Armémuseum, 1993), 71–106. The Åland debate at the League of Nations is examined in Torbjörn Norman, "Slutakt med efterspel. Ålandsuppgörelsen, Sverige och Nationernas förbund" – Torbjörn Norman, *Hjalmar Branting, freden och Folkens förbund samt andra studier i svensk och nordisk 1900-talshistoria*, edited by Karl Molin and Alf W. Johansson (Stockholm: Hjalmarsson & Högberg, 2014), 103–144. Important is also Kenneth Gustavsson, *Ålandsöarna – en säkerhetsrisk? Spelet om den demilitariserade zonen 1919–1939* (Mariehamn: PQR-kultur, 2012).

Members of Estonian foreign delegation in Copenhagen in 1918. From the right: Karl Menning, Jaan Tõnisson and Mihkel Martna. Estonian National Archives (RA), EFA.180.A.58.64

The Swedish government, similar to the Danish government, however did not want to send her own forces to Estonia, where they could be drawn into the greater conflict in Russia. Britain's impatience with the Scandinavian governments was manifested when the Royal Navy was sent into the Baltic Sea in late November 1918, just after the collapse of Germany as well as the Bolshevik offensive against Narva.

The vice-consul in Tallinn, Karl Erik Gahlnbäck, on November 12 sent a telegram to Stockholm, in which he urged the government to send troops to secure the situation in Estonia. But the response from the Foreign Office in Stockholm was negative. In early December the three Nordic countries broke their diplomatic relations with Red Russia, but the recognition of Estonia was postponed until the Peace Treaty of Tartu was signed on 2 February 1920.[6]

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[6] Lars Ericson (Wolke), "Sweden and Estonia's struggle for Independence, 1918–1920" – "*The Boys from the North." The Nordic Volunteers in Estonia's War of Independence, 1918–1920*,

The first Finnish volunteers arrived in Tallinn in late December 1918, among them the 1st Finnish Volunteer Corps under command of a former Swedish NCO Martin Ekström. He had served with Uppland's artillery regiment (A 5) in Uppsala between 1906 and 1911, before he joined the Swedish-organized gendarmerie in Persia (Iran) that was set up between 1911 and 1915.[7] Between 1914 and 1915 he, together with a handful of other Swedish officers form the Persian Gendarmerie, fought for German and Persian troops against both Russian and British units in the parts of the Ottoman Empire that were to be the state of Iraq.[8] In 1916 he returned to Sweden and became a sergeant in the reserve of his former regiment, Uppland's artillery, before he in January 1918 joined Mannerheim's White army in Finland. There he was promoted to major, commander of a battalion and after the capture of Tampere the commander of the Vasa regiment. He was one of numerous Swedish officers that served in Finnish units of Mannerheim's White army, and not in the Swedish volunteer Brigade.

In Ekström's Corps there were some 100 Swedish-speaking men from Finland as well as native Swedes that have fought in Finland during the spring of 1918. They participated in the operations against Rakvere and Narva in 1919.

After the war Ekström would return to Finland and settled in Vasa, but later moved back to Sweden. Later during his career he joined some

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edited by Lars Ericson (Wolke) (Tallinn: State Archives, Stockholm: Riksarkivet, Copenhagen: Rigsarkivet, Helsinki: Sotaarkisto, 1993), 19–24; John Hiden/Karlis Kangeris, "Die schwedische Baltikumpolitik 1918–25" – *The Baltic in international relations between the two world wars*, edited by Aleksander Loit (Stockholm: The University of Stockholm, 1988), 187–207. The Swedish volunteers are seen in a broader perspective in John Chrispinsson, *Den glömda historien. Om svenska öden och äventyr i öster under tusen år* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2011), 263–348. See also Tobias Berglund and Niclas Sennerteg, *Baltikums befrielse* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2023).

7 Markus Ineichen, *Die schwedischen Offiziere in Persien (1911–1916): Friedensengel, Weltgendarmen oder Handelsagenten einer Kleinmacht im ausgehenden Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002).

8 Lars Ericson Wolke, "Sweden, the Western world and the war that saw the birth of Iraq: implications of the events in 1914–1921 for the present conflict" – *The Iraq War. European perspectives on politics, strategy and operations*, edited by Jan Hallenberg and Håkan Karlsson (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 98–117.

of the rather small Nazi parties in Sweden, for a time as the leader of the so called National Socialist Block. During the Winter War of 1939–1940 he served both with the Swedish volunteer Corps and the regular Finnish army.[9]

During the Christmas of 1918, an Estonian delegation visited Stockholm, where they negotiated with several Swedish officers about the establishment of a Swedish volunteer force. The recruiting campaign started in January 1919 after the government in Stockholm had, on 30 December 1918, given its permission for volunteers to go to Estonia. At the same time an intense press opinion from Social Democratic and Socialist newspapers acted against the recruitment campaign.

In Stockholm plans were drawn for a Corps of some 4,000 men, but in reality the result was much less successful. During the month of January 1919 smaller groups of volunteers arrived in Tallinn, where they were placed in different units. Together with Ekström's Corps there were some 40 Swedes in Colonel Kalm's Finnish Regiment, about ten Swedes in Estonian units and a dozen men in Baron Georg Stackelberg's Baltic Battalion in Tartu.

Most of the Swedes however were gathered in the Swedish Corps, called in Estonian 'Rootsi Korpus Eestimaal'. After the liberation of Narva from the Bolsheviks on 19 January 1919, where Martin Ekström's unit played an important role, the town became a base for the Swedish Corps. During the following weeks at least four Swedes were killed in action in Narva.[10]

The former Swedish NCO Carl Mothander started to build up the Corps in Narva together with his 'Chief of Combat' Karl Georg Malm-

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[9] Sivert Wester, *Martin Ekström: orädd frivillig i fem krig* (Stockholm: Militärhistoriska förlaget, 1985). See also Bengt Rur, "Värjans egg: några svenska militärer hemma och ute" – *Krig och fred i källorna. Årsbok för Riksarkivet och landsarkiven 1998*, edited by Kerstin Abukhanfusa (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1998), 218–230.

[10] The History of the Swedish volunteers has to be written with the help of scattered private archives, since no files of the Swedish Corps itself has been preserved, see Ericson (Wolke), *Sweden and Estonia's struggle for Independence* as well as references made in the following beneath. Important are also the documents in the Swedish War Archive (Krigsarkivet, henceforth KrA): Generalstaben, Utrikesavdelningen, former secret archive, E I a Estland, Lettland, Litauen volume 1, 1919–1925.

Swedish volunteers in Narva, 1919.
Estonian History Museum, AM _ 4403:13 F 4265

berg, also a former Swedish NCO who among other merits had served in the Belgian army in Congo. Between 1883 and 1902, 44 Swedish officers had served in the army and the navy of the Congo Free State, the Force Publique, whose owner and commander was the Belgian king Leopold II. Not less than 22 of them died of diseases during the service in Congo or after their return home.

The Congo Free State was a pattern card of oppression and human abuse to that extent that the Belgian state took control of it as a colony in 1908. The military men that had served there and survived had both been hardened and procured as professionals.[11]

During the following months Swedish volunteers, together with some Finnish-Swedes and Danes gathered in Narva, where their salary was payed by the Estonian government. Mothander himself after a while established a headquarter in room number 6 at Hôtel Du Nord in Tallinn,

[11] Lars Ericson (Wolke), *Svenska frivilliga. Militära uppdrag i utlandet under 1800- och 1900-talen* (Lund: Historiska Media, 1996), 176–184.

Group of Swedish volunteers in Estonia, 1919. Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum, KLM FT 1018:5 F

together with a recruiting officer, a quartermaster and a cashier. In Narva (the now) captain Malmberg was in command.

A lot of money, meant for wages and uniforms, disappeared without any trace on their way from Tallinn to Narva. This obvious embezzlement resulted in a steep fall of the morale within the Swedish Corps.

Obviously there was a relatively large amount of adventurers within the Swedish Corps, whose interest for the professional goal was drastically reduced when their personal salaries disappeared into someone else's pockets. In that situation something dramatic occurred.

On 1 March 1919 one of the Swedes who served with Baron Stackelberg's battalion in southern Estonia arrived to Narva. This Swede had been given the task to recruit countrymen from the Swedish Corps to the Baltic-German battalion. Stackelberg obviously had analysed the situation correctly. The Corps in Narva was at risk to be totally dissolved, and then Stackelberg wanted to be able to recruit the best men to his own unit.

The Destiny of Giuseppe Franchi

The man given this task of recruitment was Giuseppe Franchi, a military musician, a trompeter, of Italian heritage. Franchi had served with the Swedish brigade in Finland, and in Estonia he had chosen to join Stackelberg's battalion in Tartu. Now he was walking among countrymen in Narva and tempted them with the possibility to serve under more professional circumstances in the Baltic battalion. The nervous leadership in the Swedish Corps in Narva immediately reacted on Franchi's attempts of recruitment.

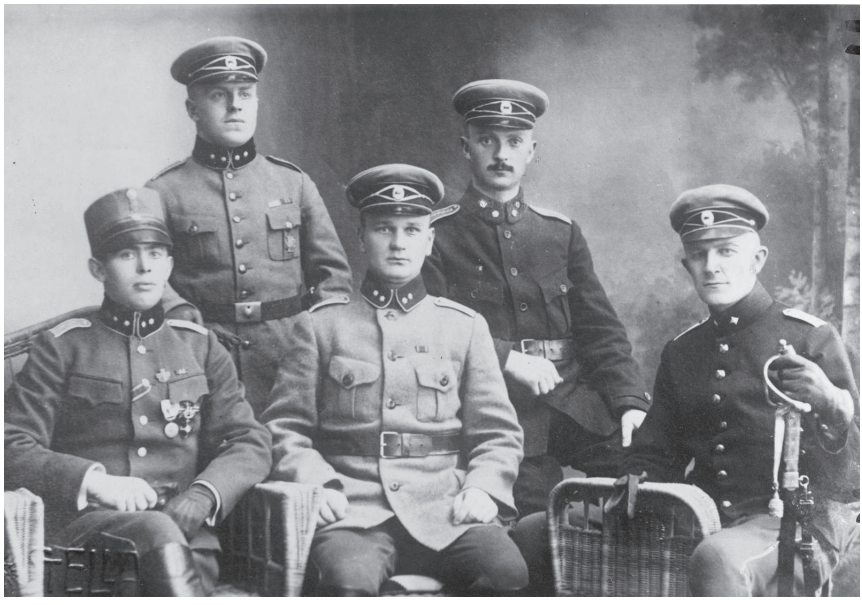
He was arrested and accused for spreading calls for mutiny. After a short court-martial led by Karl Georg Mothander, but with the lack of support in both Estonian and Swedish law, Giuseppe Franchi was sentenced to death. He was immediately executed at the bank of the Narva river by a firing squad consisting of three men from the Swedish Corps.

With the death of Giuseppe Franchi in Narva a remarkable personal destiny was ended, half a century since his ancestor Anton Franchi arrived from Parma in Italy to Stockholm, where he established himself as one of the leading names in the growing Italian colony in the Swedish capital, working as an organ grinder, caster of plaster and ice-cream salesman.

The murder on Franchi resulted in an intense debate in Sweden and the newspapers attacked the conditions within the Corps in Narva. The government in Stockholm had to promise harsh measures taken against the guilty, as well as also Estonian authorities began to investigate the fateful court-martial.

On 31 March 1919, three weeks after the shots in Narva, the field-priest of the Corps Axel Lord wrote to the Foreign Department and defended the acting of the court-martial. Franchi was accused of having "deserted from the Swedish Corps" at an earlier time, and well back in Narva he "had agitated among private soldiers and men of commanding degree in Narva". Lord did not believe in Franchi's statement that he had been given a promise by Stackelberg that he should be the commander of the unit he hopefully would recruit in Narva.

Besides that Axel Lord, in an obvious attempt to give more authority over the activities of the Corps, told the Foreign Department in Stock-



Officers of the Swedish volunteer corps. Captain Einar Lundborg in center, Bo Samzelius in Swedish uniform on his right hand. February 1919. RA, EFA.114.2.140

holm that Martin Ekström had been informed about and had accepted the decision of the court-martial. This was obviously a clear lie, or at least wrong if not a deliberate lie. Lord also underlined that the Estonian authorities had studied the matter, under the direct command of the military prosecutor, and the Commander-in-Chief General Johan Laidoner on 29 March had signed an order that freed the men involved in the murder of Franchi. The question is if the Estonian authorities could have acted in any other way. They were depending on all assistance they could get, and did not afford to make the volunteers hostile.

In the autumn of 1919 Axel Lord came into conflict with Karl Georg Malmberg and several other members of the court-martial. Now he changed his version of the story and on 28 October sent a new letter to the Foreign Department in Stockholm. Know he demanded that the trial against Franchi should be investigated according to Swedish law and rejected the acting of the Estonian authorities and General Laidoner.

In that situation the Chancellor of Justice (Justitiekanslern) in Stockholm started an investigation but this was not about whether the composition and work of the court-martial had been correct according to the Swedish military law.

The chancellor focused on the question of whether Estonia was to be regarded as an independent country with independent judicial institutions and, as a result of the first question, if General Laidoner's order of 29 March could be regarded as a legitimate government issue according to diplomatic rules?

Sweden had not de jure recognised Estonia, but if the legal advisors of the Foreign Department answered no on the first question it would result in a de facto recognition of Soviet-Russia's supremacy over Estonia, which of course was impossible for political reasons. But with a yes on the first question followed a yes on the second, and with that the chancellor ended his investigation on 6 February 1920. The fact that the court-martials attorney Färling was a Finnish citizen and neither Estonian nor Swedish was mentioned. Thus both Swedish and Finnish citizens of this irregular unit were involved in this 'affair'.

Whatever the diplomats figured out of this case, it resulted in a lot of articles in leading Swedish newspapers, most of them not very flattering for the Swedish Corps.[12]

Thus, no member of the court-martial was ever to be brought to justice, although several members were 'marked' in Sweden, and after the end of the war in Estonia drifted further into other wars in the Baltic countries and eastern Europe. They could return home later on, when the worst outrage had calmed down.

Franchi's dead body was sent home to Stockholm and he was buried at the Catholic cemetery there on 14 April 1919.[13]

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[12] See for instance the article in conservative daily Svenska Dagbladet on 4 April 1919 which concluded that Franchi "made mutiny against mutineers", Svenska Dagbladet, Historiskt sidarkiv, www.svd.se/arkiv/1919-04-04/9.

[13] Ericson (Wolke), "Sweden and Estonia's struggle for Independence, 1918–1920"; Einar Lundborg's handwritten memoirs from Estonia, KrA, Einar Lundborg's arkiv, vol. 2; Riksarkivet (henceforth RA), Utrikesdepartementet, 1902 års dossiersystem vol. 2210-02/U/37:1 vol. 1813 among others. For Franchi's family background see Christian Catomeris, *Gipskattor och*

The dissolution of the Swedish volunteer Corps

The tragic destiny of Franchi symbolized the moral state of dissolution of the Swedish Corps.

The Swedish officers involved were stripped of their authorities and were placed under the direct command of the Ministry of War in Tallinn. After that the whole Corps was transferred from Narva. On March 30 the Swedes left Narva and were moved to Paldiski, before they after a few days went south, now placed under the command of major Lambert Hällén. In southern Estonia the Swedish Corps joined an Estonian reconnaissance battalion and participated in the fighting around the villages Podlesye and Mitkovitsy (Madgrovnets) around April 10.

The following weeks several members of the Corps left for other units, among them Stackelberg's battalion. In early May only 68 men remained according to Hällén, together with some 50 wounded in field hospitals. Major Hällén suggested to the Estonian government on May 15 that a new Swedish Volunteer Corps should be recruited, but the idea was rejected by General Laidoner with the words: "I thing that one attempt is enough. Too large costs and too little use of such units." The Swedish Corps was disbanded in early June 1919.

Many Swedes stayed in Estonia but served in Finnish and Danish units, as well as in the Estonian army and White Russian units.

Axel Lord during the late spring of 1919 came to be hostile toward Karl Georg Malmberg, most likely since Malmberg denied Lord the position as field priest on the armoured train 'Pskovchanin' and within the Swedish legion that had joined the White Russian forces. Once the White Russian had been forced to retreat and the Commander, General Nikolai Yudenich had left Tallinn later in 1919, Axel Lord stayed in Estonia and began to produce a number of letters to Estonian and Swedish authorities (not the least to consul Gahlnbäck), where he demanded money that he thought others owned him. During that time Lord made his living on 'banker activities' in Estonia before he returned to Sweden. Axel Lord passed away on 5 January 1934 before his 60th birthday.

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positive. Italienare i Stockholm 1896–1910 (Stockholm: Kommittén för Stockholmsforskning, 1988), passim.

Swedish volunteers on the White Russian side

After the dissolution of the Swedish Corps in the summer of 1919 a minor group of Swedes joined General Judenich's White North-Western Russian Army, which was fighting together with the Estonian forces against the Bolsheviks. Some 200 men under the command of Karl Georg Malmberg formed 'The Swedish White Legion of the Russian North-Western Army'. Albert Flenberg became the chief's adjutant in the Legion, however, the number of national Swedes in the Legion never exceeded 20–30 men. Several of them returned home while some continued to serve with the Estonians. This Legion never counted more than a company, including several Baltic Germans and persons of other nationalities.

Many of the Swedish veterans could not return home after their service in Finland and Estonia, and one of them, Conrad Carlsson, described their situation in a book two decades later: "We have nothing to look forward to. We have to live for the day. We cannot go home, that much we know. No one would dare to give us work. No one from the class that most of us belong to would acknowledge us. Only the fronts will accept us."

The Swedish trade unions blacklisted many of the veterans from Finland and Estonia, while especially those with a background among industrial workers or crofters found it difficult to find a job in Sweden after the war.

Instead the White Swedish Legion was filled with soldiers that most likely had got to know each other during the fighting in Estonia during the spring of 1919; Swedes, Baltic Germans, Danes and Finnish. Weapons and ammunition came from British shipments. Judenich also succeeded to get financial support from Sweden, although it is not clear exactly how. While the governments in Helsinki and Tallinn were very much split in their attitudes towards Judenich, it was easier for him to find supporters in Stockholm, although not with the Social Democrats and Liberals in the government. The Finnish and Estonian governments were very suspicious towards Judenitch and his White army for the simple reason that, despite that they had the same Bolshevik enemy, the White Russian forces had never accepted the dissolution of

the tsarist Empire, while Lenin's government had recognized Finland's independence.

In the beginning of the autumn of 1919 the Swedish Legion operated together with White Russian forces south and east of lake Peipus, around Pskov, Gdov and further north towards Narva. The operational base of the Swedes was an armoured train, and it contained the hardened core of the Swedish volunteers in Estonia. One of the Swedes described it as follows: "It is an elite unit that Malmberg is commanding now. All the weaklings in the Swedish Corps have gone home."

All the Swedes did not, however, fight in the same unit. The soldiers in the Legion formed battle groups of 20–30 men each (equivalent to platoons) and were equipped with one or two machine guns for each group. According to some, unconfirmed rumours, their task was to give 'moral support' during the Russian attacks, i.e. to shoot the Russian soldier that tried to flee the battlefield without any order given for retreat.

Malmberg commanded 30 men under General Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz, 20 men under the officer Franzon served in the Semyonovsky regiment at Gdov, while a 'group Eklund' fought in Akovs regiment at lake Peipus, whereas 'group Dahlgren' was fighting at Volodino.

When the White Army on midsummer eve began to retreat from Ingria, the Swedish Legion together with some other units, was given the task to cover the retreat from positions near Jamburg (Jama, now Kingissepp). Several Swedes were wounded during the fighting that night, but they managed to survive since their enemy – Red Finnish cadets from an officer's school in Petrograd – offered them ten minutes armistice. Thanks to that the Swedish Legion managed to retreat from its positions and reunite with the main White force further towards the West.

At the end of October 1919 Judenich's forces once again were stopped, this time just outside Petrograd and then pressed back westwards. In January 1920 General Judenich himself left Tallinn while the rest of his army – some 10,000 soldiers and 20,000 civilians – began to fall apart. Already on 8 September Pskov had fallen into the hands of the Red Army. The defeat of the White Russian army also resulted in the downfall of the Swedish white Legion. After an advancement as far east as Detskoje Selo (Tsarskoye Selo before 1918, since 1937 Pushkin) also the Swedes had to

retreat towards the west and around the turn of the year 1919–1920 the Legion was disbanded.[14]

The final chapter of the Swedish volunteers in Estonia

After the dissolution of the Swedish Legion in white Russian service some of the soldiers returned home to Sweden, while others for different reasons neither could nor would want to return to their native land. Some stayed east of the Baltic Sea, among them Malmberg.

In March 1920 he was awarded with a piece of land in Estonia by the Estonian government. But during the 1920s Malmberg began to engage in the lucrative smuggling of cheap Estonian spirits to Sweden and Finland. During a winter tour his boat was unscrewed by the ice in the Gulf of Finland and Malmberg's both legs were so severely wounded that he for the rest of his life only managed to walk with two sticks.

Later Malmberg's career as a smuggler came to a brutal end when a competing smuggler gang blew up both him and his boat in the Finnish Gulf. His colleague Carl Mothander later (1943) talked positively about Malmberg's leadership and ability to take decisions. Mothander characterized Malmberg as "ruthless and hard as flintstone".

Other more wind-driven individuals could, for several reasons, not settle in a peaceful Sweden. Some of them in 1920 joined the French Foreign Legion, while others followed the white Russian General Bułak-Bałachowicz, who went to Poland together with a number of Russian soldiers. But the Poles established strict control over this unit, and most of the little Swedish group then gave up and soon left Poland. They were assisted by the Swedish military attaché in Warsaw, Carl Petersén. He had served with the Swedish gendarmerie in Persia, and later came to be

[14] Ericson (Wolke), *Svenska frivilliga*, 184–190. Some documents concerning the Swedish Legion are kept in KrA, Einar Lundborgs arkiv, vol. 2–3. The Legion's activities are described in Conrad Carlsson, *Okänd svensk soldat* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1937) although that book is partly highly unreliable. The Legion is also partly mentioned in Kaido Jaanson, *Soldiers of Fortune. Volunteers from Sweden and Denmark in the Estonian Civil War 1918–1920* (Tallinn: Perioodika, 1988).

the one who during the Second World War organised the secret Swedish military intelligence.

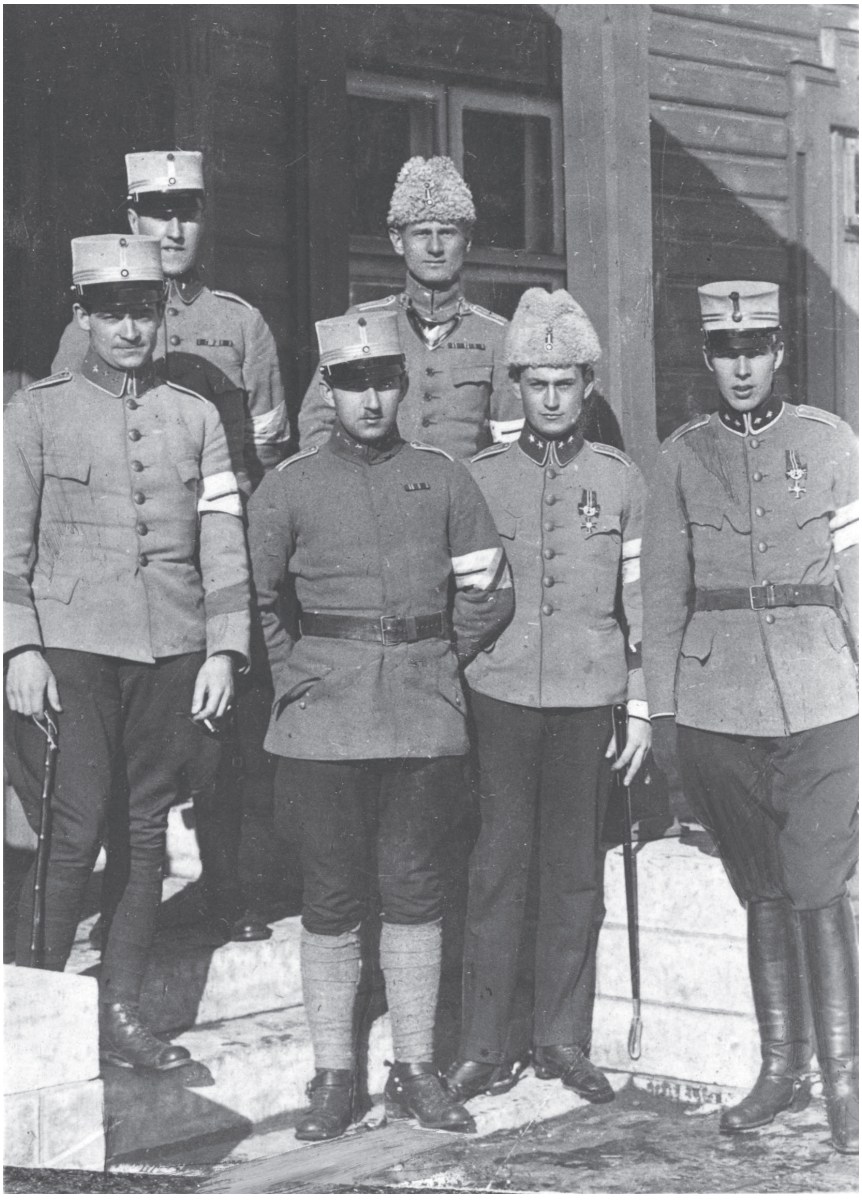
With the assistance of Petersén a handful of Swedes went to Danzig where they got aboard the Swedish ship *Egil*, and with that they travelled, via Riga, to Stockholm. The receiving was, however, not so honourable: in the harbour of Stockholm the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) police waited for questioning and de-lousing, before the veterans could travel further to their respective communities.

But many of the veterans had already experienced too much to be able to adjust to a normal life at home, or as Conrad Carlsson wrote much later: "We are root-less in our society. Betrayed on both profession and work. Without any peace of mind. Doomed to go under." His words can be said about many of the Swedes that served in Estonia in 1919.

Swedish activities in Latvia and Lithuania[15]

There was also an attempt to create a Swedish brigade to fight the Bolsheviks in Latvia. The driving force was lieutenant Nils David Edlund, one of the most skilled Russia experts of the Swedish General Staff, and Gustaf Hallström, later a famous archaeologist. In February 1919, Edlund arrived by boat from Stockholm to Liepāja. There he was searched by customs officers and they discovered a document that seemed to be a plan for a coup d'état in Latvia, supported by Baltic German groups as well as German and white Russian forces. A part of this plan was a Swedish volunteer Corps for Latvia. The idea was to restore a Baltic German duchy in Latvia and Estonia. But now the plan collapsed when it still was on paper.

[15] These activities have been studied in Lars Ericson (Wolke), "Volunteers in the Baltic? Sweden's support to the National Insurgence in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 1917–1920" – *Acta: XX. International Colloquium of Military History, 28 August – 3 September 1994, Warsaw, Poland. National Insurgence Movements since 1794*, edited by Tadeusz Panecki and Urszula Olech (Warszawa: Polish Commission for Military History, 1995), 128–140. Important sources concerning Latvia and Lithuania respectively are to be found in KrA, Generalstaben, Utrikesavdelningen, former secret archive, vol. F V:I , KrA, Olof Dahlbecks arkiv, vol. 2 and KrA, Gustaf Hallstöms arkiv, vol. 1 and 11–12.



Officers of the Swedish volunteer corps in April 1919 near Petseri. 1st row from the left: Captain Sven Liljencrantz, Company Commander Captain Carl Malmberg, Lieutenant Harry Tammelin, Lieutenant Tenander. 2nd row: Lieutenant Bo Samzelius, Captain Einar Lundborg. RA, EFA.26.0.52055

In Lithuania the Swedish activities were even smaller but still far more successful. Olof Dahlbeck was a naval officer who became Sweden's first military pilot, educated in England in 1911 and in 1914–1915 acted as the Commander of the Swedish naval air force. In 1919 he became colonel and inspector-general of the young Lithuanian air force. That force was formed by German Fokker planes and directed bombing and reconnaissance operations towards Bolshevik positions south and north of Kaunas. Olof Dahlbeck was almost the only Swedish volunteer in Lithuania but had far bigger military importance than the volunteers in Estonia.

Another Swede, the from Finland and Estonia well known Martin Ekström also arrived to Lithuania. Here he examined the possibilities to set up a gendarmerie in Lithuania. He arrived in Kaunas on 15 August 1919.

However, Ekström was very critical toward most of what he saw in Lithuania. When he came to Kaunas Ekström noted: "The impression given was terrible. Met Arnberger and Dahlbeck. Nice." Here Ekström met Olof Dahlbeck and another Swedish volunteer, Arnberg. The following days two other Swedes arrived, Kalle Häger and a person named Jacobsson. Now followed a number of visits both to the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior. After that the airport of Kaunas with its station for Zeppelins was inspected. Ekström also was able to participate in an inspection tour over the front in a plane, piloted by a German.

But an inspection tour by car only gave bad impressions: "Start at 07.30 p.m to the front at Dyneburg (Daugavpils). A hell of a night. The car broke five times – then fleas. Two of them, Ugh!"

Martin Ekström had to conclude that there was no prerequisites for the creation of a gendarmerie led by Swedish officers. Both economy and organization had to be improved. In December 1919 a rather disillusioned Ekström left Lithuania. He was rather bitter over what he perceived as weak support from Sweden: "One thinks many times that one doesn't find the right understanding for such a work at home."

Political hesitations towards volunteers in the east[16]

The explanations to the most varied level of success for the Swedish volunteer efforts in the Baltic states are among other thing to be found in the weak support at home. Among conservatives, especially in the Swedish armed forces, and in parts of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties there was a lot of sympathy for the three countries' striving for independence, as well as their possible function as a barrier towards Russian influence in the future. But many among the liberals and the political left, both social democrats and leftist socialists, were more critical toward this support. The criticism was more loud that the one hat had been directed towards the support for the White side in Finland in 1918.

There were also among leading Swedish politicians fundamental doubts whether Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania at all had the ability to survive as independent nations. At a secret meeting with the government on 6 February 1919, the Liberal Prime Minister Nils Edén declared: "They will end up at war with a restored Russia. We would come into war [with Russia] if we participated in this thing."

It was not until the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s that the Swedish military and political establishment began to activate the contacts with the Baltic states. Before that it was individual Swedes that were engaged for these countries, both during the chaotic year of 1919 as well as during the decade that followed.[17]

Finally, two of the Swedish volunteers are worth looking into a little bit more: Carl Mothander and Einar Lundborg, since their individual destines explain much of the destiny of the Swedish volunteer effort more generally.

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[16] See the references above in note 1 and 5.

[17] Lars Ericson (Wolke), "Estland och Lettland i svensk marin debatt 1918–1925" – *Forum navale. Skrifter utgivna av Sjöhistoriska samfundet* 48 (Stockholm: Sjöhistoriska samfundet, 1992), 39–55.

Carl Mothander[18]

Carl Mothander was born in Stockholm as a son of Axel Fredrik Leonard Mothander, a lawyer who among other things served within the fortification administration. But most important, Carls father was an alderman and city notary at Stockholm's city court, until his death in 1902.

It was thus not surprising that the son Carl studied law at Uppsala University. But obviously law was not his main interest, instead Carl Mothander enlisted in the army. His unit became Västmanlands trängkår (Logistic Corps; T 5) in Sala, a small garrison town west of Uppsala. In Sala Mothander advanced to the rank of NCO before leaving the army in 1915.

The year 1918 changed Carl Mothander's life when he joined the Swedish brigade in Finland. During the final battle for Viborg in the end of April 1918 he organized the medical care on the White side. From that the step was not far to Estonia and the Swedish Corps in 1919.

Despite the events concerning Franchi's death in Narva Carl Mothander managed to play a rather positive role for the Estonian authorities and he later was promoted major in the Estonian army. He came to settle in Estonia from 1928 and married to the Baltic German baroness Benita von Wrangel (1878–1967) and the couple stayed in Estonia until the Soviet occupation in 1940, when they moved to Stockholm.

Mothander returned to Estonia already in 1941 and began to work for the Estonian Red Cross. In that function he became a member of the International Red Cross Commission that in 1943 investigated the mass graves with murdered Polish officers in Katyn near Smolensk. When the Red Army once again advanced towards Estonia Mothander was also

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[18] Besides the references made above concerning the Swedish volunteers Mothanders own reflections concerning Estonia are published in Carl Mothander, *Baroner, bönder och bolsjeviker i Estland* (Helsingfors: Holger Schildts förlag, 1943); Estonian translation *Parunid, eestlased ja enamlased* (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 1997, 1998, 2010, 2021) and his *Svenske kungens vita skepp: det äventyrliga spelet om estlandssvenskarna* (Stockholm: Hökerberg, 1949; Estonian translation *Rootsi kuninga valge laev: riskantne mäng rannarootslaste pärast* (Tallinn: Eesti Päevaleht, Akadeemia, 2011 and Tallinn: Hea Lugu, 2017). For the evacuation of the Estonian Swedes in 1943 see Viktor Aman, "Överflyttningen till Sverige" – *En bok om Estlands svenskar* 1 (Stockholm: Kulturföreningen Svenska Odlingens Vänner, 1961), 179–264.

Carl Mothander (1886–1965). Photo from the book Eesti Vabadussõda 1918–1920, vol. II (Tallinn, 1939), 59

engaged in the evacuation of parts of the Swedish-speaking population in Estonia from the autumn of 1943 to the autumn of 1944. He himself also returned to Sweden where he became a writer.

Already during his years in Estonia Mothander was devoted to writing and published the books *Presidenten: en oblodig revolutionshistoria* (1923) and *Kulinariska kåserier* (1931). In 1949, he described his experiences of the 1943–1944 evacuation of large parts of the Estonian-Swedish population to Sweden in the book *Svenske kungens vita skepp: det äventyrliga spelet om estlandssvenskarna.*

His most important book was *Baroner, bönder och bolsjeviker* (1943) where he told about the time in Estonia in 1919 but mainly during the years from 1928 until 1944. Here large and small subjects are mixed, not the least during the convulsions of the agrarian reform, but also about the reading habits and food culture of the Estonians (both were admired by him).

Carl Mothander must be regarded as the most influential and important person among the very mixed group of Swedish volunteers. He is also the one that, both through marriage and settlement, became loyal

to the young Estonian republic. Among all other thing, he contributed to the spread of knowledge about Estonia in Sweden.

His feelings for Estonia and its destiny during the storms of the 20th century came to expression when Mothander on 7 May 1945 stood upon Regeringsgatan's bridge over Kungsgatan in Stockholm and watched the peace celebrations. Beneath him a huge crowd celebrated the peace that had come to Europe and that Denmark and Norway once again was free after the German occupation. Mothander described his very mixed feelings when he thought about the country, "my wife's native place – that has become my second motherland", where "I have half of my heart". With not so little bitterness he concluded: "Satan's power is crushed, but Beelzebub was alive, the Beelzebub that one in the salvation rave has forgotten."[19]

Einar Lundborg[20]

The most famous of the Swedish volunteers in Estonia, Einar Lundborg, was born in Calcutta in British India, where his parents were missionaries, before the family returned back to Sweden. A part of his childhood he spent in Fornösa outside Motala in Östergötland. After that Einar began a military career and became officer at Svea trängkår (Logistic Corps; T 1) in Örebro. He also served with Västmanlands trängkår (T 5) in Sala, and must have met his colleague-to-be in Estonia Carl Mothander, although Lundborg was an officer and Mothander an NCO.

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[19] Mothander, *Svenske kungens vita skepp*, 9–10.

[20] KrA, Einar Lundborgs arkiv, vol. 1-4. Einar Lundborg's handwritten memoirs from Estonia are kept in volume 2 and they are published in Estonian: Einar Lundborg, *Soomusautoga Eesti vabadussõjas: minu rindeelamusi 1919–1920* (Lund: Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, 1968 and Tallinn: Grenader, 2012). His documents about the Nobile rescue are kept in Eskilstuna City Archive (Eskilstuna stadsarkiv), Einar Lundborgs arkiv, vol. 1–5. The printed version is Einar Lundborg, *När Nobile räddades: mina upplevelsewr under svenska Spetsbergenexpeditionen* (Stockholm: Geber, 1928; an English edition: *The Arctic rescue: how Nobile was saved* (New York: Viking Press, 1929). Literature about Lundborg are Carl Billengren, "Livet som äventyr: Einar Lundborg I krig och fred" – Billengren, *Det förgångnas närvaro: fjorton historiska essäer* (Stockholm: private print, 2008), 56–68 and Bo Widfeldt, *In Memoriam. Personal- och materielförluster inom svenskt militärflyg*, Svenska Vingar 4 (Nässjö: Air Historic Research AB, 2002), 154 (no. 81).

Captain Einar Lundborg in front of the armoured car 'Kalewipoeg'. April 1919. RA, EFA.114.3.3872

Lundborg first made his service in the Swedish Corps and participated in the activities in Narva, including the execution of Franchi. Later he joined the Estonian army as a commander of the armoured car 'Kalewipoeg'. He and his crew began their fight with their armoured car at the Võru front in May 1919. During the autumn Lundborg also served with the Swedish White Legion in the army of Judenich, on an armoured train in southern Estonia, before he returned to Sweden after the Peace Treaty of Tartu in February 1920.

Unlike some of the other Swedish volunteers Lundborg seems to have made a "sympathetic and polite" impression, at least if we should believe the Danish captain Richard Gustav Borgelin, who in early September 1919 met Lundborg in the White Russians headquarters in Cherskaya in connection with the fighting around Pskov and Porkhov.[21]

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[21] *Hvor Dannebrog faldt ned. Kaptajn Richard Borgelins erindringer fra Den Estniske Frihedskrig*, edited by Ann-Mari Borgelin (Frederiksberg: Bogforlaget Frydenlund, 2012), 134–136.

Back in Sweden Lundborg trained to be a pilot, including a course in England, and in 1928 became a captain in the young Swedish Air Force. In the very same year Lundborg became famous far beyond Sweden's borders.

An Italian explorer, Umberto Nobile, travelled towards the North Pole with his airship *Italia*. However, *Italia,* was forced to land on ice north of Svalbard. On 26 June 1928 Lundborg managed to land and rescue Nobile, but on another rescue mission he crashed on the ice with his Fokker plane. But on 6 July he and the others were saved by another Swedish rescue plane flown by Birger Schyberg.

When they came back Lundborg and Schyberg were famous heroes, and that fame became even greater when Lundborg published a book about his adventures close to the North Pole. Already on 5 August 1928 an air show took place at Helsingborg, where Lundborg and Schyberg participated with the very same plane that they had flown at Svalbard. Now they were both celebrities who travelled around Sweden, giving several lectures illustrated with lantern-slides. Lundborg also wrote a best-selling book about his adventure: *När Nobile räddades. Mina upplevelser under den svenska Spetsbergenexpeditionen 1928* (1928).

In the year of 1929 Einar Lundborg and his wife Margareta Charlotta travelled with the Atlantic liner *S.S. Drottningholm* to the United States, where he among other things met with the world famous Swedish actress Greta Garbo. One could hardly be greater in the media world of the late 1920s.

On 27 January 1931 Einar Lundborg perished in a plane crash during a test flight with a new fighter plane of Swedish construction (J 5, also called Jaktfalken or The Falcon) at Malmslätt air force base outside Linköping. The accident also resulted in a government commission examining the conditions within the air force. Einar Lundborg was buried in Linköping.

A former commander of T 5 in Sala later described Lundborg as very interested in motor engines as well as "totally fearless of everything and he looked for all opportunities where he could face risks and dangers … the adventure was his hobby". At the same time Lundborg was described as a "exeptionally good squad officer, who made the men follow

him".[22] It is a description that contributes to the explanation of both Lundborg's engagement as a volunteer in Estonia but also later as a pilot.

Final conclusions

The destiny of Einar Lundborg is in many aspects unique, but he could also be held as representative for the Swedish volunteers in Estonia. They never managed to establish a numerous enough and well disciplined unit of themselves. Instead they were split up between several different units under Swedish, Finnish, Estonian, Baltic German or White Russian command. Hence the Swedish support to Estonia never managed to gain the power that the Swedish Brigade in Finland 1918 achieved.

This was, I believe, to a large extent due to the lack of political and logistical support from Sweden to the Swedish volunteers. The Swedish Brigade in Finland in 1918 was, literally, filled with experienced NCOs and officers, but that was far from the case in Estonia in 1919. This had two effects.

First, the Swedish support for Estonia could never reach the importance that the (much more numerous) Finnish volunteer forces managed to develop.

Secondly, this fundamental weakness of the Swedish Corps gave the forces of chaos and destruction within it greater possibilities to act more freely than otherwise had been the case. That negative developments culminated in the execution of Franchi in Narva.

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Pavel Bermondt-Avalov and the Formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army – Warlordism in the Baltic?[1]

Thomas Rettig

Warlordism is a phenomenon that emerges in a power vacuum during wars, civil wars and revolutions. There are many examples from the Russian Civil War where military commanders amassed absolute power in certain areas, without being subordinate to any state authority, or perhaps being subordinate in name only. Pavel Bermondt-Avalov, who formed the West Russian Volunteer Army, is discussed as an example of a warlord from the era of the Baltic wars of independence. A large portion of his army was made up of the German soldiers and officers who, as members of Freikorps, had fought in the Iron Division under the command of General Rüdiger von der Goltz, or in other units in the first half of 1919. In the autumn of 1919, instead of fighting the Bolsheviks and the Red Army, he turned his weapons against the Republic of Latvia and marched on Riga.

The focus on Warlordism is a relatively new feature in the toolbox of historians, who aim to explain the causes and dynamics of excessive violence in times of uncertainty. By identifying personalities who can be termed warlords, some scholars have already looked at the events of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War from this perspective in order to explain the rule of violence in local power vacuums.[2] While most of these examples

[1] Parts of this article are based on the author's M.A. thesis.

[2] See for example: Richard B. Spence, "Useful brigand: Ataman' S.N. Bulak-Balakhovich 1917–21," *Revolutionary Russia* 11, no 1 (1998); Jamie Bisher, *White Terror. Cossack warlords of the Trans-Siberian* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Joshua Sanborn, "The Genesis of Russian Warlordism. Violence and Governance during the First World War and the Civil War," *Contemporary European History* 19, no 3 (2010); Willard Sunderland, *The Baron's Cloak.*

focus on individuals and processes in the Russian armies' command centres or in the peripheries of Siberia or the Far East, the question remains whether the conflicts in the former Baltic provinces can also be analysed from this perspective. Here, too, the collapse of first the Russian and then the German empires opened up a power vacuum in which military entrepreneurs tried to use the absence of state structures to assert themselves in regional spheres of violence. So how might the focus on warlordism alter or enrich our perception of the multi-layered conflicts in the region?

To this end, I would like to examine a specific phenomenon of the civil war: the formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army (*Zapadnaja Dobrovol'českaja Armija*) on the territory of the former Courland Governorate. This army caused one of the many scandals in the events of the wars of independence with its infamous attack on Latvian-defended Riga on 8 October 1919. Its history forms the final chapter of the German Freikorps campaign in the Baltic, which was carried out under the Russian flag – but also in cooperation with Russian troops. The military leaders associated with the formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army and the attack on Riga have already been referred to as warlords in both historiographical and journalistic arguments about the events.[3] In particular, the army's commander-in-chief Prince Pavel Rafalovič (Michailovič) Bermondt-Avalov gives the impression of having left his mark on the war as a warlord of the Baltic region. His name appears omnipresent in the description of the conflict: be it in the frequently chosen designation of the 'Bermondt Army' or with the promising term 'Bermondtiade'[4] for

A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014)

[3] Corresponding assessments can be found for example here: Björn Hofmeister "Goltz, Rüdiger Graf von der," *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War,* ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2016-10-25 https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/goltz_rudiger_graf_von_der#GND_116765038, 1 February 2021; Baltic Defence College, https://www.baltdefcol.org/index.php?print=1&id=1406, 1 February 2021.

[4] See for example the title of Askolds Saulītis' documentary movie from 2009 "Bermontiāda" or Karsten Brüggemann, *Die Gründung der Republik Estland und das Ende des "Einen und unteilbaren Rußland". Die Petrograder Front des Russischen Bürgerkriegs 1918–1920* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 424.

Major General Count Rüdiger von der Goltz (1865–1946), Commanding General of the 6th Reserve Corps. 1919. Estonian National Archives (RA), EFA.706.0.338461

the adventurous military enterprise of the West Russian Volunteer Army against the Latvian state, which almost iconically associates this episode of the Latvian War of Independence with the officer's name. However, since we can assume that the cases mentioned use the label of the warlord more intuitively than conceptually, I would like to raise the question: Should we consider Pavel Bermondt-Avalov as a warlord of the military conflicts in the Baltic? And what about German officers who played a decisive role in the formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army, such as the commanding general in Courland Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz or the leader of the Iron Division Major Josef Bischoff? Were they warlords also?

To examine these questions, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the process of the formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army in order to place the alleged warlords in the context of the military and social dynamics of the period of upheaval. In this way, it is possible to evaluate the interplay of how, on the one hand, these military entrepreneurs significantly influenced the events and dynamics of violence – and on the other hand, to ask which external and internal constraints affected

their actions. Eventually, raising these questions can contribute to examining the complex social dynamics and power structures in the interstice between imperial disintegration and nation-state consolidation in the region.

Warlordism as a historiographical approach to understand the Russian Civil War

The Russian civil war is rich in people who deserve to be called warlords. However, warlordism has not really been among the essential terms used to describe this conflict. One of the most prominent scholars of warlordism in the Russian context is Joshua Sanborn, who has also reflected on the use of the term. As he has shown, the concept originated in the description of military conflicts in China at the beginning of the 20th century and has only since the 1990s been applied to the description of new conflicts in Africa, Asia and Europe.[5] As Sanborn notes, it is also worthwhile to examine the Russian Civil War under this premise. Here, too, the collapse of the Tsarist Empire provided individuals with the necessary environment to act as warlords and dominate regional spheres of violence.[6]

But what is the added value of describing conflicts as warlordism? On the one hand, the intention is to explain the dynamics of violence within a structural power vacuum by focusing on charismatic and violent leaders. On the other hand, the approach can help to explain alternative, regionally limited power mechanisms that took the place of the collapsed state order. According to Sanborn, the concept is thus suitable for making it comprehensible why the rule of determined military men was able to replace the established bureaucratic state.[7] A corresponding analysis has to focus on the following questions: "What accounts for warlordism? How does it begin, and how does it end? What happens to societies and

5 Sanborn, "Genesis," 195–196.
6 His case studies are Lavr Kornilov and Roman von Ungern-Sternberg.
7 Sanborn, "Genesis," 197.

economies subjected to extended periods of warlord rule? These are all questions that the Russian case can help us understand."[8]

And what about the Baltic case? Here, at the latest, the collapse of the German eastern front in the winter of 1918/19 had opened up a power vacuum, in which a multitude of stakeholders tried to gain control over the space. In addition to the nation-state movements and the Bolsheviks, the German army and White Russian troops were also a decisive factor in the region. Thus, a multitude of social and military conflicts overlapped here, making events appear extremely fast-moving and confusing. Therefore, it seems helpful to try to see whether examining the role warlordism played in this conflict contributes to a better understanding of how power-conscious militaries tried to exercise regional power and how the inner workings of the armies had changed since the end of the World War. For this purpose, the West Russian Volunteer Army will serve as a case study – an institution in which a wide variety of political and military stakeholders with different "reimperialisation" strategies came together and opposed, in particular, the consolidation of the Republic of Latvia proclaimed on 18 November 1918.

So how exactly is warlordism defined? Let us make use of the definition applied by Sanborn himself. Here he follows the argument of Pak Nung Wong, according to whom the warlord is "a military commander who autonomously exercises political power through the threatening use of force".[9] In addition, two preconditions must be met in order to describe conflicts as warlordism:

"The fundamental precondition was state failure. [---] The second precondition is that there must be candidates to become warlords – men with military experience, sufficient individual authority to inspire obedience on the part of their men at arms, political ambition, interest in civilian affairs and a high tolerance for risk."[10]

At a superficial glance, the context of the West Russian Volunteer Army in Courland in 1919 seems to fulfil many of these conditions. This

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8 Sanborn, "Genesis," 196.

9 *Ibid*., 197.

10 *Ibid*., 197–198.

was a space without military or even state order, characterised by arbitrary but also structural violence by the military protagonists. Power-conscious German officers around General Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz seemed to be pursuing their own political agenda here already before Colonel Pavel Bermondt-Avalov, an ambitious Russian officer, appeared on the scene in the summer of 1919. Shortly after taking over the command of the troops in Courland he caused a scandal with his risky attack on Riga. In this article, I will attempt to reconstruct the process of the West Russian Volunteer Army's emergence and its self-image as an occupying force in Courland. With the focus on selected powerful officers, I will examine to what extent it is justified to actually describe them as autonomous warlords or whether they were not rather subjected to clear limits in their actions.

Courland 1919: occupation practice in a sphere of violence

To begin with the circumstances: it is not difficult to define the area of the former Courland Governorate, which was to become the West Russian Volunteer Army's main concentration area in the course of 1919, as a territory of state failure. Here, the West Russian Volunteer Army was to inherit occupation authority over a region, which had been marked by extreme violence in the previous four years and where all preceding attempts to establish military or even civil order had failed.

The disintegration of state structures in Courland began in the course of 1915 with the withdrawal of the Tsarist army and the accompanying evacuation of the region. As Vejas Liulevicius has described, the army not only evacuated most of the regional population, but also dismantled industrial facilities and pursued an overall scorched earth policy.[11] The subsequent German occupation of Courland went beyond the objectives of a classic occupation administration. Instead, the apparatus of the

[11] Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambrigde University Press, 2004), 17.

Colonel Pavel Bermondt-Avalov (1877–1973). Latvian War Museum (LKM), 110-I

Oberbefehlshaber Ost (Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East) pursued the establishment of state structures under the objective of fulfilling a "military utopia"[12] in order to cultivate the area. However, this standard could never be achieved due to a lack of efficiency and a ruthless treatment of the country and its people. On the contrary, it led to the continuous disintegration of any organising structures, which manifested itself, among other things, in the formation of local armed groups. These groups started attacks from the forests, which meant that even German soldiers could no longer feel safe on the roads of Courland. This contrast of the pretension of total control and the reality of the effective loss of it marked the entire period of German occupation.[13]

[12] Liulevicius, 54.
[13] *Ibid*., 78–81.

The collapse of the German eastern front at the end of 1918 was not to close this regional sphere of violence – quite the contrary. In the winter of 1918/19 the Red Army followed the retreating German forces and, as elsewhere, established a system of Bolshevik terror directed against all class enemies, here not the least against the Baltic German landowners and clergy.[14] In the spring of 1919, the Baltische Landeswehr (Baltic Territorial Army) – a local armed force of the Baltic Germans with one Latvian and one Russian battalion[15] – and formations of the German army advanced into Courland's territories. Here, in addition to the already known attacks by local gangs, they also had to face acts of violence by Bolsheviks behind the front. Thus, the entire population of the occupied area came under general suspicion and from then on, the Baltic German and German forces considered an own preventive terror as the only means of guaranteeing their security. Hence, many sources described the so-called *White* Terror[16] as even more extreme than the preceding Red one. The violent measures were explicitly understood as a means of establishing regional order and can be illustrated above all by the treatment of prisoners and civilians when gaining or losing local control. For example, in March Latvian newspapers reported the indiscriminate shooting of civilians by the Baltische Landeswehr upon the capturing of the port city of Windau[17] (Ventspils). In a subsequent systematic rounding up of all the men in town, more people were shot because of their suspicious appearance or because they could be linked to known Bolsheviks. Another report from Wainoden (Vainode) mentions the problem of how to deal with the "few dozen" prisoners during the rapid advance.

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[14] Georg von Rauch, *Geschichte der baltischen Staaten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970), 50–58.

[15] Wilhelm Lenz, "Deutschbalten und Bermondt. Ihre Zusammenarbeit während der zweiten Hälfte des Jahres 1919" – *Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Lettland während der Zwischenkriegszeit und aktuelle Fragen des deutsch-lettischen Verhältnisses,* Herausgeber Boris Meissner, Dietrich A. Loeber und Detlef Henning (Hamburg: Baltica, 2000), 19.

[16] The commonly used term 'White Terror' refers to the dichotomy of the Russian Civil War and, in a somewhat simplified manner, places the Landeswehr as well as the German troops in common with the anti-Bolshvevik movement in Russia.

[17] Since the article mostly refers to German-language source material, the German designation of the place name is usually given. The Latvian name is added in brackets when it is mentioned for the first time.

Headquarters of the assault battalion (Stoßtrupp) of the Baltic Landeswehr before the attack on Riga, 22 May 1919. From the left: Rittmeister von Below, Rittmeister Girgensohn, Hauptmann Heinrich Graf zu Dohna, Kornet von Burmeister, Battalion Commander Lieutenant Baron Hans Manteuffel, Commander of the Baltic Landeswehr Major Alfred Fletcher, Rittmeister Baron Heinrich Manteuffel, Staff Doctor Dr. Kleemann, Rittmeister Fred Armistadt. RA, ERA.1298.1.461.12

While shooting also occurred here, some detainees – "mainly members of the democratically elected self-governing bodies" – were sentenced to prison terms in summary trials.[18] Even German soldiers could become victims of terror if they were denounced or had contact with the enemy. A volunteer with the German troops reported how several volunteers were taken to the remand prison in Mitau (Jelgava) without a warrant because of a denunciation. Without being interrogated, they were taken back to the German border three weeks later under police guard and sent back

[18] Übergriffe von 1. Reichsd. Militär & Behörden, 2. Landeswehr in Lettland und Estland, Latvian State Historical Archive (LVVA), 2575. f., 20. apr., 3. l., 66–67 (Translation: T.R.; as with all the following source citations and citations from non-English language works).

to Berlin. The same report also mentions the case of three soldiers who managed to save themselves from Bolshevik captivity and informed the German authorities of a plan of attack by the Red Army. They were also immediately taken to the Mitau remand prison, where, according to the report, they were shot.[19]

Also in Riga, which the Landeswehr had taken on 22 May 1919, the White Terror replaced the preceding Red one, as it had done in the countryside. The first ten days after the capture were thus characterised by indiscriminate shootings. Although people were also interned, the shootings on the open street apparently happened much more frequently. Here, too, suspicions and denunciations were sufficient reasons for executions. The Baltic German and German formations also showed openly anti-Latvian tendencies, as one aim was to eliminate supporters of the Latvian government. As Mark Hatlie has made clear in his study, revenge was not the only motive for the violence, but it was also a cold calculation to weaken the political rival. Casualty figures for this phase of white terror in Riga vary widely, ranging from 400 to 4500 victims. The executions in the city only abated when the Entente exerted more and more pressure on the German military leadership.[20]

In principle, however, the German General Command explicitly sanctioned this procedure and understood it as a necessity for establishing occupation policy order in the specific regional conditions. One operated in a space where the positions of the front changed so quickly that the warring parties usually had to give up territories before they could enforce any form of military or even state order. In addition, due to these circumstances, there were constant points of contact with the military opponent and his ideologies – and not too few of them in the rear of one's own front. These contacts had to be prevented. A letter sent by the German General Command to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace three weeks after the capture of Riga confirms these intentions. Here the leadership made it clear that it too considered "secret criminal

[19] Übergriffe von 1. Reichsd. Militär & Behörden, 2. Landeswehr in Lettland und Estland, LVVA, 2575. f., 20. apr., 3. l., 62–65.

[20] Mark R. Hatlie, *Riga at War 1914–1919. War and Wartime Experience in a Multi-ethnic Metropolis* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2014), 125–132.

trials and rash executions the most unsuitable way to establish peace and order here in the country".[21] The leadership was aware that "by not fully justifying the sentences, the nationality differences will only be aggravated, not alleviated". For this reason, summary courts martial were always composed of a Latvian, a Baltic German and a German, in order to exclude revenge from nationalistic motives. The necessity of holding summary courts martial was justified with the argument that there was a lack of personnel and buildings for 'public' courts. At the same time, there was a need to work quickly in the courts in order to "get innocent convicts released" and to "have the most serious criminals judged before a possible counter-movement brought the Bolsheviks back to power". This line of argument shows that the German general command was certainly interested in establishing order and attached importance to transforming the treatment of prisoners into forms of the rule of law. However, it also shows the dilemma faced by an institution that saw itself as a regional force for order.

However, the violent actions of the German and Baltic German forces were not only due to the General Command's claim to order. Unsanctioned arbitrary acts by members of the army as well as by unidentified men in German uniforms, who were still in the country in large numbers, were also commonplace and, despite the aspirations of the General Command, constituted a significant additional anarchic factor in the region. On several occasions, the Latvian government protested against these arbitrary acts of violence against the Latvian population. For example, as late as 24 August, Latvian Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics addressed a note to the German envoy in which he vehemently protested against the excesses of the German troops:

"Our state institutions have officially ascertained facts which characterise the terror exercised by the German army detachments in Courland. The German troops are openly attacking Latvian commandant's offices and parish halls, disarming the guards, destroying the commandant's offices, appropriating money, abducting movable property and

[21] Der Amerikanischen Kommission To Negociate Peace [sic!], 12.6.1919, DSHI 120 Generalkommando 1, 33–34.

documents. [---] Every day brings new acts of violence and robberies by German soldiers. Various murders have occurred in Neuenburg und Frauenburg [Jaunpils and Saldus]. The prosecutor of the district court has so far recorded 400 cases of theft and robbery. The German soldiers trample fields and meadows with their horses and carry away grain, so that the inhabitants have a shortage of bread."[22]

This comprehensive protest against the behaviour of German soldiers reveals that the policy measures of the General Command had not been able to establish order in the region even in August. Rather, there is much to suggest that the situation in Courland had rather deteriorated over the summer in the course of the changed political and military conditions and that the General Command was increasingly losing control over their soldiers. This is not least due to the changed conditions under which the German army had been operating since the disintegration of the eastern front in November 1918.

The West Russian Volunteer Army – Genesis of a failed army in a failed state setting?

When the German 8th Army in the Baltic was in a state of dissolution after the Compiègne Armistice and the revolution in Germany, it was decided here, as elsewhere, to set up volunteer units to secure the borders of the Reich and maintain internal order. These Freikorps continued to follow the orders of the *Oberste Heeresleitung* (Supreme Army Command), which had established the *Oberkommando Nord* (Northern High Command) in East Prussia. Command of the front in Courland was transferred to the General Command of the 6th Reserve Corps, which henceforth also supplied the Baltische Landeswehr in addition to the German volunteer formations, of which the Eiserne Division (Iron Division) was the largest.[23] The command itself was held by General Rüdiger

[22] Eine Note des Aussenministers Meierowitz an den deutschen Gesandten, 24.8.1919, LVVA, 2575. f., 20. apr.,3. l,, 80–81.

[23] Wilhelm Lenz, "Deutsche Machtpolitik in Lettland im Jahre 1919. Ausgewählte Dokumente des von General Rüdiger von der Goltz geführten Generalkommandos des VI. Reservekorps,"

Graf von der Goltz, who had already proven himself in the fight against Bolshevism in Finland in the spring of 1918, and who arrived in Libau (Liepāja) in early February 1919. Von der Goltz was anything but satisfied with the army's new structures. For example, the general was not exactly a friend of volunteer recruitment, which – in his own words – brought "highly evil elements, even numerous Spartacist agitators in disguise into the troops",[24] but which he had to accept as a necessary evil. But the undesirable politicisation was not the only problem regarding the moral integrity of the troops. Thus von der Goltz saw that "the ignoble desire to 'make oneself healthy' in a foreign country by plundering" was also among the main motives for recruitment in Courland.

This was not only problematic from a military point of view. Moreover, it did not in any way fit with the high demands that the general placed on his subordinates due to his political aspirations. They were not only to act as exemplary soldiers, but also to cultivate Courland as peasant settlers after the end of the fighting. Corresponding plans to found German peasant colonies went back to goals of German policy during and even before the World War. And even in 1919, these ideas were not only still extremely present in the German general staff,[25] but were also extensively advertised on leaflets for the soldiers[26] and were still being lively discussed in German newspapers during the summer months.[27] In this way, it had indeed been possible to recruit a large number of volunteers for service in Courland.

The only problem was that the military and political situation had changed significantly in the summer. The settlement plan, which had encouraged a substantial part of the German volunteers to fight in the Baltic, was based on a treaty between the German Plenipotentiary General

Zeitschrift für Ostforschung 36, no 4 (1987): 525.

[24] General Graf Rüdiger von der Goltz, Generalkommando VI. Reservekorps, an die Anwerbestelle Baltenland, March 1919, Document 4 in Lenz, "Machtpolitik," 540–543.

[25] See Documents 1–4 in Lenz, "Machtpolitik," 535–543.

[26] Siedlungsmöglichkeiten im Osten, LVVA, 2575. f., 20. apr., 7. l., 87–91.

[27] Paul Otto Ebe, "Ein Aufnahmegebiet für unsere Auswanderung," *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt,* 25 June 1919, LVVA, 2575. f., 20. apr., 7. l., 84–85.

and the Provisional Government of Latvia of 29 December 1918.[28] This treaty, which allowed German soldiers fighting in Latvia against the Red Army to apply for Latvian citizenship, formed the legal basis for the presence of German troops in Courland. So did the Compiègne Armistice Treaty,[29] which stipulated that German troops should maintain their posts in Eastern Europe, and dated from a time when the Provisional Government of Latvia had been unable to raise its own troops. Moreover, since the Entente was only prepared to intervene in the Baltic to a very limited extent, the military alliance came about with Germany, which for its part had little interest in a Bolshevisation of the areas so close to its borders.

It soon became apparent, however, that the parties involved had different objectives for the further shaping of Latvia. While the Entente states rather rejected a "resurgence of Germany as well as Russia in the Baltic region"[30] and supported the government of Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis, the German military and the former Baltic German elites were opposed to a Latvian nation state under the leadership of Ulmanis' government. Since no other major military power was willing to intervene in Latvia, these forces tried to exploit the situation in their favour. Already one month before the capture of Riga, there had been a putsch in Libau by the Baltische Landeswehr, in which Ulmanis and his government had been able to save themselves by fleeing to a ship under British protection. Subsequently, the Baltic German leadership installed a new pro-German government under the chairmanship of the pastor Andrievs Niedra, which, however, received no support from the population.[31] The Entente naturally protested against this action and demanded the recall

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[28] Hans-Erich Volkmann, Die russische Emigration in Deutschland 1919–1929 (Würzburg: Holzner, 1966), 63–64.

[29] The 12th arcticle of the Armistice Treaty did provide that "all German troops at present in territories which before the war formed part of Russia must [---] return to within the frontiers of Germany", but only "as soon as the Allies shall think the moment suitable, having regard to the internal situation of these territories". "Conditions of the Armistice with Germany (November 11, 1918)," *German History in Documents and Images,* ed. German Historical Institute Washington DC, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=5003, 2 February 2021.

[30] Rauch, *Geschichte*, 61.

[31] *Ibid*., 60.

of General von der Goltz at the beginning of May – demands that the politically ambitious general was able to fend off. But even after the capture of Riga, the Entente still did not demand the evacuation of the German troops from the Baltic. Instead, on 23 May, it ordered the German government to "order and ensure the remaining of all German forces in Latvia and Lithuania".[32] The protagonists in Courland and Riga, however, had more far-reaching plans. Instead of holding their positions or following the retreating Red Army to the east, the Landeswehr and German units turned north, where they clashed in tense conditions with Estonian formations that had advanced in their turn at the beginning of June. Now, the Inter-Allied Military Mission finally demanded a German withdrawal as well as the "removal of half of all German troops to Germany".[33] General von der Goltz rejected this demand, whereby the coincidence of these events with the decisive days of the peace conference in Versailles is probably unsurprising. The general apparently firmly expected the German side to reject the peace terms, which would also have reordered the power-political situation in the East.[34] Under these circumstances, the battle of Wenden (Cēsis) took place on 22 June, which the Estonian forces – surprisingly for the German side – won. Thus, the tide had once again turned for the German troops. The signing of the Treaty of Versailles reinforced the perception of defeat. It also affected the protagonists in the Baltic, since the entry into force of Article 293 annulled not only the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, but also the previous treaties between Germany and Latvia, which concerned the settlement intentions of the soldiers. With regard to the conflict between the German Army and the Republics of Estonia and Latvia, the Strasdenhof (Strazdumuiža) Armistice Treaty was concluded near Riga on 3 July. According to the provisions of this treaty, the Ulmanis government was reinstated. In addition, the Baltische Landeswehr was now placed under a British commander and transferred to the front against the Bolsheviks. The treaty also stip-

[32] Quoted from Lenz, "Deutschbalten," 26.
[33] Rauch, *Geschichte,* 63.
[34] *Ibid*., 63.

ulated the imminent evacuation of the German troops from the Baltic, while Riga and Livonia were to be evacuated immediately.[35]

Of course, these developments did not leave the German soldiers unscathed. According to Vejas Liulevicius, the moment of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles removed the Freikorps fighters even further from reality than was already the case before:

> "The Freikorps men were involved in wild plans, as they cast about for a mission from which a coherent identity might grow. They were already in the Baltikum when they heard of the signing of the Versailles Treaty. Without much sense of broader political and military realities, they had hoped negotiations would be broken off, allowing Germany to resume the war. They reacted to the signing with shame, grief, and anger, finally simply rejecting the news. [---] If their sense of the realities of the world had been weak before, ties with the outside were now broken off entirely. Germany became 'a land without reality' to them."[36]

Due to this perceived break with the homeland, the prospect of building a new home in Courland gained importance: "The vision of settlement was a powerful one, promising a permanent and stable identity."[37] Therefore, the simultaneous announcement that the Latvian government was backing away from its promise to grant citizenship to foreign soldiers due to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles came as a shock. Neither a large number of soldiers nor the army leadership were willing to comply with the now stipulated evacuation. Other solutions were needed to keep the German troops in the area. In this respect, it appeared to be a fortunate coincidence that three Russian volunteer units, which had been recruited in the previous months from German prisoner-of-war-camps, had arrived in the Baltic in the summer. In Mitau, where the headquarters of the German troops was still located, the volunteer corps Graf Keller under the leadership of Colonel Pavel Rafalovič (Michailovič) Bermond-Avalov took up quarters at the beginning of June. Their self-declared goal

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[35] *Ibid*., 63–64.
[36] Liulevicius, *War Land,* 237–238.
[37] *Ibid.,* 238.

was to intervene in the events of the Russian Civil War from the Baltic and to help liberate the Russian homeland from Bolshevism. For the decision-makers in the German military, the presence of the colonel and his soldiers gave them the opportunity to realise what had long been discussed as the *Russian option* in the General Staff. Already before the battle of Wenden, a corresponding trick had been used and the soldiers of the Iron Division had been allowed to enter the service of the Niedra government for two weeks. So now conditions were to be created under which the German Freikorps could place themselves under a Russian supreme command. First, however, a number of questions had to be clarified in this regard. For example, the possibility of equipping and financing such a Russian army in Latvia had to be discussed. Also of importance was the question of when a transfer of German formations should take place. And last but not least, it had to be clarified which Russian officer was at all suitable to take over the supreme command.

An unexpected problem for such German-Russian cooperation, however, was that the Russian volunteers in Courland did not exactly present themselves as elite soldiers either. Reports from the German General Command on conditions in the Russian units paint a less than confident picture. A report of 15 August, for example, complained about "the large number of parasites and dubious elements within the individual units".[38] However, "a certain cleansing has begun in this respect, which also extends to the new recruits". "Increasing order and proper propaganda, which is the private work of capable non-commissioned officers", have led to an improvement in the mood. However, even a month later, the problems had obviously not been solved. Another report of 9 September mentions the poor conditions at all levels, "since there seems to be a lack of the necessary equipment and the responsible agencies have by no means done what had to be done in view of the overall threatening situation and what could have been done with good will".[39] The report saw the lack of organisation as being rooted in the Russian way of being:

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[38] Bericht, 15.8.1919, DSHI Generalkommando 4, 132–133.

[39] Meldung über die russischen Truppen in Mitau, 9.9.1919 Document 4 in Lenz, "Machtpolitik," 573–575.

> "This lack of achievement is due in part to the chancery economy that prevails in the Russian departments and the long process of going through the channels, which inhibits the entire organisation and is likely to paralyse it completely in the near future. The lack of dedication to the cause of all leading circles is to blame for this, and, apart from the well-known Russian slovenliness, also a thoroughly careless treatment of the entire matter on the part of the officer corps."

The officer corps in particular was "in no way aware of its very great responsibility under today's conditions and, unbelievably, for the most part completely unoriented about the general political and military situation". This also had an effect on the soldiers, who could "not be given any information about the situation". If political convictions were expressed, they were obviously not helpful either: "The repeated and public stressing of the monarchist idea on the part of the officers is [---] completely out of place". Political passivity was not the only problem, however:

> "The almost unbelievable drinking and raving within the officer corps, which often degenerates into bad behaviour even on the street, is [---] known from the past, but is [---] nevertheless very unpleasant."

The author of the report feared repercussions on the general morale:

> "Even if all these phenomena have not yet undermined discipline, the confidence and mood of the troops has already suffered not insignificantly". Therefore, he called for stronger discipline: "In the interest of the cause, much greater self-discipline must be demanded of the officer corps, for the prospect of an unchanged old lottery economy can and must depress the soldier and also undermine the whole structure in the long run."

Incidentally, the problem did not only affect the officers. Also the recruitment of new soldiers was not to the satisfaction of the German authorities, who criticised "the inadequate selection of new recruits, which has made and still makes possible the entry of all kind of dark elements (including officers) – there are already detachments consisting almost entirely of unsuitable personalities". Cooperation in particular proved difficult:

> "The lack of capable organisers, devoted to the cause and familiar with the milieu, on both the German and Russian sides, is becoming more and more noticeable, and it seems more and more as if, due to a lack of contact, the reins of the enterprise are slipping away from the leading German hand."

This was also evident from the lack of discipline on the German side:

> "The behaviour of the German officers unfortunately differs little from that of the Russian officers and is often completely unqualified – for example, they are no longer afraid to address ladies in public in an improper manner. The wildest drinking [---] has also become alarmingly prevalent here, and this sets an example to the people that makes it completely impossible for the lower ranks to influence them in a good way, especially since the fulfilment of official duties is often severely affected by this activity. Of course, when admonished, the enlisted men always refer to the example of the officers. It is therefore no wonder that the troops are already claiming that the immorality of the officers is demoralising the troops by design."

Another problem was that there were no German liaison officers in the Russian departments "who have an insight to their inner lives, are fully conversant in the Russian language and are familiar with Russian politics". The report urgently called for changes:

> "In any case, one gets the impression that German control of the Russian departments is almost non-existent. All these shortcomings must be remedied quickly and through close and constant personal contact if the German-Russian enterprise is not to be nipped in the bud or slip into other hands, both of which would mean a great embarrassment for us."

Despite all the problems, it is clear from these statements that by the beginning of September there had obviously been progress on the question of the implementation of the Russian option. In fact, the individual Russian units had in the meantime become the West Russian Volunteer Army, to which numerous German forces also belonged.

United in disobedience – The formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Strasdenhof, Rüdiger von der Goltz had begun to pave the way for appropriate cooperation and to seek support from German governmental and military authorities whose approval he considered necessary. In this regard, he stressed the necessity that only German troops could provide protection against the Red Army. According to the state of affairs at the time, this was only possible under the Russian flag. The Oberkommando Nord shared this view and, in communication to the German Ministry of Finance on 1 August, urged that the Russian units continue to receive financial support from the German side.[40]

In this way, short-term financing was assured. However, the extent to which it would be possible to finance a German-Russian army from German government funds in the long term was questionable. For this reason, other sources of money had to be found. In this, the Baltic German political circles played an important role. Especially the former Land Marshal of the Livonian Knighthood Adolph Baron Pilar von Pilchau tried to support the contemplated military enterprise by building political cooperation. On 22 July, he had initiated the founding of the Military-Political Council for West Russia in Berlin, which was henceforth to be "the sole representative of Russia's interests with regard to questions of the Western Front vis-à-vis the foreign powers and military and state centres of Russia recognised by them".[41] In addition, it was to pool financial as well as political support for the opening of a new western front in the Russian Civil War. Pilar von Pilchau made it clear that the newly formed states in the Baltic were not to play too great a role in these plans:

> "We are of the opinion that only those who do not know the country and its people can believe in the viability of the independent republics of Eesti and Latwija, which are protected by the Entente. We foresee

[40] Volkmann, *Emigration,* 68–69.

[41] Protokoll der Sitzung des Militärpolitischen Rates Westrußlands am 10. August 1919, Document 9 in Lenz, "Machtpolitik," 558–559.

Baron Adolph (Alf) Pilar von Pilchau (1851–1925), Land Marshal of Livonian Knighthood in 1908–1918. RA, EAA.1850.1.835.1

> that these dwarf republics, created and led by national chauvinists, will perish miserably after having plunged the inhabitants into the greatest misery through senseless socialist experiments vividly reminiscent of Bolshevism."[42]

So while the general direction of the political program was clear, the Council's core task of securing financial resources was not to be achieved. Therefore, Rüdiger von der Goltz became personally active in the matter and travelled to Kolberg, Weimar and Berlin in mid-August to coordinate with both military authorities and the German government. As a result, he was able to obtain transitional funding for the month of September for both the German troops and the Russian units. However, a further assumption of payments was out of the question.[43] While von der Goltz had thus temporarily left Mitau for this purpose, facts were created here in another way concerning the transfer of German formations to Russian

[42] Quoted from Lenz, "Deutschbalten," 33.
[43] Volkmann, *Emigration*, 70.

service. The possibility of the Russian option had already spread among the troops immediately after the Strasdenhof armistice and was actively discussed by the volunteers.[44] The mood among the troops, many of whom categorically rejected the idea of evacuation and insisted on keeping the promise of settlement, did not go unnoticed by General von der Goltz, who addressed the soldiers on this matter several times and urged them to be prudent. As early as 13 July, a corps order stated: "Every day, countless individuals and entire formations report to the General Command with the request whether they should transfer to the Russian divisions being formed here in order to fight in them for the liberation of Latvia from Bolshevism."[45]

In this regard, it was emphasised that in principle "the Russian formations should be given every reinforcement and support by us for their task". Therefore, "there is already no objection to the transfer of individuals, provide they leave their unit in an orderly manner". However, it was pointed out that such a process would take place at "one's own risk" of losing the German citizenship. The general expressed a different opinion on the transfer of entire units:

> "Under no circumstances, however, is it permitted for closed formations to leave now. As long as we are here in the country, we must be prepared for an attack by the Latvians and Estonians at any moment. Every departure of a formation therefore means a weakening that can become disastrous. Of course, no troop leader can dispose of his weapons and equipment without the permission of the General Command."

He stressed that after the decision to vacate the country, "the transfer, even of entire formations, will be supported to a large extent" – "provided that their future is also sufficiently secured financially". Furthermore, the realisation of the plans also depended on the Russian side:

> "The General Command can only consider the moment of transfer to the Russian formations to have come when the Russian leaders are in a position to pay the German volunteers and when it can be seen whether

44 Lenz, "Deutschbalten," 29.

45 Korpsbefehl Generalkommando VI. Res.Korps., 13.7.1919, LVVA, 2575. f., 20. apr., 7. l., 82.

> the promises made by the Russian leaders will find their support in a future Russian government which is willing to keep these promises."

Until these conditions were not met, "the transfer of entire formations without the permission of the General Command was prohibited".

Such declarations and orders, however, could not prevent facts from being created by the troops themselves – or rather by a particular troop leader. On 23 August, the Iron Division, the largest association of German Freikorps, mutinied and refused the evacuation order issued at that time.[46] The commander of the Iron Division, Major Josef Bischoff, justified his high-handed action in a letter to his soldiers with the withdrawal of the settlement promise by the Latvian government and the lack of support for the soldiers in this matter by the German government: "I therefore consider it my duty now to uphold these rights of the troops myself. I will stand up with my whole person for their fulfilment. I have therefore forbidden the removal of the division to Germany."[47]

Bischoff took full responsibility for this action, although he stressed:

> "My move is not directed against the [German] government. I do not want to make a counter-revolution. But I will see to it that my troops receive what they have been promised, and as they have – heaven knows – deserved."

However, he also made a number of demands, the fulfilment of which apparently made him willing to comply with the eviction order. These included securing employment for some of the officers and enlisted men of the Iron Division in the new Reichswehr and in the police, a salary and rations for further three months, the "fulfilment of the promise of settlement in Germany" and the "assurance of complete impunity for all officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men of the division who are merely acting on orders, an order for which I take full responsibility". In addition, the list contained the demand that the division be placed together on the East Prussian border: "If then in winter or next spring Bolshevism appears again in the Baltic, the division will be ready to fight

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[46] Wilhelm Lenz, "Die Bermondt-Affaire 1919," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 15, no 1 (1984): 19.

[47] Eiserne Division, 23.8.1919, LVVA, 2575. f., 20. apr., 7. l., 86.

it". These were demands that the German government obviously could not meet.

These developments, which led to the transfer of German formations under Russian supreme command, raise a number of questions: Does the mutiny of the Iron Division qualify as an act of warlordism? And how should one assess the role of the decisive persons in this development, Josef Bischoff and Rüdiger von der Goltz? Must these two individuals, for their part, not already be considered warlords of the Baltic region with their supposedly high-handed actions? Here, two strong military men obviously prepared the way for the formation of the West Russian Volunteer Army and the ensuing events, even before the supposed warlord Bermondt-Avalov assumed supreme command. Did Bischoff and von der Goltz fulfil the criteria, as defined by Sanborn, to be considered warlords? Were they "military commander(s) who autonomously exercise(d) political power through the threatening use of force",[48] "men with military experience, sufficient individual authority to inspire obedience on the part of their men at arms, political ambition, interest in civilian affairs and a high tolerance for risk"?

Let us start with General Rüdiger von der Goltz: As has become clear from what we have gathered so far, he was an officer with great experience and decidedly political ambitions.[49] He was also definitely prepared to enforce his claims even by using force, although he always pretended to be guided in his actions only by military necessities and his mission to establish order. Despite the indiscipline of the soldiers, one gets the impression from studying the sources that the general was regarded as an undisputed authority in Courland and that his word carried weight in all cases.[50] The fact that the Iron Division ultimately mutinied against

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[48] Sanborn, "Genesis," 197–198.

[49] The fact that he still liked to propagate a corresponding self-image later on is shown not least by the title of the second version of his memoirs "As a Political General in the East": Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz, *Als politischer General im Osten (Finnland und Baltikum) 1918 und 1919* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1936).

[50] The Reichswehr Group Command III paid tribute to him with these words when he was recalled from the Baltic: "The spirit of patriotism and the sense of duty that enabled your numerically often outnumbered troops to achieve these feats was mostly owed to you [---]. How much the troop itself felt this, it proved to you through the trust placed in you. Respected,

his explicit instructions is of less importance in this context. Rather, it cannot be ruled out that in this way things had developed exactly in the direction intended by the general, but that no active participation in the breach of law could be proven against him – as had already been the case four months earlier with the coup in Libau. Moreover, such actions demonstrated von der Goltz's willingness to take risks, which he necessarily had to display and which was sometimes based on gross misjudgements of the political situation – as in the case of the wrongly anticipated rejection of the German signature on the Treaty of Versailles.

Overall, von der Goltz clearly played more than a military role and pursued the implementation of his own political agenda based on the goal of saving Germany's war aims in Eastern Europe. In doing so, he was concerned with far more than just fighting Bolshevism and securing Germany's borders, to which his mission was actually limited. Thus, he hindered the Latvian government wherever he could in his ambition to keep Courland within the German sphere of influence. In doing so, he skilfully adapted to the constantly changing conditions and thus repeatedly evaded the enforcement of the Entente's demand for his resignation. Only as soon as this step became absolutely unavoidable did he initiate the transfer of formations under Russian supreme command. There is no reason to doubt that the thoughts written down in the general's memoirs published in 1920 would not in fact have been the guiding maxims of his actions in 1919:

> "At the same time, however, what could still be saved from the unfortunate outcome of the war had to be salvaged. Germany was the victor in the East. [---] Why should it not still be possible to pursue the Eastern policy prevented in August 1918 together with the 'White' Russians in some modified, adaptable form under the banner of fighting the Bolshevists [---]? Why should it not be possible above all to initiate an economic and political rapprochement with the coming Russia? To the Russia which, after the slaughter of its own intelligentsia, hungered

loved and revered as only rarely a leader is, you were the strong head that inspired the troop, which was composed so differently, with a unified spirit and enabled it to achieve so much." Estorff an von der Goltz, 8.10.1919, DSHI 120 Generalkommando 5, 16–16v.

> for German merchants, technicians, leaders, whose devastated, deserted peripheral provinces demanded industrious German farmers for its fertile soil? In this way, work and bread could be provided for many of those who had become homeless in the occupied and later ceded territories, but especially for my soldiers who had been recruited with the promise of settlement: Russia could no longer raise the objections it had before the war."[51]

And yet there are also arguments that at least limit this image of an autonomously acting, politically ambitious and risk-taking protagonist. For example, it must be acknowledged that von der Goltz, for all his independent actions, was a fervent advocate of the classical army structure with its hierarchies, and he usually seemed to coordinate his actions with his superior command, while not openly resisting instructions to the contrary. He was obviously not a friend of the new developments that had so permanently upset the way the army functioned and also limited the enforcement of his command over the soldiers.

The developments that led to the transfer of German troops under Russian supreme command revealed that for all his obstinacy and revolutionary nature in his actions, he always carefully implemented his plan step by step and was always in dialogue with the Supreme Army Command and the German government. Of course, he was aware that the Entente still had leverage against an overly bold and aggressive approach on his part, such as the repeatedly threatened invasion of Germany. This represented an effective means of pressure for the general's sense of patriotic duty. In the end, the impression prevails that his actions and decisions were not completely detached from the framework set by the circumstances. It is true that his decisions and actions were characterised by a strong individualism and a constant testing and pushing of boundaries. However, he did not obviously overstep these limits and the guidelines set for him, and he secured his position with his superiors on the essential points, as one would certainly not expect from a warlord. Moreover, he

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[51] Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz, *Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1920), 127.

finally complied with his dismissal – albeit, of course, only after a long delay, while he had clarified the further development in his favour.

And Josef Bischoff? At first glance, he too could be considered a warlord. He too was an officer with great experience, had a close bond with his troops and showed his willingness to take risks when he instigated the rebellion of his soldiers. However, even in his case it is difficult to assess the situation in a clear-cut way. In Bischoff's case, too, it can be observed that he only started the mutiny when it became clear that the German government would not veto it and would secure the action financially, at least in the short term. Thus, he only accelerated the corresponding development. Taking into account the detailed demands he made for the benefit of his people, it can furthermore be assumed that a subjective understanding of justice was indeed the primary cause of his actions – and not the intention to appear as a political protagonist.

All in all, one must make an ambivalent judgement as to whether these two military men were warlords of the Baltic region. The actions of both individuals obviously bore certain signs of warlordism, but they were also not completely detached from the limits imposed on them by those whom they considered to be their political authority. Although their actions were extremely risky, both were also in constant dialogue with their superiors and usually obeyed orders given. In addition to being dependent on the support of the Supreme Army Command and the German government, on which in turn the Entente exerted great pressure, they were also dependent on the financial and political support of the Baltic German politicians. Neither of the two officers attempted to come to power via a coup. Rather, they used the positions to which they had been formally appointed to enforce their understanding of patriotic tasks and responsibility for their troops.

Thus, with due caution regarding the use of the term warlord, they should rather be denied this label. A corresponding assessment should, of course, neither trivialise nor justify the actions of the individuals. Instead, this judgement pleads for a closer look in future at the power structures within which von der Goltz and Bischoff operated – which is aimed not least at the self-image of the German authorities and army leadership. Obviously, the boundaries set by the government were so soft and spongy

that military leaders like von der Goltz or Bischoff could quite effortlessly act beyond their competence without being held accountable. Thus, they only broke these boundaries with deliberation as soon as the consequences that would result from such action were foreseeable. The reasons for the weak position taken by the social democratic government on this issue cannot be the subject of this article, nor can the extreme polarisation of political public opinion that it brought about, not only in Germany.

Regardless of whether one calls the protagonists warlords, it is undisputed that the departure of General Rüdiger von der Goltz and the transfer of the Iron Division to Russian supreme command once again changed the rules of the game according to which the protagonists in Courland acted. The events not only meant a break with the official command hierarchy of the German military, but also a general departure from the previously held claim that the German military should act as a force of order in the region. Did this open up the structures so that the field was now prepared for an autonomous warlord? A corresponding indicator would be that also the second factor that contributed to the founding of the West Russian Volunteer Army was due to the disobedience of another ambitious officer – Colonel Bermondt-Avalov.

Also the Russian forces, which were now joined by the Iron Division and other German units, were actually no longer supposed to be in Courland. On 9 July, the White General Nikolaj Nikolaevič Judenič, who was formally in command of all Russian units in the Baltic, had given the order to embark for Narva. There all units were to join Judenič's offensive on Petrograd.[52] While Prince Anatol Pavlovič Lieven, who was in supreme command of the Russian troops in Courland and thus also of the formations recruited in Germany at his instigation at the time,[53] followed the order, by no means all of the Russian officers did so. Colonel Bermondt-Avalov refused to comply with this order and remained in Mitau with his corps Graf Keller. In this way, he assumed command of all units remaining in Courland and became the first point of contact for the German General Command in all questions concerning German-Russian

[52] Volkmann, *Emigration,* 67.

[53] Rittmeister von Rosenberg, *Die Bildung russischer nationaler Formationen an der baltischen Front* (Russische Korrespondenz, 1920).

cooperation.[54] But this step did not at once settle all conflict over the question of leadership of the Russian forces, and the process that had made Bermondt the most powerful Russian officer in Mitau was anything but uncontroversial. Especially when the transfer of the German formations began to promise an actual position of military power, Bermondt had to prepare himself for headwinds. There was certainly no lack of politically ambitious Russian officers who had taken up positions in Berlin or Mitau over the summer to spearhead the opening of a new western front of the civil war. In addition to General of the Cavalry Vasilij Viktorovič Biskupskij and the former Chief of the General Staff of the Tsarist Army Vasilij Iosifovič Gurko, Colonel Evgenij Pavlovič Vyrgolič, who had assembled another corps from former prisoners of war in Germany in the spring and was stationed in the north of Lithuania, also pursued corresponding intentions. The circumstance of the embattled supreme command led to the fact that "in the months of August and September 1919, Mitau briefly became one of the centres, along with Paris and Berlin, for the political and military planning of the Western Russian émigré groups".[55] Various politicians and military officers appeared here either motivated to support Bermondt in preparing an offensive against the Red Army or to undermine his position on the ground.

In this dispute, General Gurko represented the most serious and obvious choice for the supreme command of a new front of the Russian civil war. However, the general seemed to want to wait and see to what extent the enterprise actually promised serious possibilities of success and was ultimately not available. Colonel Bermondt was not the preferred candidate because of his inadequate military qualifications. However, due to the position of power he had acquired on the ground in Mitau, he was able to fend off the intrigues of Biskupskij, who would have been only too happy to take over the position and had the support of the Military Political Council in Berlin. While von der Goltz emphasised in this respect that he "did not want to interfere in internal Russian affairs",[56] it was ultimately

[54] Lenz, "Bermondt-Affaire," 19.
[55] Lenz, "Deutschbalten," 29.
[56] *Ibid*., 35.

his personal decision that led to Bermondt's appointment. A choice that was probably also due to the fact that Bermondt had already fully integrated himself into the German structures.[57]

As a result, on 21 September von der Goltz concluded a contract with Bermondt "for the purpose of transferring the supreme command from German to Russian hands"[58] after the withdrawal of the German troops. This contract stipulated that the "Russian troops [---] were to take over a section of the front between Mitau and Riga and [---] thus the protection of the removal of the troops remaining to Germany". In the event of an attack, they were guaranteed the help of the "German forces still available". Furthermore, it was stated that binding contracts were to be concluded with the "Germans voluntarily remaining behind" and that the Russian High Command would "take over the governorate of Mitau and the German army installations against receipt on a date to be determined". Delicately, despite the previous break with Biskupskij and the émigré groups in Berlin, Bermondt also undertook "in the interest of the treaties to be concluded with the Germans, to comply with the political and economic directives of the Russian Military-Political Council in Berlin and in future to carry out his activities only in the closest agreement with it". The German government, namely Minister of Defence Gustav Noske, gave its approval to this arrangement in a telegram on 26 September:

> "The Reichswehr Minister agrees with the proposal of General Graf Goltz, which provides for the transfer of command at Mitau to the Russians and calls for a decision by the German troops as to whether they a) wish to enter Russian service at their own risk b) wish to return to Germany on orders by rail or on foot. The orders to this effect are to be issued. The troops are to be informed that those who do not leave on the date ordered can no longer be paid from German funds. If the evacuation is delayed any further, the Americans threaten to take the most severe economic measures, blocking food supplies, refusing the loan."[59]

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[57] *Ibid*., 35.
[58] Quoted from Volkmann, *Emigration*, 70.
[59] Quoted from *ibid*., 71.

When von der Goltz was finally recalled on 3 October, he also formally handed over command to Bermondt.

Pavel Bermondt-Avalov and the attack on Riga – rise and fall of a warlord?

The developments described up to this point really suggest that we are dealing with a warlord. Bermondt had defied the command hierarchy of the White movement on his own authority, asserted himself against a multitude of rivals for the supreme command of the army and now had an imposing army behind him.[60] Moreover, the colonel soon published a political programme of principles for a state reorganisation of Western Russia. When the West Russian Volunteer Army finally attempted to take Riga from the Latvian army in an attack on 8 October, he became notorious overnight.

This direct military confrontation had its origins in the tensions that had steadily increased between the government of Latvia and the German-Russian forces in Mitau since the Strasdenhof Armistice Treaty. The Latvian government insisted on carrying out the evacuation of Latvian territory from German and Russian troops. It also protested vehemently against the continuing terror of the occupying forces against the civilian population in Courland. In contrast to the first half of 1919, it could now do so from a strong position. The Armistice Treaty had strengthened the government politically. Moreover, it was now finally in a position to systematically raise its own troops. Last but not least, the proven Latvian forces from the Baltische Landeswehr under Colonel Jānis Balodis had now also come under the command of the Latvian Minister of War. In addition, the Battle of Wenden had shown that one could rely on the support of Estonian troops in the event of a threat. Of course, this new self-confidence did not go unnoticed by the members of the West Russian Volunteer Army. At the end of September, rumours of an immi-

[60] The exact figures of the army's strength are still disputed. The figure of 50,000 soldiers that usually appears in research is probably too high.

nent Latvian offensive increased within the German and Russian units. Accordingly documented skirmishes at the demarcation line were probably started from both sides.

In this tense situation, Bermondt demanded in early October that the Latvian government allow his units to cross Latvian territory so that they could intervene in the war with the Red Army in eastern Latvia. The Latvian government refused this request for understandable reasons. Bermondt responded in his own way and ordered the attack on Riga. The Latvian government's refusal to comply with his demand was only one of many reasons that led to this decision, as will be shown.

Initially, however, this military enterprise was also connected to the proclamation of a political programme with which the commander-in-chief tried to explain his intentions and actions to the Latvian people. This programme indicates that Bermondt was also concerned with establishing order in his own particular sense. To this end, he had an appeal distributed in Latvian, Russian and German at the beginning of October. In it he declared to "all inhabitants" that he, as a "representative of the Russian power" had "taken over the administration and protection of the Latvian territory on 21 August of this year after the withdrawal of the German troops".[61] He announced that in future he would "not permit any disturbance of order, nor any attacks on persons or property, whoever it may belong to". He also pleaded for ideals of equality and united action for the common good:

> "I call upon all, without distinction of nationality, party or creed, to return to peaceful activity and to submit in all things to the authorities appointed and confirmed by me, bearing in mind that that Russian sovereignty has always endeavoured for the welfare and prosperity of the country and had helped it to peace in the course of long years."

He thus invoked memories of the Russian Empire whose supposedly peaceful times he intended to restore. This was to be achieved by military means:

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[61] Allen Einwohnern, DSHI 120 Generalkommando 4, 24. (It is unclear to which event Bermondt refers here when he mentions the date 21 August.)

> "The army I have raised is going into battle against the Bolshevists, the worst enemies of the people – with whom villains are ready to make peace – in order to free Russia from their slave yoke. I call upon the people to support me in my enterprise with all their strength and not to listen to the whispers from the [---] enemies of freedom and culture."

The "villains ready to make peace" mentioned here could of course only be the governments of Latvia and Estonia.

He also made clear that he had far-reaching plans for the further state development of Western Russia: "In the Latvian territories occupied by me, I will make all the preparations necessary for self-determination in accordance with the wishes of the population". What exactly such self-determination meant in Bermondt's understanding remains to be discussed.

In another proclamation of 14 October, this time addressed to his own troops, Bermondt specified how he envisaged the development of a new state order in Latvia:

"Do not believe the false rumours that the West Russian Volunteer Army has come to Latvia to re-establish the rule of the barons. No and again no! In Latvia's self-government, two-thirds of the votes are given to the Latvians. Do not believe the fairy tales according to which I want to turn Latvia into a Russian governorate. This is not true, because this question cannot be solved by me, all the more so because the Entente takes the view that this matter can only be settled by the Russian National Assembly in conjunction with representatives of the Latvian people."[62]

Once again he stressed the need to combine all forces to fight Bolshevism:

> "I am pursuing only one goal and I will not be diverted from it. My aim is the struggle with Bolshevism until its final destruction. Whoever wants to help me in this struggle will be Russia's friend and Russia will not forget her friends. But whoever will be an obstacle to me in this struggle is an enemy of Russia, and the time is not far distant when Russia will crush her enemies."

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[62] Proklamation an die Avallof-Truppen, 14.10.1919, DSHI 120 Generalkommando 4, 5–6.

The seat of the the Latvian Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance and State Audit Office in Riga after the battles. October 1919. Nowadays the seat of the Bank of Latvia. RA, EFA.114.A.253.810

For him, anyone who professed recognition of the autonomy of the Baltic states seemed to belong precisely to that kind of "enemies of Russia", even if they were undoubtedly anti-Bolshevik Russian military officers. Accordingly, he explained his refusal to obey Judenič's orders with his patriotic understanding of duty:

> "General Judenič and the North-West Government attached to him, which was formed at the instigation of the Entente, have already recognised the independence of the small republics of Estonia, Latvia and others, which are governed by governments pursuing a vacillating policy and are ready to break off the struggle with the Bolsheviks. Such a direction cannot count on the support of all truly Russian elements whose aim is the complete annihilation of Bolshevism and the re-establishment of a strong Russian Empire. The fulfilment of General Judenič's order to

> vacate Courland would remove this country from Russian influence and would favour the rapid development of Bolshevism."

Thus, it was not only military-strategic necessities that had forbidden him to dissolve the front in Courland, but he also fundamentally invoked the fact that the "interests of Russia forbid the separation of the Baltic, which secures Russia the exit to the sea and whose interests have been connected with Russia from time immemorial". These interests were also based on Bermondt's personal alliances: "It should be noted that the troops of the Western Army and the administration are supported by the local population of the Baltic Germans and Latvians, who see a favourable future for the Baltic States in a close affiliation with Russia."

Bermondt immediately put this political programme into practice after receiving the supreme command. This was expressed in particular in the establishment of a West Russian Central Council, which took on a similar function as the Military Political Council in Berlin and was charged with the administration of the occupation area. In addition, the provision of supplies and the financing of the army were among the tasks of the Central Council – both of which were by now more than difficult undertakings due to international pressure. In fact, however, initial successes were apparently recorded through a certain amount of support by the German arms industry.[63] However, since the funds were not sufficient to fully equip and pay for the army, the procurement of alternative sources of finance was necessary, as Hans-Erich Volkmann describes:

> "Therefore the West Russian Council decided to print money [---], which was covered by the army stocks. This 'Bermondt money', which appeared with Russian and German inscriptions, contrary to the expectations, acquired purchasing power in the military operational area as a kind of promissory note."[64]

All in all, the picture that emerges here is that of an autonomous military entrepreneur who attempted to translate his position of regional power

[63] Volkmann, *Emigration,* 71–72.
[64] *Ibid*., 72.

based on military strength into a claim to political influence. Since he was met with only mistrust by his adversary in Riga, he decided to resolve the conflict by military means. For this purpose, among others, he also made a special effort to establish close ties with his soldiers, from whom he demanded unconditional loyalty in return.

However, much of this assessment cannot stand up to closer scrutiny. To begin with the acquisition of the supreme command: of course, Bermondt had put himself in the best position to take over the command in Courland by refusing to obey Judenič's orders. In the end, however, he achieved this goal primarily by ingratiating himself with von der Goltz, who appreciated the officer's less-than-honed profile. Thus, the mere formal act of transferring the supreme command (with the consent of the German government at that) does not correspond to the autonomous action one would expect from a warlord. Besides, von der Goltz was not the only person on whom Bermondt was immensely dependent. The decision to attack Riga, too, was not so much due to the supposed intrepidity and boldness of the commander-in-chief, but rather to his Baltic German advisors who pushed for it.[65] Thus one of Bermondt's advisers in Mitau, Eduard Baron Nolcken, commented on the attack on Riga with the words: "No one here was inclined to give up the game as long as one still had a trump card, such as military superiority, in one's hand."[66] However, the situation was complicated by the fact that this "trump card" was actually the last card still in hand. The German government's financing of the West Russian Volunteer Army had expired at the end of September. A new source of funds had not yet been found. Therefore, quick military successes were needed to keep the troops together.[67] Thus, the seemingly bold attack on Riga must be seen more as an act of desperation, born out of the inability to find other solutions to the manifold problems. Even in military matters, Bermondt was still extremely dependent on the German military leaders around Josef Bischoff, who continued to be responsible for military strategy. Bermondt himself would probably not have had the necessary skills if one takes his at best mediocre military career as a yard-

65 Lenz, "Bermondt-Affaire," 20.
66 Quoted from Lenz, "Deutschbalten," 36.
67 Lenz, "Bermondt-Affaire," 20.

Colonel Pavel Bermondt-Avalov and his staff officers. LKM S-692-n

stick.[68] Even the political programme that was so pompously proclaimed under his name did not seem to stem from his initiative. Konstantin Graf von der Pahlen, who had taken the chair in the Mitau Central Council, informed Pilar von Pilchau in Berlin on 3 October:

> "We have formed here a 'Central Council for Western Russia', a designation taken from Denikin's army. A ministry à la Ulmanis or Esti or Judenič would have been ridiculous. [---] Bermondt is also issuing an appeal to the population in the next few days, which I have written. Thus the beginning of the Russian set-up has become perfect."[69]

As it transpires, Bermondt had little to say in political matters also. It becomes clear: even if the contemporary press met this eccentric Russian

[68] Igor' Barinov, Ivan Strelkov (Игорь Баринов, Иван Стрелков), "'Kto vy, knjaz' Avalov?' Portret političeskogo avantjurista vremen Graždanskoj vojny v Rossii" ("Кто вы, князь Авалов?" Портрет политического авантюриста времен Гражданской войны в России)," *Forum novejšej vostočnoevropejskoj istorii i kultury (Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры)* 2 (2017): 141–144.

[69] Pahlen an Pilar von Pilchau, 3.10.1919, DSHI 190 LivSta 88, 1–2.

officer with the greatest curiosity and not least lively discussed his obscure biography, he was certainly no warlord of the Baltic. Assessments to the contrary are probably due not least to the narrative that he himself created in his highly detailed but also imaginative memoirs.[70] It is much more accurate to call Bermondt a puppet.[71] He was not a fig leaf for certain particular interests, but rather a puppet for anyone who had an interest in maintaining the conflict in the Baltic: the Baltic German elite who did not want to lose their property and influence to a new government; the German military, which wanted to save the lost World War at least in the East; the Freikorps members, who wanted to live on the dream of the settler soldiers and did not want to give up their promised clod in Courland. Of all things, the aspect of the enterprise that could really be considered Bermondt's personal concern – anchoring the army as an integral part of the white movement – turned out to be particularly unsustainable. In fact, with his refusal to obey orders, Bermondt contributed his own part to the failure of the counter-revolutionary undertakings – and Judenič declared him publicly a traitor for it. "Denikin and Kolčak, to whom he tried to explain his actions, seem to have shown no reaction whatsoever".[72]

All these tendencies are confirmed by a detailed report, which an unnamed colonel of Bermondt's general staff gave to the consular representation of the Latvian government in Berlin on 22 November. According to his own account, the colonel had shortly before resigned from his service in Courland after he, like many other members of the Russian volunteer units, had "seen through the true intentions of Bermondt's enterprise".[73] The colonel emphasised that the volunteers recruited in the POW camps in Germany had been systematically deceived about the intention of the undertaking:

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[70] [Avalov, Pavel], *Im Kampfe gegen den Bolschewismus. Erinnerungen von General Fürst Awaloff. Oberbefehlshaber der deutsch-russischen Westarmee im Baltikum* (Glückstadt und Hamburg: Augustin, 1925).

[71] This conclusion was already reached at the time, for example in the Inter-Allied Baltic Commission; Lenz, "Bermondt-Affaire," 18.

[72] Lenz, "Bermondt-Affaire," 20.

[73] Aus einer Unterredung mit NN. Oberst des Bermondtschen Generalstabes, 22.11.1919, LVVA, 2575. f., 20, apr., 7. l., 59–68.

> "They were made to believe that they were being led against the Bolsheviks and that in a very short time they would each be able to return home. Courland was to be only a transit station for concentration. The Russians had no idea of the real plans, they were deceived all along and dragged into the Bermondt adventure against their will. Exceptions were a few individual officers."

The report also confirms that the action was a German affair:

> "Bermondt was only a straw man of the German masterminds, and the Russian officers who were in on it were only willing tools for German purposes. [---] Russians were only appointed to the administrative posts that were exposed to the outside world. Since few Russians were available here, 'German Russians' were taken, i.e. Baltic German barons who had been in Russian service and were outwardly considered Russians, but in reality were typical representatives of the interests of the Baltic German nobility clique."

He also spoke about the financial agreements with German industrial circles:

> "There were special trade and finance departments at Bermondt's staff for the economic exploitation of the occupied territories. The occupied and still-to-be-occupied territory was divided into district units. Each captured district unit had to be exploited according to plan: all raw materials and economic products were to be requisitioned, mobilised and transferred to Germany. In return, the German interest groups provided the corresponding finances and sold German industrial products in the conquered territory."

The army's action would thus have initiated goals of a "German economic tutelage of Russia". He also confirmed that the German officers continued to command the action: "The supreme power of command was entirely in the hands of the Germans and also, for example, the plan of taking Riga was worked out by the Germans. Even all the orders and announcements were written by the Germans and then translated into Russian."

Thus von der Goltz would also have been involved in the plans and even the local German state authorities would have been very accom-

modating: "The German legation and officials behaved very benevolently, even if they seemed officially neutral, they were privately most interested and spoke of the Bermondt enterprise as the 'common cause'. From the German side, the opinion was spread that the official orders of the German government should not be taken seriously."

The descriptions show that the behaviour of the soldiers in Courland had also changed little for the better in the meantime:

> "The characteristic and the motives of the German troops in Courland are rapacity and vindictiveness. One can certainly describe 80% of the German soldiers as robbers. There were regular organised gangs of robbers, in which officers also took part. If the robbers were arrested and the Russian officers demanded that they be sentenced, they were placed under German jurisdiction, but the most they were punished with was deportation to Germany. The German soldiers were involved in the illegal handling of German army property, they sold it to the Russians, but they were also prepared to sell German army property to the Bolsheviks, which they had already done in December–January 1919. The dregs of the old German army came to Courland to 'make themselves healthy' 'to make roubles'. There were many among them who had fled the courts of Germany [---]."

On the motives that had led the German soldiers to Courland, the colonel said:

> "20% of the Germans were people who were lured here by the advertising agencies and were counting on settlement and earnings. Then there were convinced monarchists who wanted to fight for the restoration of the monarchy. The majority, however, were politically completely indifferent and prepared to serve whatever aims and undertakings. There were also a good number of Spartacists of a roughly terrorist hue."

He also commented on the German-Russian cooperation in practice:

> "The coexistence of the Russians and Germans was very bad. There were rivalries and mistrust between the German officers and the Russians, who felt left behind. The soldiers' cohabitation was even worse than that of the officers. The old hostility of the prison camps played a role. The

> Russians felt cheated and abused. When they were quartered there were almost always clashes between the Russians and the Germans. The Germans demanded all the better rooms for themselves. Even if these were already occupied by Russians. To get their way, the Germans threatened that they would withdraw to Germany and abandon the Russians. No detachment order where the Russians met with Germans passed without violence."

But the internal processes in the Russian units had also been anything but peaceful. Here, the "Okhranka", which Bermondt had "modelled on the notorious tsarist 'Okhranka'" as a "police organisation for the protection of his person", played an important role. The report describes the self-image of this organisation as follows:

> "The Okhranka served as a cover for extortion and robbery. Rich merchants who entered Bermondt's sphere of power were denounced by the Okhranka as Bolsheviks or conspirators against Bermondt's life, sentenced to death by Bermondt and then robbed by Okhranka men. In this way, several merchants in Mitau perished and several travellers who had arrived in Mitau disappeared without a trace."

However, Bermondt had not been the driving force behind these events either, but had allowed himself to be guided in his actions by the intrigues of his subordinates. These intrigues had also taken place between the Russian military institutions themselves due to "competitive envy" and had cost some Russian officers their lives.

The report attributed the failure of the attack on Riga, despite military superiority, to strategic mistakes and the resolute defence of the Latvian army, as well as to the overall lack of combat readiness of the soldiers of the West Russian Volunteer Army:

> "Bermondt and the German commanders had promised the troops that Riga would be taken in no time, and that after a most pleasant and easy raid they would camp in Riga through the winter. However, when the first attempt failed and the troops were involved in heavy and prolonged fighting, the mercenaries' spirit of enterprise sank and they declared that they 'did not want to be destroyed for a few paltry marks.'"

Accordingly, the dissolution was not least due to the army's lack of money. The introduction of the own currency was "a definite mistake":

> "The population, but also the troops, had no confidence in the value of Bermondt's money. The forced exchange rate helped only a little. Bermondt had held out the prospect that his money would be converted into German currency. This promise was not kept. Due to the failure of the money, the whole enterprise was hit in its most sensitive spot and disorganisation grew catastrophically."

The attack on Riga had initially been quite successful from the point of view of the West Russian Army in the first few days. After attacking Latvian positions on the Daugava, the German-Russian forces quickly advanced into the suburbs of Riga. Bermondt then offered the Latvian government a ceasefire, which the latter refused. The Latvian army succeeded in halting the advance – also with the support of Estonian armoured trains and the British fleet – and counterattacked.[74] In addition, the Entente changed its policy in the face of the developments in Latvia and now went over to using the means of power at its disposal with regard to a final clearing of the Baltic from German troops. On 10 October, the decision came to blockade the Baltic Sea.[75] Pressure was also exerted by the Inter-Allied Baltic Commission, which had arrived in the Baltic under the leadership of the French General Henri Niessel and was firmly in favour of clearing the area and cutting off supplies.[76] General Walter von Eberhardt, who had succeeded Rüdiger von der Goltz in the German general command, was now trying to organise a halfway orderly withdrawal of the troops. This was made more difficult by the attacks, which were not only carried out by the advancing Latvian army. Gangs and other loose formations attacked the German-Russian troops and especially the railway lines, not only in Courland but also in the Lithuanian territory. On 14 November, the West Russian Central Council in Mitau dissolved.[77] By the end of November, the West Russian Army had left Mitau, which had been set

74 Rauch, *Geschichte,* 65.
75 Lenz, "Bermondt-Affaire," 20.
76 Volkmann, *Emigration*, 73.
77 *Ibid*.

on fire. On their retreat, the soldiers continued to loot and plunder – "leaving a trail of destruction".[78]

The report of a medical officer vividly describes the dissolution of the military enterprise:

> „All night long, the packed trains with refugees and wounded drove out of Mitau station, the heavily loaded baggage wagons rattled through the streets. Suddenly the convoy came to a halt; a wheel had broken on one of the army command's carts and the crates came crashing down, breaking as they fell and emptying their contents. The 'money' of the 'West Russian Volunteer Army' fluttered airily in the wind, thousands and thousands of marks, but hardly anyone bent down to pick them up. 'These cash notes, the value of which is secured by the army property [---], are considered official means of payment in the area of the West Russian Volunteer Army', was written on them in German and Russian. Yesterday, one had still received goods for these papers in all the shops, had still received the most beautiful cake for them in the pastry shop Macht, yesterday Avalov was still Lord of Mitau. But today? Where is the prince, where is his Russian army, where is the army goods? Broken and scattered to the winds, just like these boxes and their millions."[79]

The 'Lord of Mitau' himself had also escaped from Courland with one of these treks. After his transport had been caught in a Lithuanian attack, which according to the description of the same medical officer was repelled due to the courageous attitude of a first lieutenant, the commander-in-chief of the army made a final appearance:

> "At the railway station in Schaulen (Šiauliai), Helling (the said first lieutenant; T.R.) was called to Avalov-Bermondt, who had also been in the attacked train. The prince looked even paler than usual when he thanked him and awarded him the order of Stanislaus, II. class, for his conduct. I don't know whether it was the excitement about having survived that had

[78] Liulevicius, *War Land,* 243.

[79] *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps. Dritter Band. Die Kämpfe im Baltikum nach der zweiten Einnahme von Riga. Juni bis Dezember 1919*, Herausgeber Kriegsgeschichtliche Forschungsanstalt des Heeres (Berlin: Mittler & Sohn, 1938), 130–131.

Banknotes of the West Russian Volunteer Army. Museums of Haapsalu and Läänemaa Foundation collection, HM_1194 N, 1209 N, 1210 N

> erased all colour from his face, or shame at the behaviour of his Russians, with whom he had once hoped to wrest Moscow from the Bolshevists."[80]

This anecdote is emblematic of the image of this supposed warlord, who obviously found ceremonial procedures much easier to handle than the actual control of the enterprise associated with his name.

On 13 December, the last members of the West Russian Volunteer Army crossed the border into East Prussia. On the way back to Germany, the soldiers were treated differently depending on their nationality, Hans-Erich Volkmann summarizes:

"The German soldiers were disarmed, the Russian ones were placed in camps. About 4–5000 men of the Bermondt Corps came to Neisse, 200 of the Vyrgolič Corps to Danzig. They were only given permission to enter Germany if they undertook to leave the Russian formations and remain in Germany."[81]

Conclusion

All in all, it can be said that the history of the West Russian Volunteer Army and its fight against the Republic of Latvia certainly bears signs of warlordism. The actions of German officers such as General Rüdiger von der Goltz or Major Josef Bischoff are particularly worthy of investigation, as they consistently drove other protagonists before them with their actions and constantly pushed the boundaries of what was possible and permissible. However, the prevailing impression is that they did not completely detach themselves from the hierarchical and power structures in which they operated, so that these protagonists should only with caution be called warlords. For whom the label of warlord certainly does not apply is Colonel Pavel Bermondt-Avalov. His function was rather limited to acting as a cover for a multitude of other stakeholders and, with his eccentric manner, to focusing the attention of contemporaries as a matter of fact as well as later historians.

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[80] *Darstellungen*, 131

[81] Volkmann, *Emigration*, 73.

Overall, the description of the history of the West Russian Volunteer Army as the last ray of hope for all those stakeholders who, for many reasons, rejected the reorganisation of the Baltic region according to nation-state criteria, will be accurate. In this respect, it is certainly not the last time to point out the strange role that the German government and other state agencies played in the matter. It is certainly no coincidence that the enterprise only fell apart when funding from the German government was stopped. Despite all public assertions to the contrary, the West Russian Volunteer Army must ultimately be seen as an institution by German grace – and definitely not as the work of an autonomously acting warlord. In this respect, the Latvian government was certainly not wrong when it officially declared to be in a state of war with Germany on 26 November – something that was only noted with surprise in Berlin a month later.[82]

The fact that funding and supplies could eventually no longer be provided also shows that despite the broad political networks of Baltic German and Russian émigrés, German military and industry, the Entente, despite its restraint, had leverage that could be used in support of the new national governments. This was probably a major difference from the other regions of the Russian Empire, where again much less pressure was exerted by the Entente and where power vacuums were thus more likely to favour the emergence of regional warlord regimes.[83]

Regardless of the outcome of this case study, however, it can be stated that the focus on warlordism is certainly suitable for examining the social complexity of military undertakings in civil war circumstances. This also applies to the West Russian Volunteer Army, where the analysis helps to trace the entanglements of different political interests and the changing ways in which volunteer armies functioned. Here, too, as it is so often in historical descriptions, the focus is on the interplay of (in this case very fast-moving) social and institutional structures and individual actions that change these structures. Finally, the example of the West Russian Volunteer Army also confirms that the only way out of the chaos and

[82] Lenz, "Deutschbalten," 15–16.

[83] Which is not to say that there were no warlords in the Baltic: Protagonists like Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz or even Gerhard Roßbach could be other interesting case studies.

violence of civil war society was through the reintroduction of forms of the rule of law. Despite all claims, neither the German General Command nor the commander-in-chief Bermondt-Avalov were to succeed in this in Courland, but the Latvian government could. As can be concluded with Joshua Sanborn: "It took a state to win the war."[84]

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[84] Sanborn, "Genesis," 213.

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1921 February rebellion as a manifestation of Armenian war of independence

Khachatur Stepanyan

Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia declared their independence in the spring of 1918. After the signing of the Armistice of Compiègne and the annulment of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that had been agreed upon between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers, the Soviet Red Army started a campaign to capture the areas that had belonged to Russia. Armenia had to fight two enemies – the Turkey of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the one side and Soviet Russia on the other. Turkey attacked Armenia in the autumn of 1920. Even though Soviet Russia had signed a treaty with Armenia in August, the Armenian Bolsheviks, supported by the Red Army, proclaimed the Soviet Republic of Armenia in November and began Sovietization of the country, accompanied by repressions against Armenian national politicians, military leaders and intellectuals. As a result of an uprising that began in February 1921, the Bolsheviks were ousted from Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, but the counter-offensive of the Red Army in April restored the Bolshevik rule in Armenia.

Sovietization of Armenia

In 1917, after the February and the October Revolution in the Russian Empire, Transcaucasia de facto became independent from Russia. By the following year, the region was independent de jure as well. On 22 April 1918, the independent Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was proclaimed, and by the end of May the republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence.

Independence for Armenia was hard to achieve. The Armenian nation had to fight against Turkish invaders in Sardarapat, Bash Aparan (today Aparan) and Gharakilisa (today Vanadzor). After the victorious battles,

Armenia was able to declare independence. However, Armenia and the two other Transcaucasian republics did not last long. Russian Bolsheviks started an aggressive policy of conquering the lands of the former Russian Empire, after achieving victory in the civil war.

Transcaucasia had a central place in the Bolshevik imperial project in the South, not least because of the Bolsheviks' interest in possessing the oil of Baku.

At the end of April 1920, with the support of the Red Army, Azerbaijan was sovietised. In the autumn of 1920, Kemalist Turkey attacked Armenia. This was the fight of the Republic of Armenia for independence and for survival, as the Turks had continued the genocide that was begun in 1915.

The Turkish attack on Armenia provoked Russia, even though it had concluded the Tiflis agreement with Armenia on 10 August 1920. Armenia's sovietisation was carried through in a short time.

In the process of Armenia's Sovietization, Soviet Russia began its alliance with Kemalist Turkey. The Turks were satisfied with the Sovietization of Armenia, because Soviet forces entering Armenia increased their security, and they could concentrate their forces in the East against the Entente. Relations with Kemal and the Muslim world was more important for the Soviet government than relations with Armenia.[1] The Sovietisation of Armenia was important for the authorities of Soviet Russia for establishing a direct land connection with Kemalist Turkey.

Russia and Turkey had agreed to attack Armenia. According to that agreement with the Soviets, the Turks had to reach Sarighamish,[2] but in fact they moved beyond Sarighamish in violation of that agreement. The Kemalists were able to convince the Bolsheviks in Moscow that it would be easier to carry out a revolution in the Eastern countries with their help and "relying on multi-million Muslims of the East, drown British leadership in India and other countries".[3]

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[1] Ruben Darbinian (Ռուբեն Դարբինեան), „Հայ քաղաքական մտքի դեգերումները" [Hay kʻaghakʻakan mtkʻi degerumnerě (Wanderings of the Armenian political thought)], Հայրենիք *(Hairenik)* (July 1923): 128.

[2] National Archives of Armenia (Հայաստանի ազգային արխիվ, henceforth NAA) 144.2.25, 94.

[3] Hambardzum Terterian (Համբարձում Տերտերեան), „Հայաստանի Հանրապետութեան եւ Խորհրդային Ռուսաստանի բանակցութիւնները: Լեւոն Շանթի պատուիրակութիւնը"

The Armenian Bolsheviks were naïve to think that Kemalist interference in the Sovietization of Armenia was in favour of Armenian and Turkish people. President of the Armenian Revolutionary Committee, Sarkis Kasyan, writes that with the Sovietization of Armenia, the "solidarity and consensus of Soviet Armenia and labouring Turkey" held the victory.[4]

Due to the jointly organised attack on Armenia by Kemalist and Bolshevik forces, the Government of the Republic of Armenia had no other choice but to resign, put down all credentials and concede authority to the 'lesser evil' of Soviet Russia.

In 1920, during the Turkish-Armenian war, having the support of Soviet Russia, the Kemalists won against the Armenian army. Taking advantage of the situation, on 29 November 1920, the previously formed Armenian Revolutionary Committee entered Yerevan from the north-eastern part of Armenia and proclaimed Armenia a Soviet Republic.[5]

On 1 December 1920, in a meeting involving the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the Parliamentary Faction of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutyun (ARFD) and the ARFD Bureau, it was decided to authorise Drastamat Kanaian (Dro) and Hambadzum Terterian to hold negotiations with the representative of Soviet Russia, Boris Legrand, about the handing of power over to the Bolsheviks.[6] The negotiations were held with the principle of guarantee of maintaining the independence of Armenia.[7]

On 2 December 1920, the Yerevan agreement was signed between Boris Legrand and government representatives of the Republic of Armenia. It supposed a peaceful transition of power from the ARFD to the Bolsheviks. The following were defined as the main principles for the

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[Hayastani Hanrapetut'ian ev Khorhrdayin Rusastani banaktsut'yunnere. Levon Shant'i patvirakut'yune (Negotiations of the Republic of Armenia and Soviet Russia: Levon Shant's delegation)], Հայրենիք *(Hairenik)* (May 1954): 10.

4 Sarkis Kasyan (Սարգիս Կասյան), *Ընտիր երկեր* [Ĕntir yerker (Selected works)] (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1967), 181.

5 NAA, 113.1.1, 1.

6 NAA, 119.1.248, 1–2.

7 Աշոտ Հովհաննիսյան (Ashot Hovhannisian), Համազգային կրիզիսը [Hamazgayin krizisĕ (Pan-National crisis)] (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1926), 26.

transition of power: before inviting the elected Assembly of the Councils, the power had to be handed temporarily to the war-revolutionary committee, which had included 5 communists and 2 left-revolutionaries (pro-Russian ARFD members), and the ARFD and all the non-Bolshevik socialist party representatives should be spared from political persecution for previously fighting against the Communist party, and Soviet Russia should guarantee the independence of Soviet Armenia.[8]

The dispositions of the ARFD concerning the recognition of the Republic of Armenia, signing a peace treaty with Turkey, not allowing civil war, as well as having a representative in the new government were accepted on 1 December at the mutual conference of the ARFD Bureau, Parliamentary faction and the Government.

On 2 December, the leader of the Transcaucasian Communists, Georgy (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze, wrote to Lenin and Stalin from Baku: "News has just arrived from Yerevan that Soviet power has been proclaimed in Yerevan".[9] The leader of the Bolsheviks, Vladimir Lenin, answered welcoming "Soviet Armenia that had been liberated from the imperialist yoke".[10]

The Soviet Armenian historiography proclaimed the Yerevan agreement as the capitulation of the ARFD government.[11] In the post-Soviet era, the agreement acquired new significance from a foreign-policy point of view, as according to the agreement of 2 December, Soviet Russia and Armenia had been allies.[12]

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[8] Alexander Khatisian (Ալեքսանդր Խատիսեան), „Հայաստանի Հանրապետութեան ծագումն ու զարգացումը" [Hayastani Hanrapetut'ian tsagumn u zargatsume (The Origins and Development of the Republic of Armenia)], Հայրենիք *(Hairenik)* (October 1926): 101–102.

[9] Georgy Ordzhonikidze (Գրիգորի Օրջոնիկիձե), Ընտիր հոդվածներ և ճառեր [(Ĕntir hodvatsner ev charer (Selected articles and speeches)] (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1950), 35.

[10] Vladimir Lenin (Վլադիմիր Լենին), Երկերի լիակատար ժողովածու [Yerkeri liakatar zhoghovatsu (Full collection of works)], vol. 31 (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1980), 350.

[11] Samvel Alikhanian (Սամվել Ալիխանյան), Սովետական Ռուսաստանի դերը հայ ժողովրդի ազատագրման գործում *(1917–1921թթ.)* [Sovetakan Rusastani derě hay zhoghoverdi azatagrman gortsum 1917–1921 (The role of Soviet Russia in the liberation of the Armenian people in 1917–1921)] (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1966), 197.

[12] Karen Khachatryan (Կարեն Խաչատրյան), Հայ-ռուսական հարաբերությունները *1920-1922թթ.* [*Hay-rusakan haraberutyunnerě 1920–1922 t't'. (Armenian-Russian relations in*

Summing up the reality of the Armenian authorities handing power to the Bolsheviks, we can generalize the following:

- By handing power over to the Bolsheviks, the ARFD leaders had hoped to spare the Armenian people from new massacres at the hands of Turkey, with the support of Soviet Russia,
- With the Sovietization of Armenia, members of the government had expected to have Soviet Russian support for restoring the economic situation in Soviet Armenia,
- One of the main conditions for the peaceful Sovietisation of Armenia is maintaining Armenia's independence.
- In the Sovietisation of Armenia the key factor was the pro-Russian disposition of the country that had developed over previous centuries.

The violence committed by the Bolsheviks and the causes of the February Rebellion

Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks did not keep their promises. Shortly after the Sovietisation of Armenia, the Bolsheviks began to actively fight against the representatives of the former authorities and their supporters. On 6 December 1920, a special committee was established by the Armenian Revolutionary Committee for the fight against "counter-revolution, speculation and crimes".[13]

On 3 December 1920, a number of the members of the Government of the Republic of Armenia had been arrested on their way to Tiflis, including Hamo Ohandjanian, Ruben Darbinian, Koryun Ghazarian, Hovhannes Qadjaznuni and others. Later, around 600 officers of the Armenian army were also arrested and exiled to Russia from Baku. Armenian intellectuals were humiliated, Armenian peasants were robbed. Banks were nationalised and considered a state monopoly.[14]

1920–1922)] (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2007), 50.

[13] *«Կոմունիստ» (Communist)*, 9 December 1920.

[14] *Դեկրետների և հրամանների ժողովածու* [Dekretneri ev Hramanneri zhogovatsu (A collection of decrees and orders)], vol. I (Etchmiadzin, 1921), 9–10.

The independence of Armenia was violated in every field. The Soviet currency was put into circulation with a special decree, and those who did not accept it were punished.[15]

Due to the decree of 20 December of the Armenian Revolutionary Committee, "The Digest of Laws of the Russian Empire" (*Свод законов Российской империи*) was abolished in Armenia with all changes that the Russian Provisional Government, Transcaucasian Sejm, Council of Armenia, the Parliament and Government had made. In its place, the laws of Soviet Russia were considered to be valid in the Armenian SSR with changes and additions that the Armenian Revolutionary Committee and other authorities had made.[16] The decrees by the Armenian Revolutionary Committee were meant to strengthen the proletariat dictatorship and at the same time expand and intensify the International Socialist Revolution.

If the authorities in the newly proclaimed Soviet Russia were councils (soviets) of labourers, soldiers and peasants, then in Armenia the revolutionary committees became the authority.[17] On 15 January 1921, a supreme revolutionary tribunal was set up. Its decisions were final and were to be carried out within 48 hours, except for capital punishment cases, which the revolutionary committee had to approve.

Due to the unjust and harsh policies of the new authorities, the people lost patience and in February 1921 an uprising began. On 18 February, rebellious forces entered Yerevan. Soviet authorities and the army had evacuated the capital.[18]

The Committee for the Salvation of the Fatherland was created headed by Simon Vratsian after conquering Yerevan, and this was supposed to control the country until the formation of the government.

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[15] *«Կոմունիստ» (Communist)*, 22 December 1920.

[16] *Ibid*., December 23, 1920.

[17] Ararat Hakobyan (Արարատ Հակոբյան), „Ռուսաստանի ու Հայաստանի խորհրդայնացման գործընթացների և միակուսակցական վարչակարգի հաստատման պատմական մի քանի զուգահեռներ" [Rusastani u Hayastani khorhrdaynacman gortsĕntʻacneri ev miakusaktsakan varchakargi hastatman patmakan mi kʻani zugaherner (Some Historical Parallels of the Processes of Sovietization and the Establishment of One-Party Regime in Russia and Armenia)], Պատմա-բանասիրական հանդես = *Historical-Philological Journal* 1 (2014): 49.

[18] Richard G. Hovannisian, "Simon Vratzian and Armenian Nationalism," *The Armenian Review*, vol. 23. no. 1 (1970): 30.

On 18 February, in his first address to the nation, he made an order to obey the rules, carry out all the instructions of the committee.[19] Independence was restored on part of Armenia, and that lasted a month and a half.

The many causes of the February revolution were:

- First of all, the violation of the terms of the 2 December agreement by the Bolsheviks was disappointing for the population. Mass arrests of intellectuals as counter-revolutionaries had raised a huge wave of dissatisfaction among people.
- The policy in favour of war by the Bolsheviks, which was led with brutality and unauthorised dispositions, had damaged the already miserable social conditions and was a disappointment for the people.
- One of the main reasons for the national rebellion was ignorance and lessening of the notion of independence.
- The inability of the Armenian Bolsheviks to regulate territorial issues with neighbours was equally important.

Defining the February Rebellion as a War of Independence

In the following, the article will argue that the February rebellion of 1921 was a struggle for independence.

As we have mentioned above, after imposing Soviet laws in Armenia, the main cause for dissatisfaction was the disrespect of the terms of the agreement of 2 December 1920. "The independence of our country *was diminished*. The entire country was under Cheka", wrote the official paper of the ARFD Droshak (author's emphasis).[20]

Apparently, the conditions of the Yerevan agreement had no value for the Armenian Bolsheviks. While the agreement that was signed with the Bolsheviks gave hope to the Armenian revolutionaries that Armenia will

[19] NAA, 37.1.9, 5.

[20] *«Դրօշակ» (Droshak)* no. 2 (1926), 38.

be able to continue its independent and democratic development, but the first steps by the Bolsheviks in power caused despair.

Reassessing the February Rebellion 10 years later, the journal Droshak wrote: "The Bolsheviks had promised to respect the sovereignty of Armenians, and had recognised Armenian independence. Some time later it became obvious that the Revolutionary Committee with the leadership of Kasyan was just lawless, and the real power in Armenia was with the Yerevan-Baku telegraph, to which the commanders of the 11th Army units sent orders and instructions, and with the leadership of vice-king of Caucasus Ordzhonikidze. Armenia had become a conquered country, a small Russian county. The Armenian people saw and understood that the promise of independence from the Bolsheviks was just a lie".[21]

The lack of independence or self-sufficiency stemmed from a policy of confiscation. The communists of Armenia, not having their own plan, were repeating the experience of Soviet Russia, the brightest example of which was the practice of war communism.

The strange part was that the policy of war communism in Armenia began to be practised only when Russia had given it up.[22] Despite the fact that war communism had no justification, Armenia's newly appointed Bolshevik authorities had decided to practice it on the spot. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia called the Armenian peasants to bring bread for the Red Army with their own means of transport.[23] Therefore, among the reasons for the February rebellion, were the arbitrary actions of many Soviet authorities that were being realised "for the state and revolutionary needs", in disregard of the independence of Armenia.

The arbitrary arrests and abuses practised by the Bolshevik authorities also provided reason for the February rebellion. The Armenian Bolsheviks considered the necessity of the arrests to root out 'counter-

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[21] *Ibid*., no. 1–2 (1931), 2.

[22] Vladimir Ghazakhetsyan (Վլադիմիր Ղազախեցյան), „Չեկայի գործունեության առաջին տարին Հայաստանում" [Chekayi gortsuneut'yan arajin tarin Hayastanum (The first year of activity of the Cheka in Armenia)], *Բանբեր Հայաստանի արխիվների (Bulletin of Armenian archives)* 1, (2011): 48.

[23] *«Կոմունիստ» (Communist)*, 14 December 1920.

revolutionaries' and neutralise all abusive elements. This 'definition' had also brought forth dissatisfaction among the people. Cheka was the main entity responsible for the arrests, and had been obeying Moscow.

Many had expressed their dissatisfaction to the members of the government and other high-ranking officials.[24] The fact that some of the arrested people were transported to prison in vans, and others had to walk to Yerevan was especially humiliating.[25] In times of independence, no other power would ever humiliate their former leaders.

The last prime minister of the Republic of Armenia (1918–1920) Simon Vratsian writes that from the very first day the necessity of shootings was discussed at Cheka. Even the names of those that had to be executed were pointed out: former government and parliament members Ruben Darbinian, Sergei Meliq-Yolchian, Hamazasp Srvandztian, Bakhshi Ishkhanyan and others.[26] According to Vratsian's writings, one can assume that the Bolsheviks had planned to kill the detained politicians. Arrests of former high ranking politicians already revealed the real intentions of the Bolsheviks, especially that the detained people were leaving Armenia and were no danger to the authorities. The arrests and attitude towards the arrested politicians showed an escalated level of violence.

On 20 December 1920, by the decree of the Soviet Armenian Revolutionary Committee, Suleyman Nouri was included in the revolutionary committee as a Muslim.[27] Nouri had participated in the ongoing massacres. Ruben Darbinian notes in his memoirs that on 13 February Armenian and Russian guards were exchanged for Turks for the purpose of executing the imprisoned, and were seen as more trustworthy for the Bolsheviks.[28]

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[24] Arshaluys Astvatsatrian (Արշալույս Աստուածատրեան), „Փետրուարեան ապստամբութիւնը" [P'etrvaryan apstambut'yune (The February Revolt)], *Հայրենիք (Hairenik)* 2 (1968), 39.

[25] Simon Vratsian (Սիմոն Վրացեան), „Յուշեր մօտիկ անցեալից" [Husher motik antsyalic (Memories from the near past)], Հայրենիք *(Hairenik)*, Monthly, December 1923, 69.

[26] *Հայրենիք (Hairenik)*, November 1923, 63–73; December 1923, 70.

[27] NAA, 116.1.2, 31.

[28] Ruben Darbinian (Ռուբեն Դարբինեան), *Երկեր* [Yerker (Works)], vol. A (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1972), 563.

Appointing Suleyman Nouri as a People's Commissar of Justice, and previously including him in the revolutionary committee, was one of the biggest mistakes committed by the Bolshevik authorities.

Regardless of how the Bolshevik authorities had tried to show that Muslims were also included in the government in Armenia, they had to take two important facts into account. The Armenian people had suffered much loss at the hands of the Turks and despite Nouri's membership of the communist party, his appointment caused tension due to his nationality. Besides, despite the simple fact of his party membership, the Turkish official was keen on committing violence against Armenians. That was the reason why the punishment of many opposition members was entrusted to Suleyman Nouri. Therefore, to prove their ideological loyalty to the Russian authorities, the Armenian Bolsheviks even appointed the 'national enemies' of the Armenian nation to high-ranking positions.

In January 1921, due to the decision of the Russian Communist Party Politburo, the plenipotentiary of Soviet Russia's delegation for the Caucasian battlefield, Gevorg Atarbekyan (also known as Georgy Atarbekov), arrived in Armenia. The latter had terrorised the Northern Caucasus via Bolshevik means and had made a name for himself as a vicious striking-revolutionary.[29] He had tried to use his Russian 'revolutionary experience' in Armenia – copying his actions from Russia and reached the stage where the Extraordinary Commission (Cheka) made decisions to sentence people to death in concentration camps, at a time when there was no such rule in Armenia, only in Soviet Russia.

Sending Atarbekyan to Armenia probably had the purpose of restricting violence. Soviet Russia's Bolshevik authorities had also tried to strengthen the power of their party. The wickedest of all the violations of the Bolsheviks was the arrests of intellectuals. Atarbekyan considered the talk of some Armenian Bolsheviks about not arresting Armenian intellectuals merely academic.

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[29] See more about this: Nikolay Yefimov (Николай Ефимов), „Atarbekov – odin iz začinščikov krasnogo terrora" (Атарбеков – один из зачинщиков красного террора (Atarbekov – one of the instigators of the red terror)), *Вопросы истории (Voprosy istorii)* 6 (2000): 130–136.

The actual violation of independence was also the attitude of the authorities towards the Armenian army and its servicemen. Taking power in Armenia, the Bolsheviks had decided to withdraw Armenian servicemen from Armenia and diminish the Armenian army. Deporting Armenian servicemen to Russia was brought forth by Leon Trotsky, who had suggested that they should be replaced with Russians.[30] The People's Commissar for Military Affairs, Avis Nurijanian, considered the exile of Armenian officers a Russian action.[31] The arrest and deportation of Armenian officers took place right after the Sovietisation of Armenia. The initiative belonged to the central Soviet Russian power and was committed by the 11th Army commanders, with the participation of Armenian communist authorities.[32]

In order to humiliate the Armenian army even more forcefully, the Bolsheviks deported the former government member and army commander Dro to Russia, which raised questions among the people.

On 24 January 1921, Armenian officers were deported from Armenia. The nation did not tolerate the inhumane attitude of the Armenian Bolsheviks towards the national army and servicemen, who were ready to die for the motherland. The Armenian Bolsheviks forced the people to face the necessity of rebellion against the deepening the revolution of peasants and labourers.

The newly emerged Bolsheviks of Armenia had also mocked the notion of Armenian independence in general. The most sacred notions for Armenians had been subjected to mockery.[33]

Besides independence, other national values were also scorned as outdated conceptions. The Armenian tricolour and hymn "Our Mother-

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[30] *Genocid armjan: otvetstvennost' Turcii i objazatel'stva mirovogo soobščestva. Dokumenty i kommentarii (Геноцид армян: ответственность Турции и обязательства мирового сообщества. Документы и комментарии)* (Genocide of Armenians: liability of Turkey and obligatgions of the world community), edited by Prof. Yu. Barsegov, vol. 2, part 2 (Moscow: Gardariki (Гардарики), 2003), 337.

[31] *«Կոմունիստ» (Communist)*, 29 January 1921.

[32] Vladimir Ghazakhetsyan (Վլադիմիր Ղազախեցյան), „Հայ սպաների աքսորը 1920–1921թթ." [Hay spaneri ak'sorě 1920–1921 t't' (The exile of Armenian officers in 1920–1921)], *Բանբեր Հայաստանի արխիվների (Bulletin of Armenian archives)* 2 (2003): 32.

[33] *«Դրօշակ» (Droshak)* no. 2, 1926, 39.

land" were banished as counter-revolutionary symbols. They were replaced with the red banner of the Bolsheviks and the "International" of the proletariat.

The policy of the Bolsheviks had driven the Armenian nation to armed struggle against Soviet Russia to restoring its independence. The rebellion was defeated, however. The Bolsheviks conquered Yerevan on 2 April 1921 with the help of the Soviet Red Army; however, thereafter they adopted a milder policy towards the people and intellectuals.

The 1921 February rebellion was a significant event in the history of the Armenian nation and is to be considered a manifestation of the Armenian quest for independence.

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ARTICLES

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Field Courts Martial, the Cheka and Penal Policy in the Estonian War of Independence in 1918–1920

Toivo Kikkas

Between December 1918 and December 1920, less then 300 men and women were sentenced to death in Estonian army field courts martial. Meanwhile the Red Terror of Cheka yielded 600 to 700 fatalities between December 1918 and early spring of 1919. It's difficult to judge how Penal Policy of both sides affected soldiers. On both sides the majority of those who received the capital punishment were civilians, not soldiers. The legal basis for both sides offered a lot of freedom of interpretation with sentencing. Four months after the creation of Estonian field courts martial these institutions received quite detailed instructions. The Cheka however continued to work on guidelines of the 'Red Terror' Decree dated September 5th 1918, allowing them much wider freedom. However Estonian Field Courts Martial but also local Chekas worked in various ways. Also, it can't be ruled out that Estonian society did not get the full picture of Penal Policy from newspapers.

The Republic of Estonia like other countries at the eastern coast of Baltic Sea suffered in 1918–1920 of the crime wave caused by the war. Particularly the number of criminal assaults increased. In the situation became more worse Estonia after the beginning of War of Independence on 28 November 1918. All powers in the region tried to re-establish the law and order and to curb the violence, even with rigorous repressions. Among the latter were the extraordinary courts and field court martials.

A field court martial is defined in Estonian as an extraordinary military criminal court for suppressing unrest on the battlefield or in a state of emergency or war. Section 1281 of the previously used 24th Book of the Digest of Russian Military Laws, which was the basis for field courts during the War of Independence, stipulates the field of activity for the

field courts. They can be convened in the areas of military operations and in the regions under the state of war, for trials of the servicemen whose crimes are too clear cut to require (preliminary) investigation. Appendix VIII section 1309 specified the order of field courts in eight points. The crucial aspect was that the court would be convened by a commander of a military unit or a garrison no lower than regiment commander. Court should convene, if possible, within 24 hours after crime detection and identification of a suspect. Hearing the case would take place no later than within two days. Hearing the case would take place behind closed doors and the decision of the field court would need to be confirmed by the same commander whose order of the day brought the accused to court. It could also be convened under the circumstances specified by section 91 of the 24th Book of the Digest of Russian Military Laws.[1] According to the Code, under extraordinary circumstances, people involved in anti-state activities were subject to military trials also in peacetime "for defending military discipline".[2] For the purposes of this article, the activity of field courts in a state of war is of main interest. The best-known case of the punishment of the guilty by the field courts in the War of Independence is probably the Saaremaa Rebellion of 16–21 February 1919, when 68 men were executed by order of the field court.[3] Field courts were also engaged in the cases of evading conscription, desertion, leaving the unit without permission and mutiny. The best

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[1] *Svod voennyx postanovlenij 1869 goda, Kniga XXIV, Ustav voenno-sudebnyj (Свод военных постановлений 1869 года, Книга XXIV, Устав военно-судебный)* (Riga: Voenno-sudebnoe upravlenie (Военно-судебное управление), 1921), 230, 291–292.

[2] *Voinskij ustav o nakazanijax (S. V. P. 1869 g. XXII, izd. 4), raz"jasnennyj rešenijami praviteľstvujuščego senata i Glavnogo voennogo suda, prikazami po voennomu vedomstvu, cirkuljarami Glavnogo voenno-sudebnogo upravlenija i proč. po 1 marta 1917 g. (Воинский устав о наказаниях (С. В. П. 1869 г. XXII, изд. 4), разъясненный решениями Правительствующего сената и Главного военного суда, приказами по военному ведомству, циркулярами Главного военно-судного управления и проч. по 1 марта 1917 г.)*. (Reval: Tipografija Ja. Cimmermana (Типография Я. Циммермана), 1923), 75.

[3] *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu. I, Vabadussõja eellugu. Punaväe sissetung ja Eesti vabastamine* (History of the Estonian War of Independence. Prelude to the War of Independence. Invasion of the Red Army and Liberation of Estonia), written by Peeter Kaasik, Lauri Vahtre, Urmas Salo et al., maps by Reigo Rosenthal, compiled and edited by Lauri Vahtre, Eesti sõjamuuseumi – kindral Laidoneri muuseumi toimetised (Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum Publications) 10/1 (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020), 510.

known case of mutiny took place in the Tartu Reserve Battalion on July 10–13, 1919 where 21 soldiers were sentenced to execution by the field court.[4] The estimated number of the victims of the Red Terror by the Cheka in the War of Independence is 600–700 people.[5]

The activity of the field courts in the 20th century wars has been studied just in the last 30 years by a relatively small number of historians. The activity of the field courts in the Finnish Civil War of 1918 has been studied by Marko Tikka.[6] In Latvia, Ēriks Jēkabsons has done research on the crimes committed by soldiers in the Latvian War of Independence,[7] but despite the availability of source materials in the Latvian Archive of History, Latvian historians have not yet done research on the field courts. Lithuanian historians have made a bit more progress. Andriejus Stoliarovas has analysed Lithuanian martial law from 1919, including regimental courts and field courts.[8] The experiences of Estonia's neighbouring countries in 1918–1919 were somewhat similar but the mass armies of the superpowers were quite different. In World War I, the armies of Germany and Britain had no problems with unrest but the unwillingness to continue fighting was a big issue. The German and British field courts in the World War I have been comparatively analysed by Christoph Jahr,[9] and his approach to the studies of the background of suspects served to some extent as a model for this article. However, these more or less comparative studies are of little help when analysing the extraordinary courts of the Estonian War of Independence.

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4 *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu. II, Kaitsesõda piiride taga ja lõpuvõitlused* (History of the Estonian War of Independence. II, Defensive War behind Borders and Final Battles), written by Peeter Kaasik, Lauri Vahtre Urmas Salo et al., maps by Reigo Rosenthal compiled and edited by Lauri Vahtre, Eesti sõjamuuseumi – kindral Laidoneri muuseumi toimetised (Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum Publications) 10/2 (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020), 175–176.

5 *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu I*, 265–266.

6 Marko Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet. Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2018).

7 Ēriks Jēkabsons, "Latvijas Neatkarības karš 1918.–1920. gadā: savējo karavīru noziegumi," *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* 2 (2020): 65–93.

8 Andriejus Stoliarovas, *Lietuvos Respublikos karinė justicija 1919–1940 m.* (Vilnius: Vytauto Didžiojo karo muziejus, 2014).

9 Christoph Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten: Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998).

In 1918–1919, on the territory of Estonia, the two opposing sides managed to put into operation extraordinary courts, field courts in the Republic of Estonia and the Cheka on the territory occupied by the Bolsheviks, respectively. So far the studies of the field courts and the Cheka in 1918–1919 have focused primarily on political violence and the repressions associated with terror. Studies of this type of focus have been published by Marko Mihkelson,[10] Taavi Minnik[11] and Reigo Rosenthal.[12] Minnik's later approaches have rather focused on the assessment of the legal bases of the activity of the field courts[13] and the Cheka[14] e.g. taking into consideration the Hague Convention.[15] Minnik came to a final conclusion that the activity of the temporary field courts in 1918–1919 did not follow martial law.[16] Minnik considered the activity of the Cheka to be the execution of the policy of fear and destruction.[17] However, Rosenthal considers field courts to be the institutions involved in a more general and extensive "struggle" for securing domestic order. He also finds the quality of the administration of justice by field courts uneven and preliminary investigation insufficient. At the same time, Rosenthal considers the existing studies insufficient for assessing the criticisms by the War of Independence contemporaries of the motives of the field courts and the competence of judges.[18] No doubt, it is possible to assess the activity of these institutions from the point of view of legal history.

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[10] Marko Mihkelson, „Punane terror Eestis" (Red Terror in Estonia) (Graduation Thesis, University of Tartu, 1993).

[11] Taavi Minnik, „Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas" (Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence) (Master's Thesis, University of Tallinn, 2010).

[12] Reigo Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus: Eesti sõjaväejuhtkond Vabadussõja-aegses sisepoliitikas* (Order and Justice: Estonian Military Leadership in Internal Politics during the War of Independence) (Tallinn: Argo, 2019).

[13] Taavi Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial and their actions," *Juridiskā zinātne / Law* 7 (2014): 99–112.

[14] Taavi Minnik, "Kontrrevolutsiooni vastu võitlemise komisjonid enamlaste terroripoliitika täideviijatena Eestis aastail 1918–1919" (Commissions for Combating Counter-Revolution as Executors of Policy of Terror of the Bolsheviks in Estonia in 1918–1919), *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 21 (2015): 51–68.

[15] Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial," 101–102.

[16] *Ibid*., 108.

[17] Minnik, "Kontrrevolutsiooni vastu võitlemise komisjonid," 66.

[18] Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus*, 189.

The current article presents its own approach from the point of view of a military historian, not a legal historian or a military scientist. Various source materials not cited by previous researchers have been used, as well as previously used sources with a stronger focus on servicemen. The article gives an overview of the development as institutions and the organization of the field courts of the Estonian People's Force (official name of the Estonian army during the War of Independence, henceforth Estonian Army) and the Cheka of the Bolsheviks. The main issue is how the penal policy of these extraordinary judicial authorities impacted the servicemen; what the purpose of the penal policy was and how it was executed.

Field Courts Martial of the Estonian Army

According to the Estonian Provisional Government (henceforth PG) decision of 5 December 1918, the activity of the field courts martial had to be based on the former Russian military law. The activity of these courts was primarily targeted against Bolsheviks and their supporters, as well as deserters and insubordinates. No distinction was made between servicemen and private individuals – "all who were somehow working against the Republic of Estonia or for the enemies of the state "would be prosecuted by field courts. The definition of deserters was to be taken from the 22nd Book of the Digest of Russian Military Laws.[19] Its section 128 stipulated that in wartime any serviceman who stayed away from his unit without his commander's permission for three or more days would be considered a deserter.[20] It is known that during WW I, Estonian soldiers who had been drafted to the Russian army, used to leave their units for a couple of days and go home in Estonia when their training was taking place near

[19] Regulation of the Provisional Government on the Establishment of Field Courts, *Riigi Teataja* (State Gazette), 1918, 6.

[20] *Svod voennyx postanovlenij 1869 goda. Č. 6, Ustavy voenno-ugolovnye (po 1 oktjabrja 1900 goda). Kn. XXII–XXIV (Свод военных постановлений 1869 года. Ч. 6, Уставы военно-уголовные (по 1 октября 1900 года). Кн. XXII–XXIV)* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaja tipografija (Государственная Типография), 1900), 30.

Estonia.[21] It probably also happened in the War of Independence as well because on 29 December, 1918 the Provisional Government decided to amend section 128 of the 22nd Book of the Digest of Russian Military Laws, making deserters any Estonian Army servicemen who left their units or the front line without commander's permission.[22] Taavi Minnik considers the main purpose of the establishment of field courts to be the need to re-establish discipline in the Estonian Army.[23] One should rather agree with Reigo Rosenthal, according to whom the establishment of field courts aimed at securing discipline in the Estonian Army as well as suppressing communists.[24] In the process of ensuring domestic security, soldiers made for merely one group.

The need to specify the legal basis of field courts was realized by institutions outside Tallinn and the Estonian Army. On 4 December, Viru County Government addressed the Minister of War, pointing out that the martial law had been in force since 28 November but the court established with the 5th Regiment of the Estonian Army was unable to start performing its tasks until the court's jurisdiction, composition, aims and specified authorities had been set.[25] It is unknown what exactly made the county government write this letter – concern about the discipline in the Estonian Army or the anti-state activities of Bolsheviks. This letter was not the only expression of opinion on the activity of the field courts. Rosenthal writes about the proposal by Jaan Peterson, Chairman of Viljandi County Council of 21 January 1919 to replace field courts by military district courts.[26]

Minnik has referred to the circular letter of the military prosecutor of 18 December as the milestone in regulating the structure and organiza-

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[21] Toivo Kikkas, "Võitlusvõime eesti sõdurite ja ohvitseride sõjakogemuses 1914–1920" (Combat Effectiveness in the War Experience of Estonian Soldiers and Officers during 1914–1920) (Master's Thesis, The University of Tartu, 2020), 82.

[22] Decision of the Provisional Government on Amendment of the Meaning of the Concept of a Deserter, 29 December 1918, Estonian National Archives (henceforth RA), ERA.31.1.9, 69.

[23] Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial," 103.

[24] Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus*, 35.

[25] Chairman of Viru County Council Juhkam to War Minister of Provisional Government, 4 December 1918, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 3.

[26] Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus*, 70.

Regulation of the Provisional Government on the creation of field courts martial, 5 December 1918. Riigi Teataja (State Gazette) no 6, 11 December 1918

Ajutise Walitsuse määrus wäljakohtute asutamise kohta.

Sõjaseaduse wäljakuulutamise puhul käsib Ajutine Walitsus sõjaministri ettepanekul, Wene sõjawäe seaduste kogu XXIV raamatu, lisa VIII põhjal:

§ 1. Iga jalawäepolgu juures wäljakohus asutada.

§ 2. Üksikute polkude wäljakohtute alla käiwad:

Saare-, Lääne- ja Harjumaa — 1. polgu wäljakohtu alla.

Järwamaa — 5. polgu wäljakohtu alla.

Wirumaa — 4. polgu wäljakohtu alla.

Wiljandi- ja Pärnumaa — 6. polgu wäljakohtu alla.

Tartumaa — 2. polgu wäljakohtu alla.

Wõru- ja Petserimaa — 3. polgu wäljakohtu alla.

§ 3. Wõim isikuid wäljakohtu kätte anda on kohalise polgu ülemal.

§ 4. Wäljakohtu otsused kinnitab sõjaminister.

§ 5. Wäljakohtu alla langewad:

a) Kõik, kes kuidagi wiisi Eesti Wabariigi wastu wõi riigi waenlaste kasuks töötawad, ehk kes nendega läbikäimises ja ühenduses seistes mõnesugusel kombel abiks on.

b) Kõik, kes sõjawäelisele tegewusele, nagu edasiliikumisele, sidemete pidamisele jne. kuidagi wiisi püüawad takistust teha.

c) Kõik tapjad, põletajad, röövijad, riisujad ja wägistajad.

d) Kõik Eesti Wabariigile kahjulikkude kuulujuttude laialilaotajad.

e) Kõik wäejooksikud. (Jooksikute mõiste määrus on antud Wene sõjawäe seaduste kogu XXII raamatus.)

f) Wastuhakkajad ja kõik sõjawäelased, käsu täitmata jätmise pärast waenlase silmapiiril.

§ 6. Wäljakohtud määrawad süüdlastele kuritegude eest süü raskuse järele wangiroodu, sunnitöö ehk surmanuhtluse.

§ 7. See määrus hakkab kohe maksma.

Tallinnas, 5. detsembril 1918. a.

Pea- ja sõjaminister: K. Päts.

Ajutise Walitsuse asjade walitseja k. t.: Th. Käärik.

tion of field courts.[27] Some facts need to be specified, though. As early as on 13 December, Lieutenant Colonel Peeter Kann, a prosecutor and an employee of the Ministry of War[28] notified Staff Captain (Sub-Captain; Russian military rank between Lieutenant and Captain) Marder, Lieutenant Hiop, Ensign Rebas and Ensign Jõgi that according to the order of the Chief of Staff they had been appointed members of Rakvere Field Court and had to depart for Rakvere the following day.[29] Probably the field court was established with the 5th Infantry Regiment in Rakvere. In a circular letter of 16 December, prosecutor Kann explained the current situation. According to him, a field court had already been established in Tallinn (probably with the 1st Infantry Regiment) and orders had been given to establish the court in Rakvere. He proposed to establish field courts primarily in Tartu with the 2nd Infantry Regiment, in Võru with the 3rd Infantry Regiment and in Pärnu with the 6th Infantry Regiment. In his legal explanations he relied on Appendix No 8 of the 24th Book of the Digest of Russian Military Laws.[30] These books were not necessarily at the disposal of the field courts. So it was stated at the 6th Infantry Regiment field court trial on 17 December that due to the lack of the books of the Digest of Russian Military Laws or manuals of court proceedings, hearing the case of desertion had to be postponed till the acquisition of relevant books.[31]

As for the activity and jurisdiction of field courts, prosecutor Kann referred to the 5 December regulation of the PG, published in *Riigi Teataja* (State Gazette) on 11 December. According to Kann, the higher court was to be the military district court with the General Staff in Tallinn.[32] However, the field courts were not to fall under the jurisdiction of

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[27] Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial," 101.

[28] Peeter Kann served as prosecutor at Ministry of War since 7 December 1918, Midshipman Alfred Nirk served as military prosecutor since 6 January 1919. Officer database, Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum, http://prosopos.esm.ee/index.aspx?type=1, 19 November 2022.

[29] Military Prosecutor Kann to Marder, Hiop, Rebas and Jõgi, 13 December, 1918, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 8.

[30] Circular letter of Military Prosecutor Kann to units of the Estonian army, 16 December 1918, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 20.

[31] 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court Decision, 17 December 1918, RA, ERA.932.1.30, 13.

[32] Circular letter of military prosecutor, 16 December 1918.

Swedish military attaché in Helsinki Major Henrik Lagerlöf is visiting the 3rd Division of Estonian Armed Forces. In the back seat Commander of the 3rd Division Major General Ernst Põdder and Major Lagerlöf on his left hand. In the middle seat Deputy Commander of the Division Colonel Peeter Kann (1883–1943) and on his left hand Chief of Staff of the Armoured Train Division Captain Johannes Poopuu. Valga, 23 September 1919. RA, EFA.114.A.256.322

the district court.[33] The lawyers of the era saw the field courts as independently functioning units. In December 1918, the regiments of the Estonian Army retreated in the counties of Viru and Võru and it is possible that under such circumstances the establishment of courts or running trials was mostly impossible. In December, field courts were established in Tallinn and Rakvere but only single cases of field court trials are known. There was a similar situation in Lithuania where the first recorded field court trial took place in February 1919. [34]

[33] Judicial Administration of War Ministry to the Office of Chief of General Staff, 7 January 1919, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 39.

[34] Stoliarovas, *Lietuvos Respublikos karinė justicija 1919-1940 m.*, 118.

Minnik and Rosenthal have only touched upon the field court related developments in January 1919. At the same time, Rosenthal elaborates on the processes which led to the so-called February crisis (the climax of disagreements between military authorities and their critics), part of which was criticism of penal policies.[35] This helps to better understand the development of field courts in January. From January 1919, the situation on the front began to improve and it helped the authorities to start thinking about a more detailed regulation of the organization of work of field courts. On 4 January, the Commander of the 6th Regiment, Colonel Puskar asked for more detailed guidelines on the cases which would require preliminary investigation by field courts.[36] On 5 January, Head of Judicial Administration Karl Ferdinand Karlson summoned the representatives of field courts to the Judicial Administration to discuss the area and fields of activity on 10 January.[37] On 10 January, updated guidelines for field courts were confirmed. The document could be interpreted in many ways. Relying on Russian military law, the Judicial Administration meant that hearing the cases which were under the jurisdiction of field courts according to the 5 December regulation of Provisional Government, could be run without preliminary investigation in the case of obvious guilt. If preliminary investigation was necessary, the case had to be closed in a field court with a reference to the regulations of Provisional Government, published in 1918 in State Gazette No 8 and 9, on 9 and 18 December, respectively [1918]". In the case of doubt, more detailed information was to be acquired from the Military Judicial Administration.[38] The author of the guidelines referred to State Gazette No 8 (published on 19 December) which had published the regulation on the relations between the military court, field court and civil court under martial law: "Persons fall under field courts for the offences which are the jurisdiction of field courts according to the 5 December regulation of the Provisional Government, in case these offences have been committed after the declaration of

[35] Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus*, 50–80.

[36] Colonel Puskar to Chief of General Staff, 4 January 1919, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 35.

[37] Circular letter of Judicial Administration to the People's Force, 5 January 1919, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 37.

[38] Guidelines to Courts Martial, 10 January, 1919, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 47.

the martial law by the Provisional Government." The offences committed before the regulation of the 5 December fell under civil courts and military crimes under military courts according to the usual procedure.[39] He also referred to State Gazette No 9 (published on 24 December) which had published the decision of 18 December on military courts, including regimental field courts and military district court and the crimes falling under these institutions. It did not concern the field courts.[40] The most remarkable standpoint of the 10 January guidelines is the fact that all the cases which require preliminary investigation, should be closed in field courts. This issue was never mentioned in State Gazette No 8 or 9 and this standpoint moved away from the former Russian military laws which stipulated very clearly that only the offences which required no (preliminary) investigation, fell under the jurisdiction of field courts.

On 30 January 1919, a supplementary regulation on field courts martial was adopted. Primarily the establishment and composition of courts were outlined. Field courts could be established with garrisons, units and military districts, including a chairman and four officers as members. Field courts would be convened by an order of the day and if possible, within 24 hours after the crime had been committed. The order of the day had to include names of the accused and the acts they were accused of. Hearing the case could not take longer than two days and the hearing had to take place behind closed doors. The court decision had to be immediately forwarded for confirmation to the commander by whose order of the day the hearing had been convened.[41] Hence, the original plan to establish permanent field courts with staff was abandoned and the Digest of Russian Military Laws was followed, which did not provide the establishment of 'permanent field courts martial'.

These regulations were the basis for action in the two following months. On 25 March 1919, a new regulation of the Provisional Government was confirmed, regulating the activity of field courts. Now the accused were entitled to get or let the court nominate a lawyer. The clause leaving room for interpretation, which made it possible to send to court

[39] *Riigi Teataja*, 1918, 8, p. 1.
[40] *Riigi Teataja*, 1918, 9, p. 2.
[41] Regulations on Battlefield Court, 30 January 1919, RA, ERA.927.1.3, 44.

those individuals who had acted against the Republic of Estonia or collaborated with the enemies of state, was removed. At the same time, now spies and active enemy's agents, as well as rebels and instigators of rebellion could be punished. Probably section 6 was the most important clause of the regulation: "Servicemen and private individuals will be taken to field court when the crime is obvious and preliminary investigation is not required. Should the crime and the guilt of the guilty persons require preliminary investigation or a preliminary hearing which takes longer than section 5 provides, then the case will not be under the juridiction of field courts but of a corresponding court, following the usual procedure."[42] Thus, the system returned to Russian military law and abandoned the 10 January instruction's position that even if the need for preliminary investigation became apparent, the hearing should be continued by the field court. A comprehensive instruction was complete only in August, including the three manuals in Estonian on the organization of field courts which had earlier been sent to army units and published in the magazine *Sõdur* (Soldier).[43] Rosenthal has pointed out that the concept of time of preliminary investigation was expressed in vague terms in the new regulation.[44] However, the issue of the time of preliminary investigation of 25 March regulation had already been confirmed in the 30 January regulation. Hence, in the field of preliminary investigation, the guidelines which had been implemented in the two previous months, continued.

The Number and the Organization of Field Courts Martial

Taavi Minnik lists ten field courts in his article.[45] According to surviving sources, there were actually twenty-two. Unfortunately, the activities and names of presiding judges of many courts are not known.

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[42] *Riigi Teataja* 1919, 19, pp. 145–147.

[43] Alfred Nirk, *Juhatuskiri polgu- ja väljakohtutele, juurdluse toimepanemiseks ja eeluurimise algatamiseks* (Guidelines for Regimental and Field Courts, for Carrying out Investigation and for Initiating Preliminary Investigation) (Tallinn: Military Judicial Administration, 1919).

[44] Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus*, 97.

[45] Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial," 103–104.

Captain Paul Triik (1896–1941), Commander of the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Infantry Regiment. 1919. RA, EFA.114.3.1080

Field courts operated with the 2nd Division (presiding judges Sub-Captains Peeter Kraav and Jaan Ritso), with the staffs of the 2nd and the 3rd Divisions and the Armoured Trains. There were also field courts in all the numbered regiments. The presiding judges of the 2nd Infantry Regiment Field Court were Sub-Captain August Priks, Captain Andreas Tomingas, Sub-Captain Karl Riigov and Captain Karl Preisberg. The presiding judge of the field court of the 3rd infantry Regiment was Sub-Captain Paul Triik, the members of the field court of the 4th Infantry Regiment Captain Voldemar Koch, Lieutenant (later Sub-Captain) Jaan Mets, Captain

Nikolai Steinmann and Sub-Lieutenant Mart Saarepera, of the 6th Infantry Regiment Sub-Lieutenant Karl Podrätsik, Sub-Captain Bruno Vitas and Captain Ludvig Jakobsen. Field courts also operated in the Naval Headquarters, the 1st Cavalry Regiment, the Battalion of the Partisans of Sakala and the Battalion of the Partisans of Kuperjanov (Lieutenant Nikolai Piip). There were also field courts with the 2nd Division Reserve Battalion (members Sub-Captain Boris Muraveisky, Lieutenant Bernhard Kolk and Lieutenant Tõnis Adamson) and the 3rd Division Reserve Battalion and the Narrow Gauge Armoured Trains Unit. Field courts operated also on the island of Saaremaa and in the town and county of Võru (Sub- Captain Ritso[46]).[47]

Some of these field courts made hundreds of decisions, some a lot less. In order to compare the organization of courts, the materials of the three field courts (4th Infantry Regiment,[48] 6th Infantry Regiment[49] and 2nd Division[50]) will be analysed below. In the case of the field court of the 2nd Divison it must be pointed out that a share of their materials are cases of the field courts of the units that were subordinated to the Division. Thus, the field court materials of the 2nd Division included the files of the field courts of the 2nd, 3rd Infantry Regiments and the 2nd Division Reserve Battalion. The selection includes the decisions made before the end of the War of Independence but among all the decisions there are many that were made after the war. For the sake of clarity, the acts of the field court have been represented as one set under the materials of the judicial division of the 2nd Division.

The field court materials used in this article come from the funds of the 2nd Division (232 cases, used 88), the 4th Regiment (76 cases, used 18) and the 4th Infantry Regiment (84 cases, used 13).

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46 Johan Haavapuu's case, 5 February 1919, RA, ERA.518.1.286.

47 In compiling the list, the lists of the field courts decisions of the military prosecutor's office and the materials of single field courts were used: RA, ERA.3704.1.353; 2nd Division Field Court, RA, ERA.518; 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court, RA, ERA.932; 4th Infantry Regiment Field Court RA, ERA.939.

48 4th Infantry Regiment Field Court, RA, ERA.939.

49 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court, RA, ERA.932.

50 2nd Division Field Court, RA, ERA.518.

The time, place and staff of a field court hearing, as well as the defence lawyer were appointed by the unit commander's order of the day. The name of an offender and the title of an offence were recorded.[51] The court included the presiding judge who was, as a rule, the most senior among the appointed officers, 3 to 5 members who were officers and an administrator-secretary. Exceptions occurred – for example, at a hearing of the field court of the 6th Infantry Regiment in November 1919, the presiding judge was Lieutenant Podrätsik, whereas among the members there were also Lieutenants Laur and Kulbok.[52] It is hard to say why at some hearings there were three and sometimes five members next to the presiding judge. Both, the Appendix No 8 section 1285 of the 24th book of the Digest of Russian Military Laws[53] and the 25 March regulation of the Provisional Government clearly stipulated that the composition of the court included a presiding judge and four judges who were officers. According to the Russian law, section 1285 had to be followed, "if possible", according to which the field court judges needed at least four years of experience in service (most probably as officers).[54] The regulation of the Provisional Government made no mention of the required experience and it would have been hard to follow in the situation where the majority of the Estonian Army officers were the graduates of wartime short time officer courses (schools for ensigns). Identifying the judges is a complex task because court decisions only have ranks and surnames recorded. In some cases there are signatures instead of surnames. Membership in field courts was not recorded on service sheets – probably for its temporary character. A large number of officers who participated in the War of Independence, had a degree in law but they seldom ended up as presiding judges in field courts. For example, Sub-Lieutenant Leonhard Ernst Luha served in the 6th Infantry Regiment, had studied law for seven years at the University of St. Petersburg, and furthermore, in 1917 he had been a long-term presiding judge of the 2nd Machinegun-Reserve Battalion Field Court. In

[51] 2nd Division Reserve Battalion Commander's Order of the Day no. 314, 30 October 1919, RA, ERA.518.1.306, 4.

[52] 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court Decision, 9 November 1919, RA, ERA.932.1.16, 10.

[53] *Svod voennyx postanovlenij 1869 goda, Kniga XXIV*, 230.

[54] *Ibid.*, 231.

the early stages of the War, Luha served in the field of economics and then was involved in the training of reservists who were called up, but in April 1919 he became Head of the 3rd Division Court Department.[55] Instead of appointing Luha the presiding judge of the 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court before April 1919, Bruno Vitas got the appointment among others.

Court decisions had to be confirmed by the commanders of units by whose orders of the day the field courts were convened.[56] The enforcement of judgment had to be confirmed by the local commandant who was military commander of the district. After the establishment of field courts in December 1918, the trials could be obstructed by the lack of books of Russian military law. For example, at the hearing of the 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court, a statement was made: "Due to the lack of *Положение о Военно-Полевых судах* [---] and court manuals [---]", the hearing of the deserter will be postponed till the acquisition of the required books.[57] The death penalty imposed by the field court would be generally executed in the early hours of the next day, between 2 and 5 o'clock. In Tartu, the persons sentenced to death, were executed in the gravel pit of Raadi manor.

Case Study: Aleksander Sild and Aleksander Vahk

In February 1919, the 2nd Infantry Regiment Field Court discussed the charge of desertion of the soldier of the same regiment. Aleksander Sild was 22 years old, a Lutheran, a member of Kavilda parish and had no previous court punishment in his own words. His files lack the service sheet and therefore, his profession is unknown. It is not known when Sild was arrested but on 22 January his mother submitted an appeal for "prompt hearing" of Aleksander's case. The file was opened on 27 January when

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[55] Toomas Anepaio, *Kohtunikud, kohtu-uurijad ja prokurörid. 1918–1940: biograafiline leksikon* (Judges, Court Investigators and Prosecutors. *1918–1940:* Biographical Lexicon) (Tartu: University of Tartu Publishers, 2017), 171–172.

[56] 2nd Division Field Court Decision's Confirmation by Colonel Viktor Puskar, 29 December 1919, RA, ERA.518.1.278, 30.

[57] 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court Decision, 17 December 1918, RA.ERA.932.1.30, 13.

the committee for extraordinary investigation decided after hearing the case, to bring Sild to justice in a field court. On 2 February, preliminary investigation commenced on the request of First Lieutenant (German rank *Oberleutnant* was used for a short time in the beginning of the War of Independence) Tang, a 2nd Division judicial investigator. Next, with no dates mentioned, Aleksander Sild and four witnesses were interrogated, including Aleksander's landlord and his mother. After interrogations, new evidence came to light. After that, Aleksander was interrogated again on 12th February and he admitted that in the first interrogation he had been too scared to admit his service for Bolsheviks. On 15 February, Andres Purri, Head of Tartu Office for Counter-Intelligence, decided to declare Aleksander Sild a defendant. He sent the act to the judicial investigator of the 2nd Division, charging Aleksander Sild of desertion and service for Bolsheviks. The hearing of the field court took place on 21 February. It was common practice to fill in the court protocol on the form "Act of Interrogation".[58] (Much more informative were the 2nd Division Reserve Battalion's "Protocols of Battlefield Court Hearings" which included defendants' background information incl. marital status, religion, education and profession.)[59] In June and July of the same year, different forms could have been used – e.g. in June marital status and education were not recorded.) The presiding judge was Sub-Captain Riigov, accompanied by three members and one administrator, all in the rank of ensign. The field court found Aleksander Sild guilty and sentenced him to death by shooting after losing all civic rights. The court sentence was executed. By error, the date of execution was recorded as 26 January at 5 a.m. and this led to writing an incorrect date of closing the case on the file.[60]

The end-of-January field court materials of the same unit are much more scarce. The whole file contained three documents – an interrogation protocol, an indictment and a court protocol including the decision. None of these documents include the defendant's age, profession, religion

[58] Sild, Aleksander Indictment for Joining the Red Army as a Deserter, 27 January 1919, RA.ERA.518.1.440, 1–11.

[59] Richard Kaitsa Indictment for Leaving Unit without Permission and Evading Conscription, 10 July 1919, RA.ERA.518.1.306, 2.

[60] Aleksander Sild's Indictment, 1–11.

Orderly officer of the Headquarters of 2nd Division and the presiding judge of the field court martial Sub-Captain Karl Riigov (1892–1942). June 1919. RA, EFA.114.3.3156

or any other detail. Typically, a deserter was arrested on 17 January, interrogated the following day, followed by a court hearing on 29 January and the death sentence.[61] The number of such decisions is fairly small – there were under 10 in the course of investigation. It is possible that some rush decisions came from the presiding judge, Captain Preisberg.

Another case study comes from the period after the adoption of 25 March 1919 regulation on specifying the activity of the field courts. The 6th Infantry Regiment Field Court was investigating Aleksander Valdek, soldier of the 1st Infantry Regiment, charged with evading military service. Valdek was 23 years old, Lutheran, field hand, member of Velise parish, resident of Haimre parish. The investigation commenced on April and closed on 14 April. The latter probably is the date of prosecution. Actually, Valdek had been detained by the Defence League much earlier on a road in Pärnu county near Sanga (Soomra) and he had been interrogated by the local militia (probably the senior militiaman of Tahkuranna) on 1 February. Unlike the case of Sild, interrogations were not run by

[61] Joosep Pöörand's Indictment, 18 January 1919, RA.ERA.518.1.409, 3.

Battalion commanders of the 2nd Infantry Regiment. From the left: Captain Felix Tannenbaum (1st Battalion), Captain Karl Preisberg (1893–1969; 3rd Battalion) and Captain Eduard Liibus (acting commander of 2nd Battalion). Alūksne (Latvia). July 1919. RA, EFA.7.3.4324

military counter-intelligence. Valdek's excuse for evading military service was his health condition, but he admitted his guilt. On 27 March, Velise parish issued a certificate confirming that Valdek was a member of the parish, single and had no criminal record. The certificate arrived at the regiment by 30 March. A similar certificate from Haimre parish first went missing in the post and never arrived at the 6th Regiment. Sub-Lieutenant Anton Simmo, officer of the 6th Regiment, interrogated Valdek once again on 1 April and then also the witnesses. The field court convened on 14 April with Captain Jakobsen as presiding judge, accompanied by four officers and an administrator who was Sub-Lieutenant Simmo who had previous experience of running interrogations. The hearing was also attended by Valdek's defence lawyer, Lieutenant Hans Birkenberg. The court took into account Valdek's testimony and regret and sentenced him to a military prison for one year. The enforcement of the judgment was postponed till the end of war and Valdek was sent back to the army.[62]

The two different field court case studies do not necessarily present typical files but in general, the contents of the surviving court files are very much like this. Marko Tikka wanted to find out about field court cases in Finland during the civil war and whether the court materials (protocols) rather reflect investigations or convictions.[63] The same question would be appropriate in the case of field courts as well. Another aspect of the problem is the fact that in the chaos of war, court files were probably not completed with care. Based on over one hundred field court and the Cheka files, we can say that in a number of cases, documents went missing later, e.g. court decisions, interrogation protocols, testimonies, certificates issued by parishes, service sheets etc. This makes it almost impossible to answer Tikka's question in many cases. On the other hand, it is possible that certain documents were never in court files. As the case of Valdek demonstrated, some documents could have gone missing in the post.

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[62] Indictment of Aleksander Valdek, son of Tõnis, member of Velise parish for avoiding military service, 5.4.1919, RA, ERA.932.1.22, 1–25.

[63] Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet*, 214.

Establishment and Activity of the Chekas

The Cheka ran temporary trials for the Bolsheviks.

The Cheka (pronunciation of the Russian abbreviation ЧК – *чрезвычайная комиссия*, extraordinary committee) is known as a notorious special service of Russia, a counter-intelligence organisation combating counter-revolution. Its name comes from the abbreviation *ВЧК (Всероссийская чрезвычайная комиссия по борьбе с контрреволюцией и саботажем* or All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage under the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR). *ЧК* – (Cheka) was an abbreviated form for extraordinary commissions which was used in daily life.[64]

The materials available in the Estonian National Archive are not sufficient to know whether the (Estonian) Cheka implemented surveillance over the Red Army Estonian national units like the Estonian military counter-intelligence (incl. an agency) did. A Latvian historian Šiliņš has written that the Cheka diligently monitored the soldiers' moods in the Latvian Red Army and agents were busy writing reports.[65] He has used materials from Russian archives and these materials could give more information about the activities of the Estonian Cheka as well.[66] Unfortunately, the majority of the Cheka-related sources are stored in the Federal Security Service (FSB) archives in Russia, making the more extensive studies of the impact of the Cheka on Estonians in the Red Army a future project. The reports on the mood of chekists from various areas of Russia in 1918–1920 have been published in a ROSSPEN collection but Estonia, Estonians or Estonian national units in the Red Army during

[64] Vladimir Dolmatov (Владимир Долматов), *VČK, Glavnye dokumenty (ВЧК, Главные документы)* (Moskva: Komsomol'skaja pravda (Комсомольская правда), 2017); *Sovetskaja derevnja glazami VČK-OGPU-NKVD. Dokumenty i materialy*, 4 t. *(Советская деревня глазами ВЧК-ОГПУ-НКВД. Документы и материалы*, 4 т.), edited by A. Berelovich and V. Danilov (Moskva: ROSSPEN (РОССПЭН) 1998–2012).

[65] Jānis Šiliņš, "The Soviet Army in Northern Lithuania between January and June 1919," *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis* 36 (2018): 30.

[66] Šiliņš has claimed in his correspondence, though that the majority of Cheka reports are in FSB archive which is closed for researchers.

the War of Independence are not mentioned. Reports made by chekists have been published in the collection.[67] It turns out that the moods of the Red Army soldiers were reported by the "information bulletins" of the special departments under military-revolutionary committees of the army. They covered political sentiments and desertions of the Red Army soldiers.[68] The chekists also drew up weekly reviews on the moods of the local population.[69]

It is possible that the Cheka made secret reports on sentiments in the Estonian Red Army units, but the surviving sources in Estonia enable us to study the role of chekists as prosecutors and judges simultaneously. In interrogation protocols and decisions the motives of soldiers emerge and for better understanding of the source materials it is worth giving a review of the mechanisms of the Cheka.

From the beginning of the Estonian War of Independence (in late November 1918) to June 1919, the violence apparatus of the Estonian Workers' Commune (*ETK = Eesti Töörahva Kommuun*) operated. It was a pendant state, formed by the Soviet Russia to act against the Republic of Estonia. Its structure included internal affairs directorate as well as local Chekas. Initially, authorities duplicating each other's activities were established but basically it was evolving into the Cheka. For example, an instruction was drawn up for the commissars of revolutionary order who were entitled to carry out searches and arrests in collaboration with the administrative department in combating counter-revolution.[70] Marko Mihkelson has written that this authority performed the same anti-counter-revolutionary function as the local Chekas. From December 15 December 1918 Johannes Käspert was on this position until he was appointed Head of the Internal Affairs Directorate.[71]

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[67] *Sovetskaja derevnja glazami VČK-OGPU-NKVD. Dokumenty i materialy*, t. 1, *1918–1922 gg.* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 1998).

[68] Из информационного бюллетеня особого отдела при реввоенсовете Запасной армии республики за 2—4 октября 1919 г, 5 октября 1919 г. – *Sovetskaja derevnja glazami VČK-OGPU-NKVD*, t. 1, 205–206.

[69] Из еженедельной сводки, за 1—7 октября 1919 г. – *Ibid.*, 206–208.

[70] Guidelines for Revolutionary Order Commissars, RA, ERAF.28.1.60, 17.

[71] Mihkelson, "Punane terror", 23.

Counterintelligence officers of the Soviet Baltic Fleet in Kronstadt, 1926. Johannes Käspert (1886–1937, in center) was Head of the State Security (OGPU) Department in Kronstadt then. RA, ERAF.2.1.2432.2

On 26 December 1918, the Internal Affairs Directorate with Johannes Käspert as its head was founded by the decree of the *ETK* Council. Within the competence of the internal affairs directorate were the following affairs: governing of the administrative activities of counties, towns and parishes, executing administrative power over all citizens, maintaining order, registration of births, deaths, marriages etc, organisation of the central office of statistics, combating counter-revolution and administering courts. Regional offices of the internal affairs directorate were administrative departments of town councils and county councils with their local commissions for combating counter-revolution and executive committees in parishes.[72] The structures of institutions had all been put on paper but they were never implemented to their full extent.

[72] Circular letter of the ETK Internal Affairs Directorate, 28 December 1918, RA, ERAF.28.1.60, 26.

The main repressive organs of *ETK* (even before the establishment of internal affairs directorate) were the local Chekas or extraordinary commissions for combating counter-revolution. The life span of the central Cheka of *ETK* was short and ended in January 1919. According to the instruction, Cheka commissars could impose the death penalty on any person who was a member of a White Guard organisation. All professional profiteers, illicit vodka makers, thieves and people selling vodka to the Red Army soldiers were to be shot. As well as all who were hiding weapons or possessions abandoned by the White Guard soldiers. All those whose "sons had fled" i.e. could be serving in Estonian Army or the Defence League, were threatened by potential fines or forced labour. Aristocrats and owners of manors as well as large landowners were to be sent as hostages at the disposal of the Cheka.[73] This document basically legalized unlimited violence against anybody and everybody, because merely the first clause leaves room for limitless interpretation. Lack of knowledge on who and when could be arrested and executed, must have created a genuine atmosphere of terror. It also made it possible for settling personal scores through informing.

The activities of chekists did not stop when they were withdrawing from Estonia. On 22 February 1919 on the initiative of Johannes Käspert, the local Chekas were replaced by commissars of revolutionary order who continued combating the so-called counter-revolutionaries in the rear of the grouping of the Red Army 7th Army who had been expelled from Estonia, fighting south of the lakes of Peipsi and Pskov.[74] By March 1919, the commissars were called "rear commissars"[75] – basically the chekists responsible for security in the immediate vicinity of the Red Army. It was no "genuine" extraordinary committee but it is worth getting acquainted with this institution. The people working for it were the same people who would be performing very similar tasks. The *ETK* Council issued a very detailed instruction which worded the aims of the rear commissars as

[73] Guidelines sent to commissars, RA, ERAF.28.1.60, 18.

[74] Report to ETK Council by Johannes Käspert, Head of Internal Affairs Directorate, 22 February 1919, RA,F.28.1.68, 3-4.

[75] ETK South Group Rear Commissar Aleksander Jea to district commissars and county councils, 20 March 1919, RA, ERAF.28.3.71, 21.

well as the district commissars. The *ETK* Council appointed rear commanders and rear commissars to all the units operating in Estonia. The rear commander was to appoint commandants on the territory under his administration, and the rear commissars appointed commissars to these commandants. Rear commanders and district commandants represented executive power and the commissars´ supreme power in their district, about a 26-km wide zone behind the frontline. With the help of district commissars, the rear commissars had to counteract local White Guard soldiers, combat illicit vodka makers etc. In order to perform their tasks, the commissars were entitled to carry out searches and arrests, impose fines or imprisonment on culprits and to shoot them. They also had to make sure that the army would be performing their tasks and not abuse their authority.[76] Their functions were almost identical to the Cheka. The earlier guidelines of the chekists of Moscow were also followed.[77] This way they watched that the 22nd February regulation drawn up in the special department of the Soviet Cheka, regarding going to the front from Russia, would be complied with on the Estonian front as well.[78]

The rear commissar of the Red Army South Group was Aleksander Jea and from 1 March he had four district commissars under him. This restructured, renamed Cheka employed 38 people. With exclusive decisions by Jea, 387 people were arrested and 50 death sentences were signed mostly in the county of Pechory between 1 March and 4 June.[79]

In the early April the rear commissar of the South Group encouraged his district commanders to record other notices and prisoners' background information in addition to interrogation protocols.[80] The activi-

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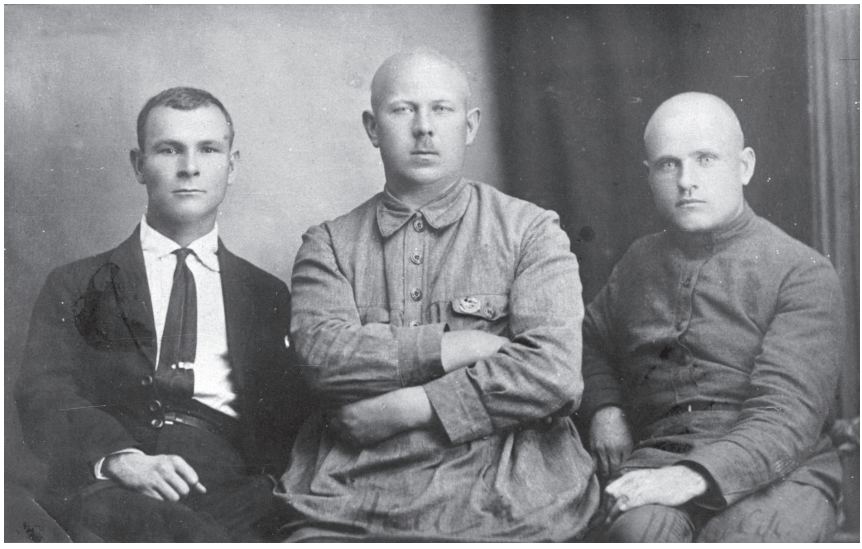
[76] Guidelines to Rear Commissars and District Commissars of the Forces Operating in Estonia, RA, ERAF.28.3.71, 5.

[77] *ETK* Internal Affairs Directorate Head Käspert to Rear Commissars of South and North Groups on the Implementation of the Russian SFSR Regulation, 19 March 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.60, 12.

[78] Regulation on Travel Permissions to the Front and to Border Areas, 22 February 1919, RA, ERAF.28.3.71, 22–23.

[79] Minnik, "Kontrrevolutsiooni vastu võitlemise komisjonid" (Commissions for Combating Counter-Revolution˘), 66.

[80] *ETK* South Group Rear Commissar to all District Commissars, 7 April 1919, RA, ERAF.28.3.71, 17.



Aleksander Jea (1888–1938, in the middle). Photo is taken in the Soviet Union probably in 1920s. RA, ERAF.2.1.2411.1

ties of the Estonian chekists can be better interpreted with the help of the instruction which had been sent to the commissars for implementing arrests and interrogations.[81] One of the leading figures of the Cheka, a Latvian Mārtiņš Lācis put it bluntly that the bourgeoisie as a class must be destroyed and in order to complete this mission, questions were asked about people's background, upbringing, education and profession. These questions were to decide the fate of defendants. "This is the essence of the Red Terror", declared Lācis.[82] At interrogations, chekists had to require the following: is the interrogated person a witness or a defendant, surname, first name and patronymic name, age, place of residence (county, parish, village and farm), profession, financial status, close family (brothers, sons etc. whoever could be suspicious), party membership and "why arrested or in whose case interrogated".

[81] South Group Rear Commissar's Guidelines to District Commissars on Searches, Arrests and Interrogation, RA, ERAF.28.3.71, 19.

[82] Max Jakobson, *XX sajandi lõpparve* (The Final Account of the XX Century) (Tallinn: Vagabund, 2005), 64.

Two clauses of the instruction express the chekists' ambition to find accomplices or open new cases. Witnesses had to answer the questions "whether the defendant and other local residents might know accomplices in the neighbourhood, or any other culprits (counter-revolutionaries etc.) who could be immediately arrested." Upon drawing up the protocol, the interrogator had to show diligence and find out "whom the defendant considers to be suspicious or guilty or something else which has nothing to do with this person."[83] The South Group was not only engaged in the cases of "the local White Guard soldiers". With the decision of the Rear Commissar Aleksander Jea, August Anton was executed; he had served in the Defence League and had given himself up as a prisoner to Bolsheviks and was shot as "a voluntary White Guard soldier" [84] At the same time, Jea sent an Estonian Army defector to a reserve regiment of the Red Army.[85] On the basis of the interrogation materials, the decisons made were not always unambigious.

Case Study: Aleksander Allmann

Typically, an investigation file of the Cheka is a bound selection of various cases in alphabetical order. Therefore, Allmann's documentation was not in a separate file like lots of the Estonian army field courts martial materials, but together with lots of other cases between the same covers. Upon opening the investigation, an act with the data of the suspect would be completed. It included the question whether the person had been earlier charged (not punished). As a rule, the Cheka did not fill in this part of the act and this was also the case with Allmann. The recorded reason for arrest in Allmann's case was "White Guard" which was one of the most popular causes. How the case ended, was usually not recorded in the act but at the end of the protocol. Sometimes the documents taken away from the interrogated were enclosed to files. From the documents that

[83] South Group Rear Commissar's Guidelines to District Commissars on Searches, Arrests and Interrogations, RA, ERAF.28.3.71, 19–19v.

[84] August Anton, son of Mihkel, 22–24 April 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.172, 66–68.

[85] Juhan Lepp, 5–9 May 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.190, 125–127.

were confiscated from Allmann, the certificate of his service in Estonian national units of the Russian army in 1917 and in the Russian army prior to this were attached. The main data in the files of the Cheka are interrogation protocols. The protocol of 15 December does not explain how Ensign Aleksander Allmann, interrogated by the Cheka, fell to the hands of the Reds.[86] According to a reference book by Jaak Pihlak, Allmann became prisoner of war on 11 December.[87] According to the protocol, Aleksander was 19 years old, came from the Vahaste parish and his parents belonged to the merchants class. Allmann had served as a volunteer in the World War I from 1916 and had studied in a school of ensigns. In the era of Estonian national units of the Russian army he served in the 4th Estonian Regiment. In 1918 when the order was given to all previous officers to join the Estonian Army, Allmann joined the 4th Infantry Regiment in Narva on 26 November. When retreating to the village of Rannu, the soldiers under him scattered and Allmann was captured: "I came to realize that combating was pointless because the chance to win was gone." Without any serious arguments or references to laws, chekists Oskar Ellek and Eduard Otter sentenced Ensign Allmann to death as "a White Guard officer" after the interrogation on 15 December 1918.[88]

Allmann's case reflects quite a typical Cheka style trial recording – a scarcely completed act and an interrogation protocol ending in the written decision of the commission. The answers of the interrogated regarding their residence or earlier punishments (charges in the case of the acts of Chekists) were usually not checked with local governments. It would have been impossible in lots of cases because Bolsheviks never controlled the whole Estonian territory. However, there were exceptions. For example, the Cheka arrested a resident of Kooraste parish in the county of Võru for keeping hunting guns at home, after which they sent an inquiry to the local executive committee and they got an answer.[89] Typical of the

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[86] Aleksander Allmann, RA, ERAF.28.1.171, 219–224.

[87] Jaak Pihlak, *Eesti ohvitser – langenud Vabadussõjas* (Estonian Officer, Fallen in the War of Independence) (Viljandi: Viljandi Museum, 2020), 47.

[88] Aleksander Allmann, 219–224.

[89] Certificate of the Executive Committee of the Workers Council of Kooraste Parish, 16 January 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.183, 136.

Cheka, their materials unlike the materials of field courts, include search warrants. Collective community appeals were submitted to the Cheka whereas field courts mostly received appeals from families. The documents that are often part of the Estonian Army field court files, e.g. service sheets that were prepared at military admission committees upon conscription, could not be in the files of the Cheka for obvious reasons. In comparison with the field courts, the Cheka collected much less background information about defendants. Unlike field courts, a number of the Cheka cases dealt with the events of 1917–1918. For example, shoemaker Kolk, a deserter was judged to have betrayed the Reds in 1917 and participating in the activities of the Home Guard organisation *(Omakaitse*) in 1918 and was executed.[90]

Both, the field courts of the Estonian Army and the Cheka(s) were established in haste. Investigations could be performed by counter-intelligence or officers of the militia for field courts but it was never the case with the Cheka. In a legal sense, judging was done by amateurs on both sides. Unlike chekists, the field courts made their decisions at least to some extent on a legal basis. Field courts processed the cases for much longer than the Cheka. In field courts, it took weeks from arresting a suspect to interrogating and making a decision, whereas with the Cheka it only took a couple of days. Therefore, the files of field courts make much more informative sources for historians than the materials of the Cheka.

Penal Policy

A number of questions arise regarding the possible impact of both sides' *ad hoc* courts on soldiers. Did the penal policy have an impact on the fighting spirit of soldiers and motivate them as an external factor, creating background fear for conscripts? Did the field courts have much less to do with soldiers than the name might indicate? Maybe their main target were political adversaries among the civil population, as the previous studies have suggested? Maybe political dissidents prevented the emergence of social unity and weakened the will to fight?

[90] Johannes Kolk, RA, ERAF.28.1.185, 51–53.

Penal Policy of Field Courts Martial

According to legal scholar Marin Sedman, field courts martial were *ad hoc*-courts and on the basis of the first regulation of December 1918, the procedural legislation was seriously faulty. Sedman considered the regulation of 25 March 1919 to be more specific.[91] It was extremely scarce and declarative, targeting primarily the persons acting against the Republic of Estonia and the supporters of Bolsheviks. It was based on former Russian military law.[92] The regulation of 25 March did indeed regulate the work of field courts in a more specific way, specifying particular sections.[93] This regulation, though, left room for interpretation to field court judges.

In his master's thesis Taavi Minnik addressed the activity of field courts martial as an instrument for the Republic of Estonia to inflict the White Terror[94] but in his later and much more detailed article he draws the conclusion that back then, the activity of field courts did not conform to the military laws which were valid at the time.[95] His estimation was that in Estonia's field courts 284 people were sentenced to death – out of them 19% were war prisoners, 21% Estonian Army servicemen, 60% civilians. These figures must be viewed with caution. Minnik's data are based on the lists of decisions of the 2nd and 4th Infantry Regiments and extracts of decisions from the collection of the Headquarters of Tallinn Garrison. He used as examples the 52 field court files (51 files of the 2nd Regiment (51) and 1 file of the 6th Regiment), focusing only on death penalties.[96] Although Minnik's figures and references have errors and shortcomings, the overall figure and percentage of soldiers are probably fairly accurate.[97]

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[91] Marin Sedman, "Sõjakohtud ja Riigikohtu roll sõjakohtute süsteemis EV esimesel iseseisvusperioodil" (Courts Martial and the Role of State Court in the System of Courts Martial in the First Period of Independence of the Republic of Estonia), *Juridica* 9 (2019): 646.

[92] Meeting Protocols of Provisional Government, 5 December 1918, RA.ERA.31.1.8, 59–60.

[93] *Riigi Teataja*, 1919, 19, pp. 145–147.

[94] Minnik, " Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas" (Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence), 56–63.

[95] Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial," 108.

[96] *Ibid*., 103–104.

[97] Minnik's table lacks e.g. the persons sentenced to death in the 4th Infantry Regiment. The sources of the data on death sentences of several infantry regiment field courts are not known.

In Rosenthal's estimation (based on statistics, found in archives), the number of people who were sent to field courts with political charges was 554, out of whom 214 were sentenced to death.[98] The materials of the Court Chamber (court of appeal) include a report using the notion "political crimes" instead of "political charges". The summary of 1919 considered the following activities as "political crimes": an attempt to overthrow the state (250), working for adversaries and contributing to their armies (166), spying for enemy (38), voluntarily joining the opposing army (75) and anti-state agitation (25).[99] Whether classified as 'terror' or 'repressions', the number or list of victims suffering because of the penal policies of both sides, is not complete. In Minnik's first estimation, the number of victims of the Red Terror was over 600 people and the number of victims of the repressions of the Republic of Estonia during the whole period of the War of Independence was up to 800 people.[100] Later Minnik increased his estimated number of the victims of the Red Terror to 650–700 people.[101] Mihkelson in his earlier research suggested the number of victims of the Red Terror 512 people, out of whom 335 were executed in January 1919. Mihkelson asserted the existence of the White Terror but only relied on the article by Tiit Noormets in the magazine *Sõdur* (Soldier) in 1992.[102]

Rosenthal refers to a consolidated list of the military prosecutor's office which Minnik never used. The list includes the data on 1661 people who were prosecuted in field courts in 1919. [103] This source provides an opportunity to analyse other categories of punishment besides the death

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E.g. The Headquarters of Tallinn Garrison fund only includes the decisions of the field courts of the Naval Forces and Chief of Internal Security.

98 Rosenthal, *Kord ja kohus*, 73.

99 Report on Political Crime in the Republic of Estonia in 1919, RA, ERA.71.1.103, 101, 106.

100 Taavi Minnik, "Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas" (Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence) – *Eesti ajaloost 19.–20. sajandil: uurimusi historiograafiast, allikaõpetusest ja institutsioonidest* (On the History of Estonia in the 19th–20th Centuries: Studies on Historiography, Source Teaching and Institutions), compiled by Tõnu Tannberg, Eesti Ajalooarhiivi toimetised (Estonian Historical Archive Publications) = Acta et commentationes Archivi historici Estoniae 19 (26) (2012), 256, 264–265.

101 *Ibid.*, 248.

102 Mihkelson, "Punane terror," 68–69.

103 Alphabetical list of the persons, punished by courts martial, RA, ERA.3704.1.353.

penalty. The first comparison of the consolidated list and the court materials proves the validity of the data presented by the military prosecutor's office regarding names, dates, charges and decisions. From the total of over 1700 decisons in 1918–1920, nearly 300 are death sentences.[104] As a smaller share of decisions were made after the war, i.e. after 2 February 1920, the list of decisions and the final figures need further specification. A large number of field court files have not survived, and this makes the checking of figures complicated.

Based on the consolidated list of decisions by the military prosecutor's office, a selection has been made separately from the 2nd, 4th, 5th and the 6th Regiment field courts data and as a consolidated list. The 2nd Division creates confusion because the decisions of the 2nd Regiment Field Court have been erroneously presented in the consolidated data of the military prosecutor's office as the decisions of the 2nd Division Field Court decisions. Checking on single cases, it becomes obvious that lots of them were the decisions of the 2nd Regiment Field Court. There is a separate section on the consolidated chart of the military prosecutor's office on the 2nd Division Staff Field Court decisions – it is possible that some cases were the 2nd Division Field Court decisions from Tartu.[105]

The 884 decisions of the selected four regimental field courts make up nearly half of all the decisions on the list. Also a sufficient number of files of the mentioned four field courts have survived unlike in the case of all the others, enabling us to better check on the validity of the data and present sample cases.

The 2nd Regiment Field Court made 346 decisions according to the consolidated list. The majority of these date from the time period 22 December 1918 –2 April 1919. Only five decisions were made from September to November 1919. Among all the decisions, 122 death sentences were passed down and enforced, 114 acquittals were made and 108

[104] The list includes data on the persons taken to courts martial in 1918–1920. A detailed database of all the decisions of the list is being constructed by author.

[105] Eduard Bosch's Charge of Espionage, Murdering of a Guard and Escaping the Prison 1–23 January 1919, RA, ERA.518.1.263.

imprisonments or penalties of hard labour were enforced.[106] Minnik suggested the number of death sentences by the 2nd Regiment Field Courts was 94.[107] In one case, the penalty was a fine – 1000 marks for hiding a deserter and in one case reduction in rank from Ensign to Private. Only in 86 cases a defendant was a serviceman and the most common charge was evading military service, including leaving without permission, late return, deserting or defection. Some cases regarded insubordination, disobedience and inciting rebellion. Out of them 38 were executed, six were set free and the rest were charged with imprisonment of varied lengths or hard labour. In 260 cases, defendants were civilians and they were mostly charged with collaborating with the Bolsheviks or acting against the Republic of Estonia, including spying and agitation. Among the 2nd Regiment Field Court cases, there were criminal charges like theft, robbery, murder and smuggling.

The first recorded decision of the 4th Regiment Field Court was made on 6 January 1919. Among 135 decisions, the only exceptional cases were the prosecution of four spies and one spreader of rumours. A total of seven people were executed by court decision, out of whom three were not servicemen. 34 were acquitted and the rest were charged with imprisonment of various lengths or hard labour. No other decisions were made. At the beginning of 1920, about twenty more decisions were made and work continued till November of that year. After the 2 February 1920, 44 more decisions were made.[108]

The first decisions of the 5th Regiment Field Court were made on 11 February 1919 but unlike the other researched courts whose decisions were mostly made in the first three months of 1919, the 5th Regiment Field Court actively operated throughout the year 1919 and made 282 decisions.[109] It is possible that the regulations of 25 March 1919 were mostly ignored and the procedures relied on better understanding. In comparison with the other field courts, the penalties imposed were lenient indeed, including exceptional 5–20-day lock-ups while the most

[106] The List of Field Court Decisions in 1918–1920, RA, ERA.3704.1.353, 1–275.
[107] Minnik, "The Establishment of "Drumhead" Courts Martial," 103.
[108] The List of Field Court Decisions in 1918–1920, RA, ERA.3704.1.353, 1–275.
[109] *Ibid*., 4-275.

common length was 10 days. The other imprisonment penalties were also fairly lenient and thus, a number of the convicted were sentenced for months, not years. However, for the same charge, leaving the unit without permission, one defendant was sentenced a 10-day arrest (25 March), the other one four years of hard labour (on 2 May) and the third a three months arrest (4 May).[110] Nearly a tenth of all defendants were civilians. Very few death penalties were imposed – among nearly 300 decisions there were five. 59 defendants were acquitted.

The 5th Regiment Field Court stands out with its large number of all possible cases and imposed decisions which differ from the practices of the other field courts. Instead of imprisonment or hard labour, a number of defendants were simply expelled from the judicial district and in two cases the persons who had crossed the frontline, were sent back to Russia. At the same time, two such illegal "border crossers" (term used in the court decision) were sent to a prison camp on the island of Naissaar. Nearly 30 defendants turned out to be Red Army soldiers, and were sent to a military prison camp. The most weird was the investigation of the two persons who turned out to be tramps and they were expelled from the judicial district. Disciplinary offences were also an issue, e.g. leaving the guard post. Notably, the 5th Regiment Field Court decisions that the executions were either postponed till the end of war or the offence had been redeemed by valour in battle. The majority of the defendants were soldiers and the main offences were evading military service, leaving without permission and deserting. Holding trials continued after the war and decisions were made in 27 cases.

The earliest recorded decisions of the 6th Regiment Field Court were made on 5 January 1919. Out of the total of 121 decisions, 16 people were sentenced to death by firing squad and 29 were set free. Differently from the 4th Regiment Field Court, 13 cases had different solutions – eight defendants got disciplinary penalties (incl. one month imprisonment), in one case an officer was demoted to private, in three cases it was decided to retry the charges and in one case the defendant was rescued by a doctor's examination which identified a disease (the defendant's excuse had prob-

[110] 5th Regiment Field Court Decisions from 1919, RA, ERA.3704.1.353, 23.

ably been a health issue).[111] The court continued its work after the war, its last decisions were made in November 1920.

Misdemeanours going under disciplinary punishment (this term has been used on the list of court decisions) should not have really been under the jurisdiction of field courts. In the Russian army, the disciplinary offences which were not under the jurisdiction of courts, were punished by general internal rules of units and decisions were made by unit commanders. In general, the Estonian Army relied on the earlier rules of the Russian army in its actions and it is hard to understand why the 6th Regiment Field Court acted like this.

Table 1. 844 Decisions of the Four Field Courts Martial of the Estonian Armyin 1918–1920

Decisions	Death sentence	Acquittal	Prison/hard labour	Other punishment
2nd Regiment	122	114	108	2
4th Regiment	7	34	94	-
5th Regiment	5	59	152	66
6th Regiment	16	29	63	13
Total	150	236	417	81

The field courts of the 4th, 5th and 6th Regiments were mostly engaged in the cases of servicemen and the most common offence was evading military service or leaving without permission. The activity of the 2nd Regiment Field Court was quite different, as they mostly tried political offences. The three field courts operated most actively in the first half of 1919, till early April.

Regimental field courts often postponed enforcements of judgments till the end of war or offences were redeemed by valor on the battlefield. In both cases, the data need to be specified because they might help to answer several questions in the field of the severity of penal policy. It is also significant that the active operations of most field courts, including

[111] The List of the Decisions of Field Courts in 1918–1920, 2–275.

the 2nd Regiment Field Court which passed down the largest number of death sentences, had ended by the enforcement of the regulation of 25 March 1919. We can look at the problem from a different angle and admit that the activity of the field courts stopped abruptly in the first days of April and the only reason for that is obviously the regulation adopted on 25 March. Maybe with the new regulations, there was no longer any reason to continue a harsh line.

Considering the share of the decisions of the four field courts among all the decisions on the consolidated list, we can draw some general conclusions but there are still more questions than answers. If the regimental field courts were so different, then we should question the opinion that the penal policy of the Republic of Estonia was aimed at frightening or containing or even punishing the servicemen. The total of all decisions (884) included one fourth (236) of acquittals and less than a fifth (150) were sentenced to death. The death sentence was not mostly imposed on servicemen but on civilians whose number among nearly 900 defendants was about 300. Marko Tikka, a researcher of the Finnish Civil War, wrote on the basis of the materials from 12 courts (sample cases were from the field courts of Varkaus and Vyborg) that only 27% of suspects had been involved in a revolutionary movement. Nearly 40.6% of the convicts were acquitted and 13.4% were sentenced to death.[112]

The court decisions made after the war are a separate issue. About 100 decisions were made in the field courts of the three regiments in addition to the 884 decisions, mentioned in the previous passage. When the field courts martial of the Republic of Estonia operated so differently and only some imposed death sentences (in addition to the 2nd Regiment also the Field Court of Saaremaa), mostly the field courts dealt with civilians/political adversaries, then we cannot really speak about all field courts martial as instruments of a repressive policy.

[112] Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet*, 459–460.

Field Court Judges

A more detailed analysis of the judges might help to understand the reasons why some courts made harsher decisions than others. The compositions of courts are not included in the above consolidated lists and they can only be identified by researching single cases. The presiding judges of Estonia's field courts were officers who were appointed by commanders of units who had convened the court.

Penal Policy of the Cheka

The surviving materials of the Cheka of the Estonian Workers Commune from the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 are mostly decisions made on civilians. In half of the cases with over a hundred offenders were the servicemen of the Estonian Army, members of the Defence League or conscripts. A large share of work was dedicated to the events of the years 1917–1918, for researching the background, settling relations and frequently for retaliation. According to materials, the activity of the Cheka with its combating of illicit vodka makers, smugglers, landlords, clergymen and other 'former people' like policemen, makes for a sprawling impression. We also need to take into account the way the judges of the Cheka interpreted laws in 1918–1920. Marko Mihkelson has stated that the documents issued by the *ETK* Internal Affairs Directorate, only minimally covered the legal gap and in reality the local Chekas enjoyed unlimited power.[113] Minnik pointed out that the Red Terror lacked any legal basis whatsoever[114] Jekaterina Kobeleva studied the role of the Cheka in the process of Sovietization and according to her, under conditions of the Russian Civil War the situation was the same everywhere and there was no rule of war but rather subjective interpretation of law. This was the case in all the regions of Russia.[115]

[113] Mihkelson, "Punane terror," 26.

[114] Minnik, " Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas," 257.

[115] Ekaterina Kobeleva (Екатерина Кобелева), "Mesto i rol' organov ČK v processe stanovlenija Sovetskogo gosudarstva. 1918 – načalo 1922 gg.: na materialax Permskogo Prikam'ja"

On 4 December 1918, the first work meeting of Estonian chekists took place in Narva. Local commissions for combating counter-revolution operated in Narva (chairman Oskar Ellek), in the county of Viru (from 15 December in Rakvere, Juhan Hansing), in the county of Võru (from 16 December Otto Tiisler, from 16 January Villem Jaakson), in the county of Tartu (from 1 January 1919 Aleksander Kull) and the county of Pärnu (actually in the South of Viljandimaa, under the leadership of V. Busch). An attempt was made to establish a governing body and departments under it but the established Estonian Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, i.e. Estonian Cheka (chairman Eduard Ott) remained a merely formally operating organization which lost its meaning after the establishment of the Internal Affairs Directorate. On 17 January 1919, the Directorate of *ETK* dismissed Eduard Ott from the position of chairman. Mihkelson has stated that the work of the local Cheka was governed by a troika with its exclusive competence for executing searches and arrests and punishing offenders. The operations of the presidium were governed by its chairman.[116]

At the same time, administrative departments whose commissions for inquiry could be of overlapping competence, i.e. engaging in arresting suspects of counter-revolutionary and sanctioning searches seemed to have been parallelly operating. In the county of Võru the administrative department issued search warrants for the militia.[117] For setting free the person who had already been arrested by the local Cheka, a polite and reasoned application had to be submitted.[118] The Cheka did not see the administrative department as a subordinate authority. For example, the Cheka of Võru asked (not ordered) the local administrative department to notify them of all public gatherings in towns and in the

(Место и роль органов ЧК в процессе становления Советского государства. 1918 – начало 1922 гг.: на материалах Пермского Прикамья) (Candidate of Sciences Paper, Perm State University, 2005), 209.

[116] Mihkelson, "Punane terror," 22–26.

[117] The Warrant of the Administrative Department of the Executive Committee of the Municipality of Võru, 2 January 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.661, 11.

[118] The Investigation Commission of the Administrative Department of the Municipality of Võru to the Commission Combating Counter-Revolution, 25 January 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.191, 236.

Members of the Council of the Estonian Workers' Commune in 1919. First row, from the left: August Pihlap, Jaan Anvelt, Otto Rästas, Maks Trakmann and Karl Mühlberg. Second row: Hans Pöögelmann, Johannes Käspert and Artur Valner. RA, ERAF.2.1.553

countryside.[119] According to Andres Purri, head of Tartu information collection point of Estonian military intelligence, the administrative department of Tartu was working hand in hand with the local Cheka.[120] However, based on the research completed, it is impossible to make a final assessment of administrative departments.

According to the report of Tartu Cheka, the work of local Cheka was "hard." In the estimation of the chekists, the troika lacked the power which would enable them to carry out searches and arrests. In Tartu there was a plan to organize a 150-men strong defence group but they managed to find only 117 members.[121] Mihkelson was not certain whether the

[119] Võru Cheka to the Municipal Administrative Department, 26 January 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.661, 22.

[120] Memoirs of A. Purri, RA, ERA.2124.3.1041, 10.

[121] Report of Tartu Department of the Estonian Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, 1–14 January 1919, RA, ERAF.28.1.68, 5–11.

group participated in shootings but he considered it likely.[122] According to Purri, the searches, arrests and shootings in Tartu were carried out by a flying squad. He listed 40 names of the members of the squad.[123]

The Comparison of Penal Policies of the Two Sides

How should we assess the penal policies of both sides? One of the key questions is whether the penal policy was orchestrated by the central authorities. Rosenthal has called the penal policy which was enforced on the suspects of Bolshevism, repressions without using the term 'terror'.[124] Minnik has claimed that although the aims of both sides were the establishment of power, the repressions during the War of Independence and the rear violence were not controlled by the central governing authorities.[125] Jānis Šiliņš is of a different opinion, claiming that the Reds considered a strictly organised and controlled central system of terror a means of achieving prompt success. Šiliņš points out that the repressive system of Bolsheviks was used as a tool for changing society and ensuring the authority of their regime.[126] In his later research Minnik has stated that in the process of carrying out the Red Terror in 1918–1919, Estonian Bolsheviks copied the models of Soviet Russia, establishing commissions for combating counter-revolution as executors of terror. Minnik sees the violence against civilian population of chekists as a special operation and a part of military strategy.[127]

Nicolas Werth has emphasized that on 5 September 1918, the Soviet government legalized terror with its notorious decree "on the Red Ter-

[122] Mihkelson, "Punane terror," 27.

[123] Memoirs of A. Purri, 11.

[124] Reigo Rosenthal, "Eesti Vabadussõda" (Estonian War of Independence) – *Eesti sõjaajalugu. Valitud peatükke Vabadussõjast tänapäevani* (Estonian History of War. Selected Chapters from the War of Independence to Today), compiled by Tõnu Tannberg (Tartu: The University of Tartu Publishers, 2021), 109–110.

[125] Minnik, " Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas," 6.

[126] Jānis Šiliņš, "Padomju Latvijas militārā un politiskā attīstība (1918. gada decembris – 1919. gada jūnijs)" (doctoral thesis, Latvian University, 2011), 85.

[127] Minnik, " Kontrrevolutsiooni vastu võitlemise komisjonid," 66–67.

ror". The decree pronounced the decision to shoot without delay any person who was "a class enemy".[128] According to Minnik, the decree left room for interpretation, but administration of justice requires definitions which are as accurate as possible.[129] We can probably claim the same about the Estonian field courts martial – first they were permitted to work on the basis of the Russian military law but the 10 January regulation for field courts moved away from their initial field of activities. Indirectly, we could say the same about the Provisional Government regulation of the 5 December 1918 which left room for interpretation.

Warning of the General Public and the Awareness of Penal Policy

How or how much did the awareness of the so-called cautionary examples reach the general public? In the units of the Estonian Army where the field courts were operating, the soldiers had good knowledge of the decisions. On the other hand, they would not necessarily have reliable data on what was going on in other units. Civilians had even more scarce information. The main means of communicaton was probably the media. Too few publications of Bolsheviks have survived, therefore, we can analyse only the newspapers of the Republic of Estonia. It is obvious that the population had been warned about the field courts even before they were established. Namely, Prime Minister and Minister of War Konstantin Päts in his appeal which he signed on 1 December 1918 and which was published a couple of days later in newspapers, called the population to defend their homeland in peril. Päts threatened with field courts those who would rather not make "light sacrifices".[130] Threatening as such is still very different from executing threats. The fact that Päts was serious about dodgers and adversaries, became apparent after the establishment

[128] Nicolas Werth, "Country against People: Violence, Repressions and Terror in the USSR" – Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repressions (Tallinn: Varrak, 2000), 85.
[129] Minnik, " Kontrrevolutsiooni vastu võitlemise komisjonid," 55.
[130] "Decree of the Provisional Government on Defence of the Republic of Estonia," *Tallinna Päevaleht*, 3 December 1918, 2.

of field courts. Mari-Leen Tammela has written that it was common practice to publish the field court decisions in the newspapers.[131] The decisions would be published in the newspapers *Postimees, Waba Maa, Maaliit, Tallinna Teataja* and *Sotsiaaldemokraat*. From January to late March 1919, the newspapers mostly published the judgments regarding criminals and political adversaries. It was not only about the persons who had been sentenced to death. The punished servicemen were occasionally mentioned. Taking into consideration that each newspaper had its readership, the population's knowledge of field court activities depended on the regularity of published announcements in them. The newspapers did not publish announcements of judgments on a regular basis. For example, newspaper *Postimees* published them only three times in February and March 1919, at the peak of the field court activity. It is possible that newspapers wanted to be careful with publishing announcements. The published lists of deserters had sometimes been erroneous and therefore, *Postimees* wrote that the publishing of such announcements had occasionally been too hasty and it gave an example of the two servicemen who had denied the claim of them being on the list of deserters.[132]

Tammela wrote that General Aleksander Tõnisson was in favour of publishing the decisions of field courts.[133] The main standpoint of Colonel Jaan Soots, the Commander-in-Chief's Chief of Staff, representing the military high command, was that under extraordinary conditions, the newspapers had to support the Estonian Army will to defend the homeland and the commander-in-chief had to be entitled to ban with military censorship any articles of negative impact.[134] We are only sure about the standpoint of General Tõnisson. It is not known whether Soots considered the publication of field court decisions as an activity supporting the

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[131] Mari-Leen Tammela, "Ristilöödud töörahva nimekiri nr. 11 Eesti Asutava Kogu valimistel" (List no. 11 of the Crucified Working People in the Elections of the Constituent Assembly of Estonia) – *Vabadussõja mitu palet. Rahvusarhiivi toimetised* (Various Facets of the War of Independence. National Archive's Proceedings) = *Acta et Commentationes Archivi Nationalis Estoniae* 3 (34), compiled by Tõnu Tannberg (Tartu: National Archive, 2019), 441.

[132] "Väejooksikute nimekiri lohakalt kokku seatud" (List of Deserters Sloppily Put Together), *Postimees*, 21 March 1919, 3.

[133] Tammela, „Ristilöödud töörahva nimekiri," 441.

[134] War Time Censorship. J. Soots, before 27 February 1920, RA, ERA.495.10.23, 195–199.

will of the Estonian Army. Neither is it known whether the newspapers published only few decisions because they did not cross the news threshold or whether it was impeded by the military authorities.

In 1919, two prominent events for field courts martial took place – the Saaremaa Rebellion and the Mutiny in the Tartu Reserve Battalion. The covering of these two events could have been considered to be of cautionary character as there were more than four months between these two events. The rioters of Saaremaa were conscripts. The covering of the activities of that field courts in the first months could have been influenced by politicians because the elections of the Constituent Assembly were coming up in the second half of April. Informing the population of the punishment of murderers, makers of illicit vodka and perpetrators of incitement against the state suited political and military authorities. These cases were to be cautionary examples, a proof of the Republic of Estonia's capability of securing order on its own territory.

Conclusions and Summary

The field courts martial of the Republic of Estonia carried out penal policy in accordance with regulations of the Provisional Government and the instruction of the judicial administration. On the consolidated list of field court judgments, charges had been written as "desertion" or with a reference to a regulation, e,g, section 19-9, also a charge of desertion according to the regulation of 25 March [1919] of the Provisional Government. The instructions and regulations following the Provisional Government regulation of the 5 December 1918 offered more accurate definitions, leaving less room for interpretation. One of the most significant amendments of the law was the new definition of desertion – from 29 December 1918, deserters were all soldiers leaving their units without the commander's permission. In the Russian military law, deserters were the soldiers who had been away from their units without a permission for at least three days. As Estonian soldiers had become used to leaving their units in the Russian army without permission for a couple of days, it is possible that they continued with this habit in the Estonian Army. A lot

more important amendment to the old Russian laws was the instruction for field courts of the 10 January 1919, providing the hearing of the case even when the need for a more detailed investigation became apparent. No doubt, it was going away from the principles which defined the field of activities for field courts in the Russian law. On the other hand, it was not always possible to follow the Russian military law in the work of the field courts. Namely, according to the Russian law, only officers with the minimum of four years experience would qualify as field court judges. Due to a shortage of career officers in the Republic of Estonia, observing this law would have been impossible. The activity of the field courts as well as of the Cheka very much depended on the local circumstances and the personalities of individual judges.

The main difference between the field courts martial and the Chekas as extraordinary *ad hoc* courts was that when the field courts had to follow the former Russian military laws, then the only basis of the activities of the Chekas was the decree legitimating the Red Terror. In the Republic of Estonia, the society was gradually moving toward more specified responsibilities of extraordinary courts.

Insufficient competence of judges or the lack of books of Russian law help us to understand *why* the administration of justice in field courts may have been faulty. The comparative analyses of the activity of single field courts questions the existence of a uniformly implemented penal policy in the Republic of Estonia. Penal policies of both opposing sides are similar in the sense that in field courts as well as in the Cheka, more severe punishments fell more often on the political adversaries. Nearly one third of all the persons sentenced to death by Estonian field courts, received capital punishment after being charged with participation in one of the two largest riots or in their organization. The rioters of Saaremaa were conscripts who performed armed resistance to the representatives of state power during martial law. In the case of the mutiny in Tartu Reserve Battalion, the servicemen who were under training, were executed.

The chekists became infamous with their executions in Tartu, Rakvere and Valga where the number of servicemen among the victims was very small. In general, more severe punishments fell on civilians on both sides ca 60% of the persons sentenced to death in field courts were civilians.

The research shows that the Bolsheviks sent the servicemen who had fallen into their hands, to serve in the Red Army due to its shortage of soldiers. This explains why in half of the cases the backgrounds of suspects were hardly studied. Another larger difference was in the approach of the two institutions to preliminary investigation – when in field courts there were shortcomings in the investigations prior to decision-making, then the Cheka hardly ever bothered with preliminary investigations.

It is hard to evaluate unambigiously the impact of the field court decisions on servicemen, separately from the whole society but also various control mechanisms and mechanisms for ensuring internal order. We should not rule out the option that the general public's awareness of the penal policy of the field courts was rather scarce. We can claim that the penal policy implemented in the field courts of the Republic of Estonia had two aims – to strengthen military discipline and to hinder the activities of the Bolsheviks and to limit the spreading of Bolshevist ideas among the Estonian soldiers. In order to establish its authority and order, both courses of action were crucial to a young republic. The Russian military laws which formed the basis for the operations of the field courts, were observed to a smaller or larger degree, according to the circumstances. The penal policy of the Cheka aimed at punishing civilian as well as military 'class enemies'. In the Estonian War of Independence, the main victims of the penal policy of the Cheka were the men who had served in the Estonian Army and the Defence League. The former Russian military laws were never observed by the chekists.

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The White and Red Terror in the Eastern Part of Viru County in 1917–1919

Ants Jürman

From 1917 to 1919, terror against political enemies was used by the Bolsheviks, the German occupation authorities, the Commune of the Working People of Estonia that acted as a puppet government for Soviet Russia, and also by the young Republic of Estonia, as they tried to protect their rule. Compared to the rest of Estonia, the eastern parts of Viru County, especially Narva and Jaanilinn, are notable for a relatively higher number of victims. Estonians constituted the majority of the victims of the terror from both sides, but less is known about the fact that many Finnish members of the Red Guards were among those who fell when the Estonian Army and the Finnish volunteers liberated the city of Narva in January 1919.

Introduction and Aims

As a counterweight to the establishment of the Baltic Duchy with the support of the German Empire in April 1918, Arthur Balfour, the foreign minister of Great Britain, the opposing side, declared the Estonian Diet (*Maapäev*) *de facto* the only legitimate representative of the Estonian people in May 1918.[1] The first international recognition of Estonia (in the spring of 1917, the Governorate of Estonia and the Estonian areas of the Governorate of Livonia merged into one Governorate of Estonia) at the government level took place on 8 December 1918 when Soviet Russia recognized Estonia as the Commune of the Working People

[1] See Estonian Diet Protocol No 61, Appendix No 6, Response of the British Government on 8 May 1918 – *Maanõukogu protokollid 1917–1919, 1. koosolekust 1. juulil 1917 78. koosolekuni 6. veebruaril 1919* (Estonian Diet Protocols 1917–1919, from the 1st meeting on 1 July 1917 to the 78th meeting on 6 February 1919) (Tallinn: s.n., 1935), 295.

of Estonia (*ETK = Eesti Töörahva Kommuun*). It is interesting that the first territorial conflict of the *ETK* broke out about ten days later in the town of Walk (Valga and Valka today) with the newly proclaimed Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia due to the fact that the Latvian riflemen battalions invaded the territory of Estonia which the *ETK* considered to be its own.

The concept of terror as part of the politics of violence also includes state violence against its citizens. As it is unclear within which borders Soviet Russia recognized the *ETK,* we can reduce the area we are going to analyse to a smaller region than a state. The district of Alutaguse in the county of Rakvere included four parishes (Vaivara, Lüganuse, Jõhvi and Iisaku). Under tsarist Russia, Narva was part of Saint Petersburg Governorate (but at the same time, Narva was subject to Baltic provincial law like the Baltic governorates). In July 1917, a referendum on joining the Governorate of Estonia was carried out in the territories of Narva and Ivangorod (Jaanilinn). In Narva a majority was in favour but in Ivangorod against; as the population of Narva was larger than Ivangorod, then the referendum resulted in the decision to join. The Chairman of the City Council of Narva, Ansis Daumanis (1885–1920; perished in the Soviet-Polish war) then sent a letter to the Council of People's Commissars of Russia whose chairman Vladimir Uljanov recognised it with a document, signed by him on 16 November. Narva and Ivangorod became parts of the Governorate of Estonia. The twin cities of Narva-Jaanilinn saw the bloodiest terror in Estonia during 1918–1920.[2]

Apart from the newspaper articles published within a hundred years on the terrorist acts committed in the regions of Alutaguse and Narva, these acts have hardly been mentioned in the publications of historians. E.g. a book by Arved Palgi, published in 1936,[3] a study of the White Ter-

[2] The article covers the events in the parishes of Vaivara, Lüganuse, Jõhvi and Iisaku and in Narva and Ivangorod. Therefore, one of the largest-scale mass murders of Viru County in the forest of Palermo near Rakvere is not covered. However, a resident of Tudulinn (parish of Iisaku) is on the list of the executed in Rakvere. *Author's note.*

[3] Arved Palgi, *Enamlaste võimulolemine Rakveres ja Rakvere vabastamine* (The Rule of Bolsheviks in Rakvere and the Liberation of Rakvere) (Rakvere muuseumi seltsi kirjastus: Rakvere, 1936).

Victims of the Red Terror in Palermo forest near Rakvere after exhumation on 17 January 1919. RA, EFA.257.A.288.363

ror by Paul Vihalem in 1961[4] and Taavi Minnik's unfinished manuscript "Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence in 1918–1920" (2016).[5] The latter is the only publication which studies both, the White and the Red Terror, it contains a number of references to various authors but its work with archival materials is incomplete. For example, the number of the victims of the Red as well as the White Terror has been pointed out but it is unclear what the sources of information are.

This article was mostly finished by the end of 2019. Later, the White and the Red Terror were studied in the two-volume collection The History of the Estonian War of Independence, published in 2020.[6]

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[4] Paul Vihalem, *Valge terror Eestis aastail 1918–1919* (The White Terror in Estonia in 1918–1919), Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli Toimetised (Tartu State University Transactions) 110 (Tartu: Tartu Riiklik Ülikool, 1961).

[5] Taavi Minnik, " Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas (1918–1920)" (Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920)) (manuscript, Tallinn University, 2016).

[6] *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu*, I, *Vabadussõja eellugu: Punaväe sissetung ja Eesti vabastamine* (The History of the Estonian War of Independence, vol. 1, Invasion of the Red Army and the

The author of this article has set the following goals:

1) describing and comparing the terrorist acts committed in the eastern part of Viru County with those committed in the civil wars of Finland (1918) and Russia (1918–1922);
2) finding out as many names of the perished as possible and the causes of their slaughter, leaving open the research on those whose cases lack archival materials;
3) identifying who initiated the terror outside military action.

Terrorist Incidents in 1917–1919

Unlike in the counties of Harju and Lääne, no manors were burnt down in the eastern part of Viru County during the 1905 Russia's revolution. Looting on the largest scale took place in the manor of Maidla, followed by some shootings by punishment squads. The victims had never participated in the looting.[7] After that, by local standards, the people were able to lead fairly peaceful lives until the Bolshevist seizure of power in November 1917 when the Estonia's War and Revolutionary Committee (*SRK= Sõja-Revolutsioonikomitee)* which had been set up for seizing power in the governorate, set its goal to take over the property of landlords. On 10 December, a four-man strong group of Tallinn Red Guard was sent to the manor of Püssi. Count Stackelberg[8] found out about it and sent a request for help to the 4th Estonian Infantry Regiment in Rakvere whose forma-

Liberation of Estonia), written by Peeter Kaasik, Lauri Vahtre, Urmas Salo a.o, maps compiled by Reigo Rosenthal, compiled and edited by Lauri Vahtre (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020), 201–203, 506–511.

7 Helmut Joonuks, *Alutaguse* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1969), 31.

8 Manor of Püssi (in German: Neu-Isenhof) was the majorat estate (i.e. it was inherited as a whole to owner's eldest son) of the branch of Püssi of the large Stackelberg family. By the fideicommissum signed in 1876, the estate comprised the manors of Püssi, Purtse, Hirmuse, Voorepere, Kohtla and Ereda. The manor of Püssi was bought by the Stackelbergs in 1732. Probably it was Count Otto Magnus Ernst Konstantin Stackelberg (1885–1945) who inherited the estate from his childless uncle Gustav Ernst Magnus (1840–1919) (*Genealogisches Handbuch der estländischen Ritterschaft*, I, compiled by. O. M. v. Stackelberg (Görlitz: Starke, 1931), 291–292; Kinnistute register, Rahvusarhiiv (Land Register, National Archive), www.ra.ee/apps/kinnistud/, Püssi Lüganuse parish 20.01.2023). *Editor's note.*

tion had begun a couple of days earlier under the leadesrhip of Captain Hendrik Vahtramäe, the grand uncle of the author of this study. In June 1917 he had relocated from the 14th Siberian Rifle Regiment to Estonian national units and been appointed Commander of the 4th Infantry Regiment, formed in December of the same year.[9] The Regiment included servicemen of various world views but the command never took the side of the War and Revolutionary Committee (at the beginning of 1941 when the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs arrested him, this was one of the few solid charges according to the interrogation protocol[10]) and a section of soldiers was sent to help the landlord. In the following shooting three Red Guard soldiers were killed: **Mihkel Aitsam, Jüri Kalmus and Rudolf Imberg**. The only person who managed to make it back to Tallinn was Karl Roots. According to the left-wing media "... shooters, the seven brothers Kursells (the Baron and his family),[11] some landlords from the neighbourhood and Estonian soldiers – about 18 to 20 men in total, got in a vehicle which had been waiting for them and left immediately... Some of the murderers have been imprisoned. The counter-revolutionaries who had been caught before, were also brought to Tallinn."[12] The revolutionary tribunal sentenced the murderers to ten years in prison. The decision of the revolutionary tribunal of Tallinn regarding landlords Kursells, Baron Stackelberg and others is quite bizarre, as Stackelberg was not given any punishment. The workers of Dvigatel Machine Plant and Peter's shipyard protested against it.[13] To our knowledge, it was the only slaughter in the period under review, until the signing of Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty in March 1918, after which Soviet Russia ceded to the military authorities of imperial Germany all parts of the Governorates of Estonia and Livonia

[9] Vahtramäe, Heinrich son of Jaak, Rahvusarhiiv (National Archive, henceforth RA), ERA.495.7.6415, 7v.

[10] Vahtermägi, Heinrich Jaak, RA, ERAF.129SM.1.5186-1.

[11] Alexander von Kursell (1854–1918) had bought the manor of Erra in 1887. He had eight sons. (*Genealogisches Handbuch der estländischen Ritterschaft*, I, 126–127; Kinnistute register, Rahvusarhiiv, www.ra.ee/apps/kinnistud/, Erra Lüganuse parish, 20.01.2023). *Editor's note.*

[12] "Wasturevolutsioon organiseerib tapmisi" (Counter-Revolution is Organizing Killing), *Eesti Teataja* No 19, 14 December 1917, 3.

[13] *Nelikümmend aastat Oktoobrirevolutsioonist Eestis* (Forty Years from the October Revolution in Estonia), ed. by Joosep Saat (Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia, 1958), 77.

Lieutenant Colonel Hendrik Vahtramäe (1886–1941) in 1919. RA, ERA.495.7.6415.1.1

and a small area between Ivangorod and the village of Dubrovka which had been under its rule.

The German troops arrived in Iisaku, one of the largest villages of Alutaguse, on 4 March 1918. The Red leaders of Iisaku had tried to regain power before the arrival of Germans in Tudulinna, a village just 17 km away through the woods and they had reached the verge of the village. The local Defence League fighters had set up a guard and a battle broke out where the Reds of Iisaku lost one man killed and two wounded and they had to retreat. The furious commander of the squad – a railway worker and chairman of the Council of Working People's Deputies **Karl-Eduard Peep** went to seek help in Jõhvi. Halfway there, he ran into his old foe from the municipal council **Hiiob Koppel** whom he shot dead during the following quarrel. He was too late for Jõhvi because the Germans had seized it already. The local people recognized Peep and they handed him over to the representatives of the German army. The same day, he was taken to the manor of Edise and shot dead. On the same day, the farmhands of Tärivere handed over to the Germans the Red Guard

fighter **Rempel** who had been sent there from Tallinn. Just the day before he had wanted to take away the grain crop of the manor and had he set on fire the grain storage which the farmhands managed to put out.[14] The three other Council of Working People's Deputies members did no better. Obviously, the in-coming Germans did not know the local people but there were "active" persons available (allegedly the family of Reinhold Sabolotny, Deputy Commander of the Armoured Train No 1),[15] who notified them of the leading figures of the Red power in the municipality. **Mihkel Käosaar, Tanel Surav and Tanel Tamme** were caught. It took a bit longer before they were killed. They were detained for two nights and then a horror show was set up for the local people. One of the last, Oskar Surva, described the events of the 6 March as follows: "[---] the school stopped, [---] it made an even more horrible scene the following day. 3 men had been caught – Käosaar,[16] Surav and Tamme. They were sentenced to hanging. All schoolchildren who were present and their teacher were made to line up and we all walked to the woods, after the prisoners, with officers at the end of the column. It was supposed to be particularly educating for the children. The moment of hanging made a few children scream. I myself could not get rid of this terrible image for months."[17]

The members of Iisaku Council of Working People's Deputies were not the first victims in this region. On 24 February 1918, a five-man strong squad tried to organise an armed takeover of power from the withdrawing Reds. As the Red Guard possessed greater forces, they were arrested and put on the last train leaving for the East. The next morning the train arrived at Jõhvi railway station where the Red sailors insisted on the handing over of the schoolboy **F. Silberstern**, the brother of the landlord of Vaeküla manor **Karl von Schubert** and a schoolteacher **Tiido Jõesaar**. About twenty steps away from the railway, Silberstern, Schubert

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[14] Anne Nurgamaa, *Iisaku vald läbi aegade (*Iisaku Parish through Time) (Iisaku: Iisaku Kihelkonna Muuseum, 2016), 94.

[15] The claim comes from the local history researchers. *Author's note*.

[16] According to the personal church register of Iisaku congregation Mihkel Käosaar (1866–1918) was hanged on 14 March for his participation in the murder of Hiiob Koppel. Personal church register XII (Iisaku, Pootsiku, Tärivere), RA, EAA.1225.1.208, 186. *Editor's note.*

[17] Nurgamaa, 94.

Killed members of the Red Guard near the Tapa railway station. 10 January 1919. RA, EFA.114.0.50431

and Tiido Jõesaar were shot dead, shoolboys P. Erna and A. Leiberg and Lieutenant Laasi together with P. Pajos were taken to Narva.[18, 19]

On 27 February, a conflict broke out near Sompa railway station between a German unit and a twenty-man strong Red Guard squad of the workers of Narva and Petrograd. The exchange of fire lasted until the Red Guard ran out of ammunition. **12 combatants** were imprisoned and taken to Rakvere by train. The next day, they were hanged on the trees next to the railway station in front of the townsfolk.[20]

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[18] Palgi, 48–53.

[19] Together with Võsu school headmaster Tiido Jõesaar (1879–1918) from Mäetaguse, on 27 February three more men from the same neighbourhood were shot dead in Jõhvi: the brother of Laviko farm (Palmse parish) owner **Gustav Grönholm** (1880–1918), a student of Käsmu Maritime School **Willem Talpsepp** (1899–1918) from Palmse, and Head of Palmse Rural Municipality **Johannes Kaldenberg** (1869–1918) from Sagadi. On 11 March they were buried in the cemetery of Ilumäe. See " Hukatud Palmse mehed" (Executed Men of Palmse), *Postimees*, 13 April 1929, 1; "Von der roten Garde ermordet in Jewe", auxiliary congregation of Ilumäe, list of the deceased 1892–1926, RA, EAA.1227.1.128 (unpaginated). *Editor's note.*

[20] "Millest jutustab mälestuskivi Rakvere jaama juures?" (What is the Monument next to Rakvere Station Telling us about?), *Punane Täht* No 2, 23 February 1965, 1.

On 11 November 1918, the World War I ended. Imperial Germany ended up on the side of the defeated, the emperor was overthrown and according to the Armistice of Compiègne, Germany had to withdraw its troops from the governorates of Petrograd and Estonia. Some presence of German troops continued in the governorates of Livonia and Curland. In Narva, power was taken by Council of (German) Soldiers (*Soldatenrat*) on 15 November. A week later, 22 November, the Red Army of the Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic (the country's official name since July 1918) made its first attempt to advance from Dubrovka towards Ivangorod but was defeated by the better armed German troops. Soon, the Germans began to withdraw from Estonia. The Red Army 2nd Rifle Regiment of Viljandi and the 3rd Rifle Regiment of Tartu, which had been formed in Jamburg and Petrograd, and the 46th Rifle Regiment (the successor of the 4th Workers Regiment of Narva formed in the autumn of 1917) together with the landing unit of Baltic Fleet sailors – the total of ca 4000 men – began a new offensive six days later, in the early hours of 28 November. They were facing the German 405th Infantry Regiment (1800 men), a battalion of Estonian 4th Infantry Regiment (80 men) and Narva schoolboys, members of the Defence League (100 men). The German troops, the Defence League fighters and the 4th Estonian Regiment combatants started to withdraw from Narva.

Before leaving the town, the Germans destroyed some civil structures. By 3 p.m. the units which had been defending Ivangorod, made it to the Estonian side bank of Narva River and all three bridges of Narva River were blown up. By midday, a couple of hours earlier, a battle in the field of Joala had ended.[21] During the Soviet period beginning with 1944, the estimated number of casualties were 83 combatants of Viljandi Rifle Regiment, today the estimated number of the fallen is larger.[22] However, not all the riflemen were killed in action. The wounded whom the Viljandi Regi-

[21] Today on the southern verge of Narva and partly under Narva Reservoir built in the 1950s. *Editor's note*.

[22] Ilja Davydov, " Mõned täiendused Joala väljal 28. novembril 1918 langenud punaväelaste ümbematmise loo juurde" (Some Additional Notes to the Story of the Reburial of the Red

ment soldiers were unable to take along when retreating, were killed with bayonets or according to some sources, even by crushing their heads, and the better clothes and footwear of the victims were robbed – all in contravention of the Hague 4th Convention. Germans had treated the wounded of the opposite side, the Red Guard, in the same way in the battle of Keila near Tallinn on 23 February 1918. After the battle, the wounded were killed with bayonets and the nine taken prisoners were shot dead the next day. To our knowledge, the only prisoner who was taken along by the retreating soldiers, was squad commander Jaan (Ivan) Utter.[23]

The next day, 29 November, the Commune of the Working People of Estonia was proclaimed in Narva Alexander Church. However, the next day, the Defence League fighters arrested the former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County **Aleksander Kippar** and his brother **Adolf Kippar**.[24] On 1 December they were both shot dead (according to some sources, during an escape attempt). Two days later, the leaders of the Commune Jaan Anvelt, Johannes Mägi, Hans Pöögelmann and Artur Vallner issued the instruction for combating the "counter-revolutionary element".[25] On 4 December, the fallen Red Guard soldiers were buried in the Pimeaed Park of Narva and the next day, arrests began on both sides of the river.

On 5 December, **Leopold Linder** (1896–1919), an electrician from the Aseri Cement Factory and a former Head of Department of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County was arrested at the railway station of Lehtse and taken to a prison camp in Tallinn after he had been turned in by the owner of Aseri manor.[26] He

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Army Soldiers who Fell in the Field of Joala on 28 November 1918), *Narva muuseumi toimetised* (Narva Museum transactions) 19 (2018), 61.

[23] Viljandi Rifle Regiment Orders, 24 December 1918, RA, ERAF.4907.1.73.

[24] Vihalem, 26; Aleksander (1892–1918) and Adolf (1888–1918) Kippar from Voka municipality were shot dead on 1 December and buried in Illuka. Personal church register XVIII (1910–1928) of Jõhvi congregation , RA, EAA.1226.1.318, 68. *Editor's note.*

[25] Palgi, 59–61.

[26] Mari-Leen Tammela, "Ristilöödud töörahva nimekiri nr 11 Eesti Asutava Kogu valimistel" (List No11 of Candidates of Crucified Workers in the Election of the Estonian Constituent Assembly), *Vabadussoja mitu palet: Soda ja uhiskond aastatel 1918–1920 (Facets of the War of Independence: War and Society in 1918–1920)*, Rahvusarhiivi toimetised (National Archives

German soldiers together with local people in Narva (1918). RA, EFA.114.2.227

was kept in the camp for about three weeks. In the morning of 1 January he was summoned out of his cell. First, prosecutor Jaan Teemant hit him over head with the butt of a pistol, according to his cellmate, whose words were published in the newspaper *Punane Virumaa* 22 years later,[27] after that two gunmen dragged him away and killed him with two shots.

On 7 December, the combatants of Gdov Detachment and the Red Army 3rd Finnish Rifle Regiment 2nd Battalion came across the river from the village of Skamja near Vasknarva. A group of combatants of the Defence League of Iisaku, Tudulinna and Illuka had gathered in Vasknarva. Fighting broke out, the forces were unequal and the men of Alutaguse were forced to retreat. Five men from Iisaku fell, **Rudolf Kreenmann** fell prisoner to the enemy and the following day he was killed near the village of Jaamaküla (today Jaama near Vasknarva).[28]

Transactions) = Acta et commentationes archivi nationalis estoniae 3 (34), ed.by Tõnu Tannberg (Tartu: Rahvusarhiiv 2019), 436.

[27] "Langenud seltsimehi mälestades" (Commemorating the Fallen Comrades), *Punane Virumaa*, 4 January 1941, 5.

[28] Rudolf Kreenmann (1885–1918) was shot dead on 9 December 1918. XII Personal church register (1899–1927) of Iisaku congregation, RA.EAA.1225.1.208, 51. *Editor's note.*

One unresolved massacre took place on 6 December in the village of Pootsiku near Iisaku. 20 years later newspaper *Postimees* wrote about it as follows: "In the evening of 6 December, one of these bands of robbers was on the move in the village of Nurme within the parish of Iisaku. For some reason, the Reds seemed to be particularly keen on the farm of Olka in the village of Nurme, probably expecting to acquire a larger amount of wealth. We still lack the details of this nocturnal tragedy because no accomplices were ever caught. After the Reds had left, the neighbours went to Olka farm where they witnessed a horrendous scene. The outer doors had been smashed from outside, everything in the house had been messed up, the whole family had been slaughtered, including farm owner Eduard Olka 37 years of age, his mother Triinu Olka, his wife Anna Elisabet and their two children Meinhard Woldemar and Hermann, the latter only 7 years old."[29, 30]

This written record is a bit confusing or rather semi-propagandistic and it is not absolutely clear that the culprits were the Red Army soldiers. First, according to the war announcements of 14 December 1918 by the 6th Army of the Red Army, the units arrived at the village of Katase (ca 10 km from Pootsiku toward Narva River) only the following day, 13 December and instead of Jõhvi as mentioned in the newspaper, the Red riflemen and the sailors were located much further to the East, somewhere between Vaivara and Oru. Secondly, on 2 December, four civilians judged guilty of looting, were shot dead in Narva by the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia (see below: *ETK* list No 1–4). It is possible that this made the robbers to flee Narva for the West.

A week later, on 16 December the fighters of the Red riflemen regiments of Tallinn and Tartu entered Rakvere. Among the prisoners taken was a resident of Tudulinna – nurse **Rudolf Roost**, the date of whose

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[29] "Punase terrori päewad Wirumaal" (Days of the Red Terror in Viru County), *Postimees No* 10, 11 January 1939, 5.

[30] According to the XII personal church register (1899–1927) of Iisaku congregation the murder took place on 12 December. Anna Elisabeth Olka was 34 years old, son Meinhard Woldemar was 10 years old and son Hermann was 7 years old. The youngest, two-year old Gerda survived. RA.EAA.1225.1.208, 121–122. *Editor's note.*

Members of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County in 1918. From the left: Leopold Linder, Aleksander Kippar, Aleksander Grauberg. RA, ERAF.2.1.1443.1

execution is unknown,[31] neither is it known whether he was a civilian or a military nurse and how he ended up being a prisoner.

A day later, the combatants of Viljandi Riflemen Regiment who had been guarding the prison of Joa, were sent to Narva front, whereas in Narva the executions had already started under the leadership of the Commune.[32] The shootings took place on 16 different days, out of them ten in December and six in January. The first to face the shooting on 2 December were four persons judged guilty of looting and one "White officer" **Johannes Jun**; two days later **Mart Tamm** was found guilty of spying and killed; five days later, two riflemen of Viljandi Rifle Regiment **Oskar Lund** and **Teodor Elberg** were killed for deserting.

[31] Rudolf Roost (1896–1919) was killed in January according to the personal church register XIIIa (1900–1926) of Iisaku congregation. RA, EAA.1225.1.210, 182. *Editor's note.*

[32] Lists of prisoners of Narva Department of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, RA, ERAF.28.1.628.

In the same decree, 13 Red Army soldiers were found guilty escaping and expelled from the regiment. So, upon catching they could be court-martialed.[33] The same day, another Red Army soldier **Albert Mäe,** was executed, his unit is unknown. On 19 December, six Estonian Army soldiers were executed (see below the list No 13–18). The rest of the victims of the Red Army, identified by the commission investigating the crimes of Bolsheviks, were civilians. On the last day of executions on 13 January 1919, the only person shot was **Olga Snitkina** – for stealing the personal belongings from fallen Red Army soldiers in the battle of 28 November 1918.

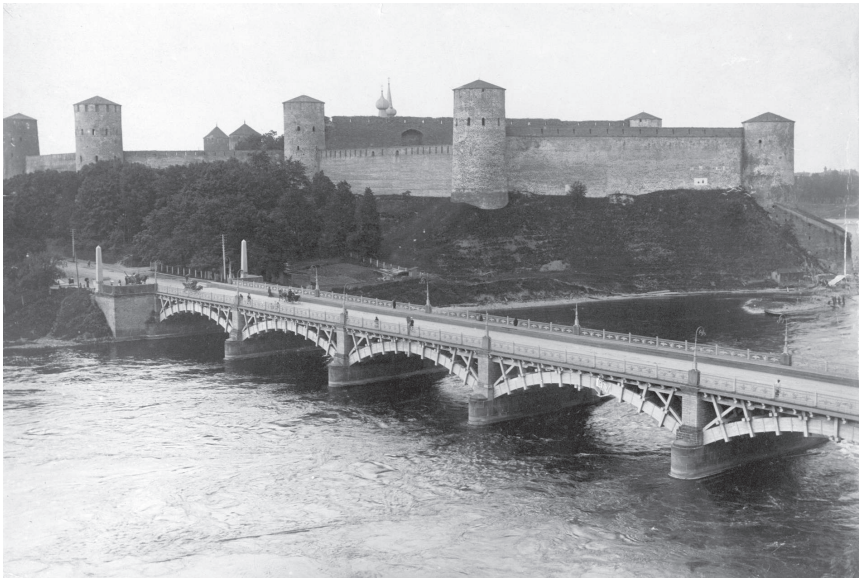
Executions were organised by the chief of the prison Madis Jõgi and his deputy Vladimir Kataev, the decision was signed by Oskar Ellek, head of Narva Department of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution (the Cheka). In addition to the prison on the western bank, the detainees were also kept in the fortress of Ivangorod on the opposite bank of Narva River where the conditions were a bit better.

Below is the list, put together by the Estonian Provisional Government commission for investigating the crimes committed by Bolsheviks[34] of the residents of Narva and Ivangorod, executed by the Commune, whose corpses were identified.

> 1. Ivan Olnov, 2. Pavel Svedov, 3. Karel Landing, 4. Leopold Pruul, 5. Aado Välja, 6. Oskar Lund (Viljandi Regiment riflemen), 7.Albert Mäe (Red Army soldier), 8. Theodor Eiberg (Viljandi Regiment riflemen), 9. Konstantin Savi, 10. Kristjan Lallo, 11. Grigori Simonenko, 12. Pavel Belykh, 13. Johannes Telling (officer of the Estonian Army), 14. Aleksander Ahlmann, 15. Joosep Siimann, 16. Karl Bauer, 17. Gustav Kull, and 18. Julius Treimann (all six were soldiers of the Estonian Army), 19. Peeter Kusnets, 20. Nikolai Yeemelyanov, 21. Jaan Ilves, 22. Moischa Herschkowitsch, 23. Albert Kerno, 24. Villem Lukken, 25. Eduard Peterson, 26. Ants Epro, 27. Mart Tamm, 28. Voldemar Korsnik, 29. Daniel

[33] Orders of Viljandi Rifle Regiment, 10 December 1918, RA, ERAF.4907.1.73.

[34] Materials on the people executed for political reasons and requisitioning of property during the era of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia, presented by local governments, RA, ERA.495.10.110.



A view to Ivangorod (Jaanilinn) from Narva in 1913. Photo by Johannes Pääsuke. Estonian National Museum, ERM Fk 214:6

> Valgepea, 30. Johannes Mitri, 31. Adolf Schmiedehelm, 32. Karl Puusepp, 33. Eduard Pent.

The name of Karl Miller has been left out because he allegedly managed to escape while being taken to be executed; at the same time, the name of Albert Mäe is not on the list of the executed for deserting the riflemen regiment. In addition, there were people who were reported missing or whose corpses were found elsewhere from the original burial site.These people were not included on the list of hostages either:

> 34. August Trall, 35. Theodor Gorsanov, 36. Vjačeslav Rimski-Korsakov (16-year-old combatant of the Defence League), 37. Leena Reinfeldt, 38. Johanna Reinfeldt, 39. Anton Steinberg, 40. Dmitri Čistoserdov (a priest), 41. Volkov (a priest), Johannes Miller, Kristine Prunes.

When comparing the lists of the executed compiled by the Commune and the Estonian Provisional Government commission, it is important to pay attention to the realisation of the latter that all the corpses had not been

identified. Some discrepancies: the names of Johannes Miller (42) and Kristine Prunes (43) are not on the Commune's list. There are 15 more names who have been marked as executed on the Commune's list including the dates of execution:

> 1. Johannes Jun (White Guard officer), 2. Nikolai Vilipson, 3. Johan Nurk, 4. August Trall, 5. Ernst Rosit, 6. Alats, 7. Robert Prink, 8. Lauri Pesonen, 9. Martin Karutamm, 10. Hugo Pahmann, 11. August Toom, 12. Julia Tamberg, 13. Johannes Reinfeld, 14. Aleksander Volkov (all seven were registered as White Guard soldiers), 15. Liisa Podaletski.

Although Alexander Volkov (No 14) has been marked as a White Guard soldier on the Commune's list, he was probably the above-mentioned priest (no 41).

According to the Finnish database of war deaths,[35] Lauri Pesonen (No 8 on the list) probably died from the wounds he got in Narva on 18 January 1919 and was not executed on 12 January. The Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat published a memorial article on him on 5 February 1919: "[---] still the Reds managed to wound two young soldiers so that the second who was physically weaker, was incapable of taking his comapanion with him and went for help in a company further away. Meanwhile, the Red bandits had seized the wounded man, dragged him along to Narva where he was found dead a couple of days later. A victim of this kind of death turned out to be a lyceum [high school] student Lauri Immanuel Pesonen."

Let us add some unofficial data from the memoirs of Mrs Veera Davidenkova (Davydenkova), a teacher of the Municipal Gymnasium (High School) of Narva. She wrote about 26 January 1919 that a total of 35 corpses had been taken out of the nightman's hole (corpses of the executed had been thrown to the hole where the latrines of Narva were emptied), thus, the difference in data is very small.[36]

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[35] Sotasurmasampo 1914–1922. Portaali Suomeen liittyviin sotatapahtumiin vuosina 1914–1922 (WarVictimSampo 1914–1922. A semantic portal about war events related to Finland from 1914 to 1922), https://sotasurmat.narc.fi/fi, 30 May 2023.

[36] The newspaper articles covering the activities of the city government. An overview of the economic and political situation of Narva from 26 October to 15 May 1919, RA, ERA.2536.1.144.

Finnish volunteers of Ekström's battalion in January 1919. From the left: NCO Eero Miettinen, Private Lauri Pesonen and Sergeant Onni Korhonen. RA, EFA.114.2.145

The last and the bloodiest terrorist act in the eastern part of Viru county began on 18 January 1919. Mrs. Davidenkova wrote:

> "[---] The first White units, 50 (Martin Ekström's) Finnish combatants and 10 Estonian Army fighters entered the city about 5 p.m., we can hear Hooray! And a bit later, the shots can be heard on the square in front of the Town Hall. We later find out that a group of Red Army soldiers were besieged and they were all shot dead on the spot. [---]."

According to a Finnish historian Vesa Leino, 27 Finnish Red Guard soldiers were shot in front of the Town Hall.[37]

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[37] Vesa Leino, "Oikeudenhoito suomalaisessa vapaaehtoisjoukossa Viron vapaussotassa 1919" (Master's thesis, Department of History of the University of Jyväskylä, 2001), 53.

Mrs. Davidenkova wrote:

> "19 January, at 10 in the morning. There is horror on the streets. There are corpses all over, single and in groups. Along the edges of the houses there are long rows of corpses, these are slaughtered Red Army soldiers. Blood has painted the snow red, it is impossible to find a spot of clean white snow where to step. An attempted breakthrough of the Red Army took place at Herman Castle, the corpses of the horses of two squadrons are lying on the street, with corpses of soldiers between them. There were streams of blood on both sides of the street, the Revel (i.e Tallinn) road was covered in corpses. The White Finns and Estonians have shot everyone with the red star on their hat... We found out that the Whites would not be further advancing or tracking the Reds. The whole day single shots could be heard in town, the Reds who were found in basements, courtyards and buildings, were shot."

An extract from Juuso Ylonen's master's thesis on the attitude of the Finnish media to the activity of the Finnish volunteers in Estonia. Helsingin Sanomat of 24 January 1919 describes the events on the above dates, referring to the Estonian newspaper Waba Maa as follows:

> "[---] the enemy leadership had been expecting an attack along Tallinn road and had therefore focused all its attention there. Out of the blue, Finns appeared on Narva Town Hall Square at 5.20 p.m. The Finns' hail of bullets mowed down the fugitives. A large number of prisoners was taken, including the leadership of a whole division and all officers of the regiment command."[38] (the last is an exaggeration. Author's note.)

Mrs Davidenkova 10 days later:

> "Every day we can hear shots in *Pimeaed* park, on these "red graves" the Red Army soldiers, mostly Red Finns were shot; the people who were sentenced to death were told to take off their boots and to turn around with their backs to gun barrels..."

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[38] Juuso Ylonen, ""Wiron wapauden puolesta bolshewistien hirmuwaltaa wastaan," Suomen lehdistön suhtautuminen suomalaisvapaaehtoisten toimintaan Viron vapaussodassa 1918–1919" (Master's thesis, the University of Joensuu, 2009), 34 (ref. 101).

Captain Martin Ekström (1887–1954), Commander of the Detachment of Finnish Volunteers, in Swedish uniform. Tallinn, 1919. RA, EFA.272.0.37839

Mrs Davidenkova's description of the execution of a large number of Red Finns is confirmed by Arthur Nieminen, a Finnish volunteer in the Ekström unit in Narva back then.[39] In 1938 he sent his war memoirs to the Committee on the History of the War of Independence. He wrote: "[---] On 20 January we arrived in Narva. The rooms of the Town Hall

[39] Arthur Mathias Nieminen (1893–1942), Cross of Liberty II/3. Served in the tsarist Army in 1915–1918. He was a non-commissioned officer in Ekström's Battalion, later Sub-Lieutenant. After the departure of the Finnish volunteers, he joined the Estonian Army, took Estonian citizenship and settled in Estonia after the war. After the Soviet Union occupied Estonia, he was arrested in the summer of 1941 and taken to GULAG. He died in the hospital of Irkutsk (*Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid* (Cavaliers of the Estonian Cross of Liberty), written by Jaak Pihlak, Mati Strauss and Ain Krillo, compiled by Jaak Pihlak (Viljandi: Vabadussõja Ajaloo Selts, Viljandi Muuseum, 2016), 500.) *Editor's note.*

were full of Red prisoners, the majority of whom were Finns. I went talking to them with Lieutenant A(nto) Eskola. Later they were all shot dead."[40] His description of what could be seen on streets is also similar to Mrs Davidenkova's. Nieminen writes: "Everywhere, more in the suburbs, corpses were to be seen. There were civilians and soldiers. I have seen a fair amount of fighting and bloodshed but I had never seen so much blood before as I saw on the streets of Narva back then. A dark red stream was meandering in the gutters and as frozen and snow-free, it shone in a dull glow."[41]

According to Vesa Leino, 700 Red Army soldiers were taken prisoners in Narva.[42] No sources have been found to identify those 700 or even more, according to some estimates. Leino writes that some prisoners were ordered to roll the cannons in the battles adainst the Red Army, and if they refused, they were executed.[43] According to Mrs Davidenkova, groups of 30–40 prisoners were taken to Pimeaed Park every day.

The Estonian Radio archive possesses the memoirs of Viljandi Rifle Regiment company commander Karl Kanger, recorded in 1982: they retreated from Narva, taking the same route they had crossed the river the year before, in the night of 27 November i.e. via Piimanina, 4 km South of the railway station. He did not comment on the losses, he only pointed out that he sank through ice and his companions pulled him out of water.[44]

Some extracts from the Finnish newspapers on the Finnish volunteers and the Red Guard soldiers, quoted by Juuso Ylonen. The left-wing Suomen Sosiaalidemokraati wrote on 20 January 1919: "[---] The units which went to Estonia may contain White terrorists". According to the Hufvudstadsbladet (in Swedish) on 23.1.1919 "[---] Over 200 Finnish

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40 Nieminen, Arthur Mathias, RA, ERA.2124.3.841, 7.

41 *Ibid.*, 8–9.

42 Leino, 53.

43 *Ibid*.

44 Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) archive, KIRJUTAMATA MEMUAARE (UNWRITTEN MEMOIRS). Karl Kanger. 09.01.1983 Estonian Radio / ASCDR-10257, https://arhiiv.err.ee/guid/19626.

Red Guard soldiers, resisted much harder than Russians. Among them were some infamous murderers from the district of Malm in Helsinki. The first thing to do when they got to Narva Town Hall, was to tear down the "red rag" from the roof."

Another recollection of the events of 19 or 20 January by a future Red Army Major and war commissar Hjalmar Front:

> In Ivangorod, the battalion was ordered to get out of the train and received a command from the front section Russian commander to go across the river and to go on defending positions in the suburbs of Narva in order to defend the city against the enemy attacks from the West.
>
> Later it turned out that the Russian units had withdrawn from Narva the day before and the city had been seized by the units of the Estonian Defence League. Allegedly, there were also Major Ekström's Finnish volunteers in Narva. No doubt, the Russian headquarters in Ivangorod were aware of the situation. The commander of the Finnish battalion was told that Narva was still held by the Red Army and the battalion was getting on its positions in the rear of its own units which could, however, retreat any moment.
>
> The only route to defensive positions went through the city of Narva.
>
> A narrow road led from the bridge of Narva to the city square. The distance was less than half a kilometre. The battalion made a stop on the square for a meal and a brief rest, the food was ready in the field kitchen and company commanders were about to distribute it. Allocated time was one and a half hours.
>
> They had barely stopped when the hail of bullets began from the buildings around the square. The enemy had organized an ambush.
>
> Machine guns sowed death; the battalion standing in dense groups in the open square had no chance to hide. At first it was unclear where the enemy was shooting from.
>
> A couple of minutes later, a bloody hand-to-hand combat began. The ambushed enemy came to the square. Seeing the enemy, the sparse group of survivors went to defence. The witnesses later said that the Finns were killed with bayonets, knives, street paving stones and axes. Neither side was able to shoot properly.

> About twenty men of the battalion survived. They managed to pretend to be dead and later to escape. Part of the rear of the battalion survived because they had not made it to the square yet.[45, 46]

The action on the eastern bank of Narva River ended on 20 January but new victims kept being added. The previous passage described how every day, till 28 January, groups of about twenty prisoners were taken to Pimeaed Park to be executed. There is no documentary evidence available about the events on these dates.

Here we can make a smooth transition to the last large-scale settling of scores in the remotest eastern corner of Viru county. The underground leadership of the Estonia's Communist Party published a leaflet in April 1919 before the elections of the Estonian Constituent Assembly, whose other side was titled as List No 11 of the Crucified Working People.[47] It includes the names of the two executed members of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County (Kippar, Linder), Puumann (worker of Narva, savagely slaughtered by the Finnish butchers) and Klara Lind (worker of Narva, slaughtered in Rakvere by Estonian Whites) and a longer list of the "crucified" workers of Narva from the end of January to the publishing of leaflets. They are the following:

> 1) Karl Kuiva, 2) August Visnapuu, 3) Jakob Vahesaar, 4) Johannes Kuitinen, 5) Roman Ruubert, 6) Alide Ruubert, 7) Anna Timofeeva, 8) Maria Tost, 9) August Holm, 10) Mihkel, Orv, 11) Konstantin Kaerov, 12) Johannes Aart, 13) Aleksander Aart, 14) August Aart, 15) Oskar Kurvits, 16) Joosep Lippo, 17) Karl Lindeman, 18) ...Rogort, 19) ...Riisar, 20) ...Alt, 21) ...Järv, 22) Larionov (factory clerk), 22) Nikolai Nikitin

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[45] Hjalmar Front, *Kremlin kiertolaisia. Muistelmia monivaiheisen elämän varrelta* (Helsinki: Alea-kirja 1970), 59–60.

[46] Hjalmar Front (1900–1970) was a man of colourful life. Later he was a Red Army officer, in 1938 he gave himself a prisoner to the Japanese in Manchuria. After the WWII where he had been fighting on the Japanese side, he made it to Sweden via the USA. He died in Sweden in 1970. The facts presented by him should be approached with some reservations. *Author's note.*

[47] Ristilöödud töörahva nimekiri nr. 11 (List No 11 of the Crucified Workers), Eesti Ajaloomuuseum (Estonian History Museum) AM D 292:1/17.

(hospital committee member), 23) ... Michlai (factory committee member), 24) August Utsel (employee of a pharmacy).

As for the fate of the two last dozen people, we can add that the first name of Alt (No 20) was Dmitri. At the beginning of the 1960s, Maria Alt, the widow of the executed, showed the site where her husband had been shot. She and her brother had secretly gone to the cemetery of Siivertsi and dug up a grave. One of the corpses had green woollen socks on which helped her to identify it as the body of her killed husband. Dmitri Alt, Karl Kuiv and Oskar Kurvits were all executed on 15 February for having been members of the committee for arranging funerals of the Red Army soldiers.[48]

Analyses and Hypotheses

The scarcity of archival sources, the events that keep moving further back in history and the deaths of witnesses only makes it possible for making superficial analyses and formulating hypotheses. The Hague Convention IV of 1899/1907 on the Law and Customs of War on Land stipulated that it was forbidden to kill or wound the enemy who had laid down his arms or to declare that no quarter would be given.[49] The commands of imperial German Army did not adhere to it either in the Battle of Keila on 23 February 1918 or in the field of Joala on 28 November when they killed the wounded who had been left on the battlefield. The Germans took the Tallinn Red Guard soldiers and Viljandi riflemen who were wearing brightly coloured outfits for an armed gang (francs-tireurs). The ca 1200-man strong unit of Martin Ekström (subject of the Kingdom of Sweden) who had entered Narva in January 1919, got paid by the Estonian Provisional

[48] Davõdov, 80; the claim is confirmed by an entry in the personal church register K III volume (1897–1939) of Alexander congregation of Narva, according to which Oskar Kurvits (1886–1919) was shot dead according to his wife on 15 February 1919 for being in the Red Guard. RA, EAA.1221.1.327, 219. *Editor's note.*

[49] Vt Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV), 1899/1907, article 23, The Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp#art23.

Government but proceeded from the Finnish law while waging war in Estonia. The Finnish Supreme Commander, General Mannerheim had stipulated in February 1918 that the surrended could be killed or taken prisoners based on the commander's consideration arising from the situation.[50]

The 4th Infantry Regiment of the Estonian national units of the Russian Army in Rakvere did not fall under the subordination of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County, although there had been attempts to make it bolshevist at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. The Estonian Provisional Government did its best not to use the names of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia and the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic, the subjects recognized by Soviet Russia. While investigating the crimes committed in the county of Viru and other counties, the vague concepts like Bolsheviks or Russians were used. In the file of Leopold Linder[51] he was called a Russian spy without any evidence. The Commune used vague concepts while investigating guilt – the enemy was called either bourgeoisie or the White Guard and Ekström's subordinates were called butchers or knifemen (a term used by the Reds about the Whites in the Finnish Civil War).

The only original documented information available about the victims of terror covered in this study, concerns the victims of the slaughter in Püssi manor, Leopold Linder and the White (a very small amount) and the Red Terror in Narva. Apart from the decisions of Narva Department of the Commune's Committee for Combating Counter-Revolution (their legitimacy is a different matter), there are no written documents on the procedures of investigation on any other victims, although none of those killings were carried out in a battle situation; the Finnish Red Guard soldiers were also shot dead after they had surrendered. Executions were covered in the newspapers but after the publication of the last issue of Eesti Kütiväe Teataja (Estonian Riflemen Gazette) in mid-January 1919, no newspapers were published in the Estonian language in Narva until the end of October. However, another source – the church registers,

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50 Leino, 52.

51 Leopold Linder, RA, ERA.56.2.1538.

has become available in this century. Lutheran ministers and orthodox priests recorded the deaths of the members of their congregations on the lists of the deceased and the buried and the personal books, also noting in a more or less detailed way the circumstances of deaths. Back then, the absolute majority of the people were members of a congregation, regardless of their world view. Still, these documents have no data about the people who were not local or the servicemen who fell victims to terror in large numbers.

Estonia saw the White and the Red Terror in 1918–1919. The permanent exhibition of the War of Independence in the Estonian War Museum, opened in 2019, quotes 680 as the number of civilian casualties in 1918–1919. The numbers of the victims of the White and Red Terror have not been separately pointed out, it is only mentioned that the majority of them were killed by the Reds. We might conclude that for that figure, almost every second execution had to be carried out in the eastern part of Viru county. Briefly after the War Museum exhibition was opened, The History of the War of Independence was published where we can read that nearly 700 people fell victim to the Red Terror and 500–600 people to the White Terror.[52] Probably, these figures do not include the Finnish Red Guard soldiers who were shot dead on 19–29 January 1919 (who were not civilians), about twenty to thirty a day. Unlike Viktor Kingissepp's List of the Crucified which we should be sceptical about, the written records by Vera Davidenkova can be considered an objective source. The number of the victims who were brought out of the nightman's hole in her records is nearly the same as the number presented by the Committee of the Provisional Government. At this point we should recall the fate of the little known Red Finns in Estonia in the battles of 1918–1919 where about 1100 Red Finns fought. They were not only fighting against the Estonian Army and the Russian White Guard soldiers but also against the Finnish volunteers (see above).

The approximate losses of the Red Guard in the battles of 1918 in Finland according to the Finnish Encyclopedia[53] were 3600 fallen and 8400

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[52] *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu I*, 508.

[53] *WSOY iso tietosanakirja*, peatoim. Kalevi Koukkunen, 4. kd. (Porvoo: WSOY, 1995), 173.

as victims of other violent deaths. In the battles, 70,000 men participated on the side of the Whites and a few more on the side of the Reds. If the round number of them was 72,000, then every sixth fighter got killed. The share of the fallen and the killed was even larger in Estonia. The Commander of Vaasa Regiment Martin Ekström had not been known for his adherence to the rules of waging war in the battles of Viipuri (Vyborg) in April and May 1918 and therefore, it is likely that he behaved in the same manner in Narva.

Davidenkova was not interested in who had organized the shootings in Pimeaed Park at the end of January. Major General Aleksander Tõnisson, commander ot the 1st Estonian Division, removed Sub-Captain Karl Paulus[54] from the position of the Commandant of Narva for the reasons which are still not known and he was demoted. The author has a suspicion that the demotion, which was possibly justified by extrajudicial executions in Narva, was unfair. It strikes the eye in the files that the first investigation material to be found was dated as 30 January, hence on 20–29 January no investigations were effected and the twenty to thirty Red Army soldiers who were taken for execution every day, were shot dead without any record. During the battles of Viipuri in spring 1918, there was an unwritten rule in a *Jääkäri*-battalion that if the ID of a Red Guard soldier was found in his pocket, then he was executed without any delay or explanation.[55] (At the end of 1918, Head of State Pehr Evind Svinhufvud granted amnesty to all the White soldiers who had participated in executions.) There is every reason to believe that back then, in January 1919, Narva was not governed by an Estonian commandant but the lead-

[54] Karl Aleksander Paulus (1896–1960), Sub-Captain (after liquidation of Sub-Captains rank Captain), the Cross of Liberty II/3. On 19 January 1919 participated together with the Finnish volunteers in the liberation of Narva. On 21 January was appointed Commander of Narva, on 28 January was arrested by the order of General Tõnisson and on 26 February was demoted to a private by the order of the day from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. On 4 March he was set free and assigned to the Commander of the Naval Forces. On 22 October 1919 his rank was restored. In 1920 he resigned. Paulus, Karl, son of Konstantin, service file, RA, ERA.495.7.3997, 13–14.

[55] Lars Westerlund, "Me odotimme teitä vapauttajina ja te toitte kuolemaa. Viipurin valloituksen yhteydessä teloitetut venäläiset" – *Venäläissurmat Suomessa 1914–22*, Osa 2.2. *Sotatapahtumat 1918–22*, edited by Lars Westerlund, Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisusarja 3/2004, 136.

ers of the Finnish volunteers whose activity was very similar to what had happened in Viipuri.

Jesse Hirvelä writes in his study that at the end of January 1919, the 164th Finnish Rifle Regiment was sent to the front of the Russian Civil War, composed of 712 combatants who had mostly returned from the Estonian front.[56] The 3rd Finnish Communist Rifle Regiment which started its combat near the village of Vasknarva, comprised 870 soldiers and officers, out of whom (at least) one battalion was fighting on the Estonian territory. Hereby we can calculate the approximate losses of the Red Finns: if we subtract a bit less than 700 men of the 164th Rifle Regiment from 1100, then we get ca 450 as the number of the lost combatants of the Red Finns, out of whom half fell on the front and half were shot dead within the last ten days of January in the Pimeaed Park of Narva, the bloodiest period with the most casualties from December 1918 to the end of January 1919.

Why were these casualties never mentioned after World War II? Probably because the Finnish Democratic Republic, a puppet government established by Stalin at Terijoki during the Winter War in 1939–1940 which was supposed to come to power after the conquest of Finland, did not make it to a triumphant entry into Helsinki but stopped in the suburbs of Viipuri on 13 March 1940. Between the two world wars, Estonia favoured the narrative that during the Estonian War of Independence the kindred nation of Finns came to help on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. The fact that another part of Finns came to support their proletarian mates in order to fight for the Commune of the Working People of Estonia instead of the Finnish Socialist Workers Republic, was hardly ever mentioned in Estonia between the two wars nor afterwards.

When comparing the executions carried out in the eastern part of Viru County and in the civil wars of Finland and Russia, then one of the greater distinctions is the lack of concentration camps in Northeastern Estonia. Marko Mihkelson does write in his bachelor's thesis about

[56] Jesse Hirvelä, "Kahden sisällissodan vallankumoukselliset: Suomalaisen Kommunistisen Puolueen sotilasjärjestö Neuvosto-Venäjällä 1918-1920" (Master's thesis, the University of Helsinki, 2017), 49.

a concentration camp of the Commune but actually there were ordinary prisons in Narva and in Ivangorod but there was no prison whatsoever in Tartu. The Commune had a Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution[57] and the Estonian Provisional Government had field courts martial,[58] decicions were made in haste and the accused had no right of appeal.

At the end of 1918, the largest number of detainees was in the Far East of Russia and Eastern Siberia in the camps set up by the Japanese and the White guardsmen of Alexander Kolčak.[59] Back then, the bolshevik GULAG had far fewer prisoners. In Finland, the shootings of the Red guardsmen finished at the end of 1918. A large part of the prisoners with more lenient sentences mostly died from hunger or disease.

There are some recorded episodes from 1918–1919 in immediate surroundings of Estonia in the Finnish Karelia (where most of Estonian victims of the Finnish Civil War come from) and in the governorates of St Petersburg and Pskov. The Viipuri Massacre at the end of April 1918 is known for its largest number of casualties, over 300 people (it was the revenge for the slaughter of 30 supporters of White Finns in the prison of Viipuri a few days before the city fell to the Whites), mostly the Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, Poles) but also three (or possibly five) Estonians.[60] On 23 November, the Red Army shot in Jamburg 23 Red Army soldiers

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[57] See Palgi, 25: The Manifest of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia p. 1: "The Provisional Government of Estonia, all its agents and supporters, all landlords and pastors whose criminal hands are dripping with the blood of the Estonian workers, are outside the law, i.e. outlaws." P. 2: "Anyone who insists on carrying out the orders of "the Provisional Government of Estonia" or its agents, must be shot on the spot."

[58] The decree of the Provisional Government on the establishment of the field courts martial, 5 December 1918, *Riigi Teataja* (State Gazette) 1918, 6, 1–2. The decree was retroactive from the declaration of the martial law, i.e. from 29 November 1918. All persons who worked against the Republic of Estonia or for the benefit of the anti-state forces or communicated with them or collaborated with them in any other way; all persons who attempted to hinder military action (e.g. communication, advancing); all killers, burners and plunderers; all persons spreading rumours harmful to the Republic of Estonia, all deserters, rebels and defaulters were to be court-martialed.

[59] Pavel Golub (Павел Голуб), *Belyj terror v Rossii (1918–1920 gg. [Белый террор в России (1918–1920 гг.) (White Terror in Russia (1918–1920)]* (Moscow: Patriot (Патриот), 2006).

[60] Westerlund, 123, 125.

who had retreated in panic after failed offensives on Narva and Ivangorod. In May 1919, Finnish volunteers killed in Krasnaya Gorka a dozen bolshevist leadership members of Kronstadt (there were no Estonians among them) and in September the same year, the armoured train combatants of the Estonian Army killed in Irboska on their own initiative 25 trade union figures who had been taken there from Tallinn for sending over the front to Russia.

The only similarity with the Finnish Civil War is the Battle of Tampere which took place in the second half of March and the first half of April in 1918. The number of the fallen (ca 1000 soldiers) was more or less the same on both sides but after the battle, hundreds of Red Guard soldiers were extrajudicially executed. The same happened after the Battle of Narva where the Red Army losses on the battlefield were even smaller than the massacre in Pimeaed Park which started on 19 January.

Hypotheses

First, from the murdered on The List of the Crucified Working People there is information only about three persons; in addition to D. Alt and K. Kuiv there is the biography of Klaara Lind.[61] When the Germans entered Narva in March 1918, she was imprisoned. Allegedly, the Germans wanted to shoot her right away but then they agreed to keeping her behind bars. When the Commune was in power, she supposedly used to report her fellow citizens to the commission. However, how would the leadership of a German regiment who was in Narva for the first time ever, know whom to arrest as early as in March? We could set up a hypothesis on the executions at Iisaku on 6 March as well: was it the acting out of mutual enmity by killing a fellow citizen, unpleasant in the eyes of the newly changed authorities or was it just pure and simple currying favour? When, how and where (most probably in Rakvere) Klaara Lind was killed, remains unknown.

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[61] "Pilk enamlaste elust ja tegevusest Narwas" (A Glimpse of Life and Activity of Bolsheviks in Narwa), *Waba Maa*, 12 February 1919, 2.

Second: The Estonian Army was incapable of securing normal civil life in Narva from 18 January to the end of January 1919 in a state of war. Martin Ekström had been Commander of the Vaasa Regiment in Viipuri in April and May the year before but did not get actively involved in trying to stop ethnic cleansing.[62] The population of Viipuri in 1918 was made up of the Finnish majority and the three groups of minorities of equal sizes – Swedish, German and Russian. Among the executed there was only one Baltic German, a victim of a random bullet, all the others were mostly Russian. It is likely that before the Whites captured the city, there were Swedes and Germans among the 30 victims of the Red Terror. From 19 January, the Finnish volunteers committeed a large number of violent acts in Narva. For the robbery of merchant Kalašnikov, one member of the 5-man strong group was sentenced to death but General Martin Wetzer, the general leader of the Finnish volunteer units in Estonia, replaced it by a more lenient punishment. Finnish volunteers paid hardly any attention to the orders of the leadership of the Estonian Army. The White Terror which had been committed on the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland in 1918, was now continued outside the borders of the Republic of Finland. The only Estonia-related data which the Finnish database of war deaths includes, are the data of the casualties of *Pohjan Pojat* and Ekström's unit. As for the fallen Red soldiers, only two possible names come up – Viktor Rahikainen (died in Narva on 19 January 1919) and Wilhelm Ruotsalainen. There were more armed conflicts in Narva that day and they may have also fallen in exchange of fire. As for the Red Finns and other Red guardsmen who fell prisoners or were killed in Narva, only the number of the ones who were shot dead in front of the Town Hall is known. Their names are not known and we can only guess who, how many, when, why, where and how were killed in the ten last days of January and probably also in February.

In response to the last question of the set aims: As a result of the transfer of power in Petrograd in November 1917, Jaan (Ivan) Poska, the governorate commissioner, handed over the administration in Toompea

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[62] Seppo Rustanius, Jouni Eerola, "Viipurin etninen puhdistus," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 14 January 1996.

Castle on 11 November to Viktor Kingissepp, the representative of the Estonian War-Revolutionary Committee. Till 10 December 1917, the district of Rakvere saw a tense but peaceful political life until Count von Stackelberg together with his relatives and a group of the 4th Estonian Regiment soldiers arranged the killing of the Red Guard soldiers who had been delegated from Tallinn to take over the manor on the authority of the War-Revolutionary Committee. According to the interview with the only survivor Karl Roots in 1957 it turns out[63] that there was no exchange of fire; the first two could not even grab their guns, the third rushed toward the other outer door but he was hit by the bullets from outside. Roots thought that he survived only because the shooters rushed to the sledges which were ready for immediate departure, reckoning that all raiders had been killed. Ironically, two years later, the Count had to give up his property due to the land reform, this time for the benefit of the Republic of Estonia.

Summary

In a contemporary approach to history, an understanding prevails that in 1918–1919, the people entered the fight against the proletarian world revolution, exported from the East which in Estonia was represented by a handful of fanatics and conspirators.

In 1913, the number of Estonians living in the Saint Petersburg Governorate was 93,000, in the Pskov Governorate 32,000 and around Novgorod 3300, out of whom the majority had been born in Estonia and Livonia.[64] At the beginning of 1917, the Estonian community in Petrograd was the second largest in the world, exceeding the one in Tartu.

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[63] Estonian Public Broadcasting Archive, 40 aastat tagasi Püssi mõisas (40 years ago in the manor of Püssi). 10.12.1957 Estonian Radio / RMARH-103748, https://arhiiv.err.ee/guid/103748.

[64] Vadim Musaev (Вадим Мусаев), *Éstonskaja diaspora na Severo-Zapade Rossii vo vtoroj polovine XIX – pervoj polovine XX v. [Эстонская диаспора на Северо-Западе России во второй половине XIX – первой половине XX в. (Estonian Diaspora in North-Western Russia in 2nd Half of 19th Century and 1st Half of 20th Century)]* (St. Petersburg: Nestor (Нестор), 2009), 19.

By 1918, the migration balance of Estonians from the sight of Russia's border areas was positive, because of which the number of Estonians in the neighbouring governorates had been growing. The majority of them had left for Russia in the hope of possessing land which was complicated and expensive to do at home.

As for the participation of Estonians in the Russian Civil War, there are some data about officers. Mati Kröönström writes that "according to a rough estimate, the number of Estonian officers participating in the Russian Civil War, could amount to 800 men, out of whom up to 250 were in the Red Army and at least 500 officers in the White Army."[65] There is less information about the non-commissioned officers in the Russian White Guard. As for the Red Army, we know that the Estonian Rifle Division which had been renamed the Estonian Rifle Brigade in February 1920, prior to Tartu Peace Treaty, comprised over 5100 men on 17 September 1919,[66] who were not all Estonians. It was technically not possible to draft the same number of Estonians to the White Guard forces from the other regions of Russia (Siberia, Crimea etc) because there the number of Estonians was significantly smaller than in the governorates of Petrograd and Pskov.

According to the orders of Viljandi Rifle Regiment, in December 1918 (the Commune announced general mobilization on 7 January 1919) over 500 men were drafted to the Regiment. This number surpasses the total number of the volunteers who joined the Estonian Army in the whole of Viru County. The Defence League of Narva under the leadership of Captain Heinrich Laretei had 120 members at the end of November 1918. In the first elections of the Constituent Assembly in April 1919, the leftists (social democrats, labour party and socialists-revolutionaries) who in the Russian context were called the minority (Mensheviks) won 65% of votes or the majority. By mid-February 1919 (the time of rebellion in Saaremaa) people's mentality was not as developed as we usually think today.

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[65] Mati Kröönström, "Eesti ohvitserid Vene kodusõjas" (Estonian Officers in Russia's Civil War), *Akadeemia* 5 (2005): 918.

[66] Hanno Ojalo, *Punakütid: Eesti punakaartlast ja punaste küttide sõjatee 1917–1920* (Red Riflemen: The War Path of the Estonian Red Guardsmen and the Red Riflemen in 1917–1920) (Tallinn: Argo 2014), 119.

During the War of Independence, in Pechory County, the soldiers of the Estonian Army and of the Red Army Estonian Rifle Division used to to go for chats in the trenches during the breaks in battles.[67]

The most significant difference is that one party saw their future in an independent state, and the other party in a renewed Russian Federation. In December 1918, the mobilization into the Estonian Army failed. At the same time, a notable number of people voluntarily joined the riflemen in Narva. The author lacks comparable data about the other regions of Estonia, but I dare draw the conclusion that the mentality of the residents of eastern Virumaa was notably different from the other regions of Estonia. The Red Guard Squad of Iisaku parish comprised ca 20 men, the Red Guard of Aseri was even larger, and there was also a Red Guard Squad in Kunda which is outside the district studied in the current article (thanks to this squad, the Bolsheviks managed to seize power in Rakvere at the end of 1917).[68] In Narva, Ansis Daumanis managed to form a fully-fledged workers' regiment, and other units of the Commune comprised residents of Narva. Out of the identified men of Viljandi Rifle Regiment who fell in the battle of Joala, a third were the residents of Narva.

The second half of 1940 saw the return of the Red repressions and they continued in the form of terror during and after the World War II. The formal executor of judgments was the only political party allowed, the Communist Party of Estonia (ECP) and there were Estonians among the executors. It is hard to assess whether they did it in their blind conviction or simply for retaliation (incl. for the White Terror in 1918–1919). The communists who peaked in the parliamentarian elections of 1923, (15% of votes), had 1400 members when they got legalized after the Soviet occupation at the end of July 1940.[69] 16 years later, by ECP 9th Congress in January 1956, the number of members had grown to 23,000 (incl. 45% Estonians). In addition to communists, there was the Young Communist League (Komsomol) with the age limit of 27 years

[67] KIRJUTAMATA MEMUAARE. Karl Kanger.

[68] Palgi, 25.

[69] Hiljar Tammela and Olev Liivik, " Eestimaa Kommunistliku Partei liikmeskond 1940–1941: allikad ja mehaanika" (The Membership of the Communist Party of Estonia 1940–1941: sources and mechanics), *Tuna* 1 (2020): 65.

for its members. The number of members of the Komsomol was about three times larger (over 60,000).[70] Obviously, in 1956, both communists and komsomols included a large share of Estonians who had arrived in Estonia after the Soviet Union occupied Estonia and they had never been citizens of the Republic of Estonia. However, we can presume that the total number of Estonian citizens who were members of the Communist Party or the Komsomol,[71] surpassed the number of the deportees of 1941 and 1949. After the speech of Nikita Khruščev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (which was confidential but became widely known) in February 1956, they abstained; since then up to the Hungarian revolution in October the same year, the author has not found one single protocol of a plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia or a meeting of the local organization which would have assessed the repressions, following the example of Moscow.

Finns have done a huge amount of work and identified the victims of the White and the Red Terror as much as it has been possible. The author of this article found ethnic Estonians among them who had ended up in Finland. In Estonia, there is still a lot of work to do.

Comparing the White and Red Terrors in the eastern part of Viru County, it is clear that unlike in the other regions of Estonia in 1917–1919, the number of the victims of the White Terror exceeded the number of the victims of the Red Terror.

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[70] The nationality of members is known because the society-related statistics conducted in the USSR included the data of social background, nationality, gender, education et al. *Author's note.*

[71] The number of members of the ECP and Komsomol does not reflect the mentality of the society as a whole, because back then the candidate members for the Communist Party and the Komsomol, particularly intellectuals, had to go through a thorough background check after submitting an application, therefore, each candidate would not become a member. *Author's note.*

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