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THE BALTIC NATIONS

ESTONIA,
LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

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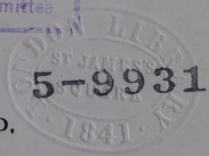
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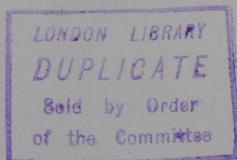
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CENTRAL EUROPE WITH THE BALTIC STATES



Scale 1:15,000,000 (1:40 m. s. 1")

0 50 100 200 300 400 500
Statute Miles

P R E F A C E

It was John Seeley who used to say that "History without political science has no fruit; political science without history has no root." This book is only another illustration of his words. Originally I meant to write nothing but the history of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the three ancient nations living on the south-eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Their fate has been curiously similar. They suffered invasion at the hands of Danes, Germans, Poles, Swedes and Russians; yet, like other Small Nations, they withstood them all, finally to rid themselves of alien rule and to emerge, triumphantly, as liberated nations. In our own days, in 1918, relieved from the struggle for mere survival, they could direct their unbending vitality towards building their own home—an inspiring achievement.

Their history, here recorded, speaks for itself. Yet, in following it, one cannot cast from one's mind political lessons—the fruit of which their history is the root. The first and the last chapters of this book therefore deal chiefly with the Soviet Union as a neighbour: the neighbour of the small Baltic Nations, since 1941 our own ally against Hitler and his policy of annexation and conquest, our good-neighbourly friend if world peace is to be established. "Those four years," said Lord Cecil of the last war, "burnt into me the insufferable conditions of international relations which made war an acknowledged method—indeed, the only fully authorised method—of settling international

disputes. Thenceforward, the effort to abolish war seemed to me, and still seems to me, the only object worth while." I share this belief of the Grand Old Man of peace and have no patience with those who—like Croce—declare wars inevitable since pain is the mainspring of life; as if there were not sufficient suffering without the man-made horror of war. It is in the pursuit of a real peace settlement that lessons are drawn from the history of the three Baltic peoples. If they seem outspoken at times, I speak out, I hope, for the principles of peace and against sheer expediency, war-time decisions, as Mr. Anthony Eden put it, "for a short-term advantage which, in the light of long-term policy, you would prefer not to take." And the British Foreign Secretary added: "There is, in our minds, no reservation when we say that we wish to work with the Soviet Union in the fullest and closest collaboration, but it is also in the interests of our two countries that we should accept that there are certain difficulties in this task, and I agree that we do not gain much by ignoring them." Indeed, we might lose all. If the fruit of history taste bitter to some, the fault is not the historian's.

ELIZABETH COLLEGE, BUXTON.

F. W. PICK.

CHAPTER ONE.

OURSELVES AND RUSSIA.

It seems time we knew where we and Russia meet. We know how interlocked are the United States of America and the British Commonwealth. Of their intimate relationship, in turn, with the manifold nations of Europe, we are all aware. But what of Russia? Where do we and Russia meet—physically and spiritually, in the past and in the future?

It is a truism that collaboration between all nations solves all problems in international affairs. It is no less obvious that collaboration between the United States, the British Commonwealth and the Soviet Union will solve most problems, if only because the British Commonwealth contains many small nations in many continents. Between them, the three outstandingly Great Powers encircle the globe and embrace, for good or ill, practically all its problems. Some of us seem to be satisfied to leave it at that, at vague generalities. After all, a third of the last thirty years has been misery to us, a time filled with the cruelty of war. Nobody then can expect us to worry about the precise terms of future collaboration for peace. Nobody? Is it not just the recurrence of wars that must make us think how to organise peace? Reasons there are to excuse us if we meet with deaf ears the distant rumble of future dangers while the din of battle is still about us. But excuses accuse us. By merely taking collaboration for granted, we shall not get it. If we don't prepare peace, we shall not be able successfully to wage it.

What, then, of the third pillar of the peace structure, of Russia? Since so much of human history springs from the map—even when the air belongs to us all—where, geographically speaking, does she meet us? In the Far East—off Alaska and off China. She is a neutral in our war—surely, in the words of George III or Bute, a “bloody and expensive war”—against Japan. There the United States and the British Commonwealth on the one side, and Russia on the other, do not fight for the same thing, nor against the same thing. We meet her next in the Pamir Mountains and Afghanistan, frontiers of potential rather than actual importance. In Iran, or Persia, we have met her, in the flesh so to speak, when President Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill and Marshal Stalin put their feet under the same table. In 1907 Britain and Russia had divided Persia into three spheres, the northern for Russia, the southern for Britain, the middle zone, a left-over, to avoid any possible clashes. At Teheran it has been put on record that the integrity of this small State is guaranteed. Why has this declaration stirred so few and has left cold so many? Dividing of spoils, annexation of territory are part and parcel of the kind of power politics which lead to wars. Did the Great Powers then, in promising independence to Persia and in thus recognising the rights of a Small State, take a step, natural to them, towards a system of security for all? If the declaration by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt is no incident but the expression of principles—valid anywhere—we have indeed met Russia in Iran spiritually on common ground.

We next touch Russian interests at the Dardanelles and to this, the famous ‘Eastern Question’ of the nineteenth century, we have given much thought in the past; in our attempts to solve it we have spent much time and life. The Crimean War of ninety years ago stands on one end of our line of thought and action; we were decided then to prevent Russia from gaining access to the Eastern Mediterranean. The agreements of 1914-17 and the landing at Gallipoli when Russia had been promised the Straits as the spoils of that war, represent the other extreme. Have we now agreed on what one hesitates to call a middle course and on what ought to open new vistas? Turkey has been asking herself that self-same question many a sleepless night. If our principles mean anything, she must be as secure from aggression as we ourselves or Russia. That, surely, is the

meaning of peace through collaboration as contrasted with war.

We mostly meet Russia, if indirectly in Eastern Europe. The same truth holds good there. On the basis of the rights of nations, of self-determination, each problem can be solved—and the taunt that high principles give no practical guidance is, if not intentionally mischievous, wrong at all times. If, for instance, of the thirty-four million inhabitants of pre-war Poland, twenty-four millions were Poles, there are no real obstacles to asking the other ten whether they prefer becoming Soviet citizens to linking up once more with Poland. The record of either Power is there for all to read. It must, of course, be more painful for twenty-four millions to lose ten, than it can give pleasure to say a hundred-eighty to gain another ten million citizens. Such, and similar considerations, play their part. But the overriding issue is the one expressed, for the sake of shortness, in the words self-determination. Unless we grant to those concerned freedom of decision we are acting as in the war-ridden past, as in the days of power politics: we are back in the world of wars. Already for reasons of internal policy no British, no American, no European statesman can subscribe to solutions forced upon an unwilling population. If he did, say for the sake of expediency, he would find himself face to face with the fact that his own people would not back him. Democracies cannot wage wars without their people being convinced of the righteousness of the cause. Others ought not to forget the shrinkage which the globe undergoes at the hands, or the wings rather, of the aeroplane.

Finally, we meet Russia in the Baltic and, via Murmansk, in the North. Murmansk was founded in 1916 and the White Sea Canal, built on Marshal Stalin's orders, has since given the Soviet Union an additional outlet to the high seas. Britain and America, as the two biggest naval powers, have an obvious interest in these links with Russia. Here, it seems, is the point where the three interlock. Historically this is quite true. Only when Russia broke into the Baltic, did she become really part of our common history and join the Western world. She did so, as we shall see and as we should expect, through the then recognised means of conquest. "Access to the sea", more than a slogan for landlocked nations, was established by Peter the Great. Yet, he did more than cut an opening into the forests to found a capital town and a naval base. He also conquered

neighbouring nations—for instance the Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians. His successors, therefore, thought of Denmark and the way out of the Baltic into the open ocean. Even when they partitioned Persia in conjunction with Britain, they signed simultaneously a secret treaty with Imperial Germany, threatening the nations along the shores of the Baltic. All this was of one piece. Morality did not come into the story.

Since the purgatory of the last World War, however, morality does come into it. The common man of the twentieth century is not prepared to lay continents waste, to kill and cripple millions—very many millions—of his fellowmen for such ends of power politics, for conquest or annexation, for the partitioning of countries and the establishment of spheres of influence. Whether the realist tell us that the material poverty of one nation means a loss to all; whether he inform us that modern technical devices have made the world too small a place and the weapons of war too deadly—the fact remains, above all others, correct or true as they may be, that nations to-day try to judge on moral grounds. They will fight for a righteous cause, not for conquest as of old. They ask for organised peace, therefore; and they were ready to make the League of Nations a success. If this first great experiment in organised peace failed, it was not because the nations of the earth were not ready for it. It was because the leadership failed them. This leadership the three Great Powers have promised to supply this time. If they fall out, we shall have exclusive groups, precariously balancing one another for a short while until a second Hitler emerges, until the powers of evil we have now destroyed rise again to join the highest bidder and plunge the world into yet another wave of wars.

How urgent therefore is the question: where do we meet Russia after the defeat of Hitler? We must, obviously, meet her on the common ground of the self-same principles of organised peace, and nowhere can their application be tested better than in the Baltic. Here East and West meet. Here, not only geographically speaking, Russia touches us most. We are not concerned with her internal policy—only with what makes her a pillar, or otherwise, of peace. Just as a Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, before 1914, was ready to close his eyes to the Tsarist system (“absolutely rotten”, as Lloyd George put it)—and vice versa—so a Conservative Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden, in 1942, was ready to enter into

a twenty years' alliance with a view to preserving peace after the war and resisting aggression. Naturally, both sides had to give up something. The Soviet Union had to renounce the assistance she gave to Communist groups all over the world. We, on the other hand, had to renounce the concern we felt about the loss of individual liberty, as we understand it, to an omnipotent State based on a single party. In the interest of peace such price has to be paid. Neither side can hope to make the other arrange its own affairs on equal, or even on similar lines. But in foreign affairs, in order to collaborate, all parties must, indeed, act upon the same principles.

What, then, is the common ground on which we can all step and that will carry us all safely? The answer is simple—otherwise it would not be practicable. It is the principle of self-determination, tempered by self-willed collaboration of all, great or small. Each people, said the American Declaration of Independence, is entitled “to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station . . .” The British Commonwealth grew out of the same ground. The nations of Europe subscribe to the same creed. The Atlantic Charter of 14 August 1941 was but its last expression: “They desire,” the spokesmen of the United States and Britain declared, “to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them . . .” These are the principles on which alone peace can be built. There is nothing equivocal about it, nor anything new. It is simply a restatement of the belief we hold and of the foreign policy we want to follow. “Ourselves” in the meaning of this chapter and the whole book refers to all of us who stand and fall by these principles.

But why: “and Russia”? Why not just “Ourselves” or “One World” in the caption of this chapter? Russia has formally subscribed to the Atlantic Charter; has confirmed her adherence with all other United Nations in Washington on 1 January 1942; has entered into the twenty years' alliance with Britain “on the basis of the principles enunciated in the declaration made on 14 August 1941 by the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of Great Britain to

which the Government of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics has adhered." This, too, is unequivocal; these are also binding declarations. And yet there remains one question, put by Russia herself: the Baltic question. The fate of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, members all of the League of Nations, is in the balance. They may be Small Nations—not smaller though than England was before the industrial revolution; their population may not be more numerous than say Canada's, yet they constitute a test case. Nobody doubts that the principles of the Atlantic Charter are to be applied to Czechoslovakia, to Greece, to Belgium, to Norway, if we want peace. Equally they must be applied to the six millions who belong to the ancient peoples of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—as ancient and distinct as any in varied Europe—if we want peace.

Soon after its foundation the Soviet Union fully recognised this. Russia then was ready to make good the crime of the conquest carried out by Peter the Great far beyond the needs of his Window to the West: a crime, of course, only in the eyes of the twentieth century which is to use moral standards if it wants to record progress towards a peace structure. Again the realist may add that the Soviet Union could thus act in 1920 in accordance with the principle of self-determination because modern Leningrad, unlike Peter's primitive foundation in the midst of swamps and forests, is capable of handling all traffic and securing all intercourse with the West. Moreover, that Baltic bastion of hers, unconquerable Leningrad, is now linked by canal with both the Volga to the South and the White Sea to the North.

For over twenty years these and other moral reasons proved their worth. Yet, to-day, in the hour of our common triumph over Hitler, Russia hesitates. Being stronger than Peter the Great, she seems poised as if to follow him rather than Lenin's Foreign Secretary who guaranteed the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania "in view of the proclaimed principle of the Republic of Socialist Federative Soviets of Russia establishing the right of all peoples to self-determination." That principle, of course, is ours too. It brought peace to the Baltic as it establishes the pre-conditions of peace at all times anywhere. We cannot do without it. It is here that we and Russia truly meet.

In the United States the achievements and the rights of the three Baltic Nations have been stated in a manner that makes this test case of our pledges to the peace principles well understood there. In Great Britain, however, an American friend thought he detected "a cold-blooded, realistic, even slightly cynical view" while Americans, he thought, could afford to inject broad issues of principle even if this seemed less expedient for the moment. But the fact remains that Great Britain has a peculiar duty towards the Baltic. She was the first of the three Powers to fight Hitler. She was the first to welcome Russia as an ally when Hitler had launched his attack. She is nearest to Russia, nearest to the Baltic. In fact, she acted almost as a god-father to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1918-19. Her trade with them throughout the inter-war period was as great as with the whole of the Soviet Union. She knows they form an integral part of Northern Europe, as much as Sweden or Denmark. She is aware of their achievements—the late Lord Wedgwood called Estonia the best-governed small nation of Northern Europe. Her relations with all of them have been close all along, so much so that Marshal Stalin believed as late as 1939 that Britain intended to buy the two main Estonian Islands as naval bases—the last Imperial German general in the Baltic called the three States an "English colony"! They have a right to be heard before they are destroyed. Even if Britain, for expediency's sake, wanted to forget them—how can she? She protested against Hitler's conquest of the Czechs and the Slovaks; she went to war against a Hitler bent on the destruction of Poland; without self-determination, we know, there is no salvation.

Unprincipled expediency cannot build a new peace. Yet, we are told to "think twice before attempting again to stretch a hand to the far side of Europe to take on such commitments, to put one's hand between the German hammer and the Russian anvil." I thought this war was fought to destroy that hammer. And have we not thought twice too often already? We thought twice before putting our hand between Mussolini and Abyssinia; we thought twice before putting our hand between Franco and the Republican Government of Spain. We never thought of putting our hand between Japan and Manchuria. We thought and feared and only acted when it was almost too late to save

ourselves and our way of life. If we are sure of our ground, of the principles that go to make peace, we must stretch out our hand to all peace-loving nations and help safeguard them in time, together with all like-minded nations. "Common action to preserve peace and resist aggression in the post-war world" is the aim of the Anglo-Russian alliance. Such purpose could not be achieved if Britain were to annex Norway nor if Russia were to annex the three Baltic States. It cannot be done. And it is time we said so,

Nazi propaganda, Mr. Eden reminded us, said "that we were disinteresting ourselves in certain parts of Europe: in other words, that, at some place or other, never specified—it may be Moscow, it may be Teheran—we had done a deal...by which we would cease to interest ourselves in certain parts of Europe. That is absolutely and categorically untrue. I would like to go further. In the first place, no arrangement of such a kind has been come to. In the second place, no arrangement of such a kind was suggested to us. In the third place, if anybody had suggested such an arrangement to us, we would not have agreed to it." Even if so humane a man as Mr. Anthony Eden could cast from his mind the fate of so many millions who have withstood centuries of alien domination and who demand their independence as of right, he could not accept annexations carried out by allies. In the days of power politics, on the other hand, a Foreign Secretary was expected to do just this and help his associates to conquer new lands. The twentieth century, if it is to organise peace, can have none of it.

No argument of strategy can alter these truths which we hold to be self-evident. How little the occupation of the Baltic States from 1940 to 1941 helped the Soviet Union we shall see. In fact, it lost to our cause half a million fighting men, men who wanted to fight for their own liberty, who would have resisted as peasants fighting for their own soil. "As soon as one of the great States of Europe enters upon the course of expansion at the end of this war, whether impelled by high purposes or by base ones, and whether the expansion is open or veiled, that State will inevitably contribute to the formation of international coalitions directed against itself, which will at the same time provoke a rapid restoration of the military power of Germany." Thus stand power politics condemned out of the mouth of the

realist or materialist. Whether judged with the help of principles or of so-called practical considerations, the result is the same. Peace without liberty, without independence also for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, is a contradiction in terms, is impossible.

This means in positive terms, in the words of so shrewd a judge as Harold Callender: "If Britain and the United States form parts of a collective system in which Russia believes, the incentive for advanced frontiers will have disappeared." How can she and we believe? As far as we are concerned, through first of all being perfectly frank with our friends, and then, through being sure of ourselves and our own principles. "We cannot say to the world 'You have got to do this, you have got to do that.' That is beyond the power of forty-five millions (in Great Britain). But what we can do is, in our own conduct and by our own leadership, to try to establish and maintain those standards of international conduct without which there cannot be peace." This was Mr. Anthony Eden's summing up of his duties, of our duty. We can clear our own mind. We can say what we know is right.

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CHAPTER TWO.

THE BALTIC NATIONS.

The story of the big nation-states of Europe has often been told. As for the rest, for the smaller nations, they have been brushed aside more than once: peoples bothersome in their peculiarities, their history burdened with strange-sounding, difficult names. At best they were given a benevolent mark for picturesque variety. Yet, is it not this variety of a thousandfold shapes that goes to make Europe's glory?

The corners of Europe know of small states. The 'cockpit of Europe', a term so often applied to the Low Countries in its North-Western corner, is an equally true description of Greece in the South-East and of the Baltic States in the North-East. The two last named, moreover, form bridges from West to East, from Europe to Asia. These facts spring from the map; they constitute a great deal of Greek and Baltic fate. Both too command an important stretch along the two seas which formed the world's main waterways before the vast oceans could regularly be braved: Greece on the Eastern Mediterranean, the Baltic States on the Eastern side of the Baltic Sea, both have suffered from those inland who longed for the sea, both stamped their mark on all who came and went. Many there were, invaders from Asia, invaders from Europe. They came, many tried to stay, but each time the ancient nations already settled on those shores emerged triumphantly.

In other respects the North-Eastern regions of Europe, peopled by Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians, resemble the North-Western

lands of the Low Countries inhabited by Dutch and Belgians: both districts are near Scandinavian influence, their people mostly fair; both have a Protestant population to the north (Estonians and Letts—the Dutch) and Roman Catholics to the south (Lithuanians—Belgians). Both districts rule the mouth of great rivers, the Rhine and the Meuse, the Daugava (Dvina) and the Nemunas (Niemen). Even the Zuider Sea seems to have its counterpart in the Bay of Riga. Like the Low Countries the Baltic States are flat and, with the exception of lakes, rivers and canals, have no geographical features that would make for safe frontiers.

The Baltic States are small, but no smaller than the other Small Nations of Europe. Together Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania number some six or more million people, about as many as there are Greek, slightly more than there are Irish or Australians and slightly less than Dutch or Belgians. Their land covers some 80,000 square miles, and even the smallest amongst them, Estonia in the north, is still twice the size of Belgium. As far as Europe is concerned they represent what can safely be called the standard size of the Small State—a glance at the lilliput units like Luxemburg with its 999 square miles and a population of a quarter of a million confirms this. Only ignorance of Europe could dismiss them as pigmy States, pebbles washed up and washed away again by the maelstrom of history. As with the Low Countries, their life is linked up with the sea and the rivers running into it. Their shores thrive on the Vistula and the Daugava, on the trade routes going up these rivers and continuing south-eastward down the Dniester and the Dnieper. In fact, it was this broad land ribbon stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, limited by the Vistula and the Dniester in the West, the Daugava and the Dnieper with its tributaries in the East, that made up the Lithuanian-Polish Kingdom of the sixteenth century. Owing to these river routes the Baltic States formed the Northern outlet for the Ukraine and for Asia beyond, linking them up with the amber coast of the Baltic Sea, the Scandinavian countries, Britain, the wide open oceans. The Arabian coins of the eighth and ninth centuries found on the muddy river banks of the Daugava in Latvia are the tangible proof of these geographical facts. It goes without saying, however, that more than geography is involved, that man's destiny has been shaped by these truths. Like Flanders, the Baltic States are blessed and condemned to

lie at the crossroads. What the poppies of Flanders saw was equally seen, in equally murderous form, by the yellow cowslip of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian fields. Hemmed in by the Germans, the Poles and the Russians, watched from overseas by the Danes and the Swedes, the Baltic nations saw the invader come in the garb of them all, providing both battlefield and colony for half a dozen neighbours. Influenced by them all, the Baltic peoples nevertheless preserved their own particular features, and in 1917 they emerged, clearly formed nations. Should we not count their liberation amongst the finer achievements of our own century?

* * *

The three nations do not belong to the same family. It is the closeness of their homes rather and the threats from their German and Russian neighbours that accounts for the similarity of their historical fate. 'Racially' speaking they are very distinct units, distinct when compared with their Teutonic and their Slav neighbours, divided too amongst the three of them. Since the racial rubbish propounded by Nazis of the Rosenberg type one has to make haste and add that 'race' is mentioned as only one of the many forces—some quite imaginary in the face of science—that go to make our world. With Julian Huxley we know that nationality is something "much broader but less definable than physical kinship." When the Eastern Baltic enters into the light of history we find the Lithuanians, the Letts and the Borussians as three branches of the same group; for lack of any better definition we might call them Balto-Letts. They are fair, tall, with longish faces and without the jutting-out cheek bone of their Slav neighbours to the South and East. We must treat with suspicion, therefore, claims to the effect that they were akin to the Slavs. What resemblance there may have developed may easily have come to them through conquest or close neighbourhood throughout the centuries. The Borussians were wholly submerged by the Germans, giving their name to their conquerors—the Prussians. They thus suffered the fate of the Wends of Lusatia and of so many Slavs. Perhaps it is this that accounts for the 'Slav' features of the Prussian of to-day and for some of the bitterness of the Slav-Teutonic feud? Leaving this field to race-ridden Europe, we note, as Huxley does, that the existence of anything that can be called a 'pure race' is mere fantasy: "Among all the sentiments that nurture

feelings of group unity, greater even than the imaginary tie of physical or even of historic relationship, is the reaction against outside interference." For such reaction, the Baltic nations had more than ample opportunity—it was provided for them lavishly by Danes, Swedes, Germans, Poles and Russians. Yet, what we set out to define and which cannot really be 'explained', was just the fact that they considered the others as foreigners, themselves as a distinct group.

The Lithuanians and Letts resisted the danger of assimilation to which the Borussians had succumbed under the impact of the Germans. Their languages would offer no help if we were to attempt an explanation: they are Indo-European, in fact supply the finest example of archaic Indo-European actually spoken to-day. Lithuanian is so close to Sanskrit that it attracted Franz Bopp, the father of modern philology, who included it in his main work on comparative studies in grammar. *Dievas, Sunus, Diena* is Lithuanian for *Devas* (God), *Sunu* (Son), *Dina* (Day) in Sanskrit. *Esu* and *Esti* is not Greek for "I am, he is" but Lithuanian as spoken by any peasant living along the Nemunas.

The Letts, in their turn, absorbed the Livs, a tribe living to the North of them. Of this, important as it is, we know very little. The Livs gave their name to the Tsarist province of 'Livonia', but on the liberation of the Baltic States in our own century, 'Livonia' became what she really is, North Latvia and South Estonia. Not quite a thousand Livs survive to this day, a fishing community in Latvia. In a real sense the Livs built the bridge from Latvia to the third, the northernmost of the Baltic nations: to Estonia. Estonians, like Livs and like Finns, stand apart from the races and languages of the rest of Europe. They belong to what we have been driven to call Finnish-Ugric, thus to hint at the resemblance of Finnish and Estonian with Hungarian (and Turkish, as well as Mongolian). There are in Estonian no genders, but sixteen cases with a sheer endless number of declensions, even the numerals being declined. Choosing, at random, the words used above to show how near Lithuanian is to Greek and Sanskrit, the Estonian counterpart will illustrate how far removed Finnish-Ugric is from Indo-European: *Jumal* (God), *Poeg* (Son), *Päev* (Day), *mina olen* (I am), *tema on* (he is). The Livs, belonging to the same group, were submerged by the Letts and bridged the gap between the

Finnish-Ugric speaking Estonians and the Balto-Lett language group, the Letts and Lithuanians. Perhaps this helped to prevent the appearance of a feud like the one that disfigures Slav-German relations.

* * *

Most of the history of the Baltic peoples as written right down to the beginning of this century dealt only with the foreign conquerors of their soil. Hardly ever were we told of the Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians themselves. Instead we heard of Teutonic Knights, of Polish Kings, of Russian Tsars and their Governors. True, the name Baltic slipped in at times, but then merely to indicate yet another type of foreign master—the Baltic Baron. In short, most of the History of the Baltic Nations has so far appeared as a chapter of the colonial expansion carried out by the big Powers around them. Looked at through the eyes of an Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian farmer, history must depict itself in different colours and appears to be treading different paths altogether. If we are to call our days truly the Century of the Common Man, we must know what happened to him throughout the ages.

Naturally there were reasons for the kind of history written in the past, for this concern with the glamour of the conquering knight rather than with the often fearful fate of the native farmer (who was yet to survive all on-comers and live when the knights' shining armour had long grown rusty). Of these reasons only one need detain us here: the fact that Estonians and Letts had not yet formed States when they were overrun by invading Germans, Poles, Danes, Swedes and Russians, though the fact that they had been independent seemed of little concern to political historians. Signs of tribal organisation and of a common law are well proved; cattle were reared, horses were bred, agriculture was well developed; yet there were no central governments at the time alien intruders appeared. Lithuanians, on the other hand, had built a strong State which in the Middle Ages grew to become the most powerful kingdom of Eastern Europe. She went under, as did other medieval States, which had been built and were dissolved in accordance with the monarchical principle. Since the sixteenth century she was linked up with Poland, her élite generally merging with the Polish ruling classes. Again this seemed sufficient reason for many a political historian to forget about her distinctive

features. Only on re-emerging in our own days, a liberated peasant State sure of its own standing, did she try to build a nation-state. As such she claims her place in European history, as do Estonia and Latvia, the more so since they were as successful as Poland, the big Slav neighbour to the South, which was emerging at the same time.

* * *

Riga, the capital of Latvia, is further away from the Urals than from Dublin, the most Westerly capital of Europe. The Baltic people, divided from their neighbours by 'race' and language, non-Slav, non-German, live indeed close to Western Europe. All great European movements touched them deeply—Luther, who never influenced Russians, stirred them. Their first lasting experience of Western Europe was the appearance of armed knights. The story of the Western invaders who came to conquer the Baltic trade routes, to settle and to live on the fat of the land, need not be retold in detail. The German knights first appeared in 1186, intruding the more quickly in Latvia and Estonia where no centrally organized States had as yet been formed. Backed by the Popes, these crusading Brothers of the Sword set up a bishopric in Riga (1201); Albert, the order's founder, had been primate of Ireland. They soon profited from the eclipse of Denmark as a Baltic Power, the Danes proving in fact no more than pathfinders for the knights. Thus as early as the twelfth century disappeared the possibility of a safe West-East route through the Baltic, from Denmark to the Baltic peoples. What remains of the Danish period in the Eastern Baltic is the name of Estonia's capital, Tallinn, that is Taani Linn or Danish Town (Estonian knows no initial d, b, g), founded in 1219. It was eleven years earlier that the knights had first clashed with the Estonians who offered them fierce resistance. The unequal struggle between poorly equipped farmer and highly organized knight lasted some twenty years. Not before 1227 could they claim Estonia theirs, a colony to be exploited and christianized. In 1236 they suffered a severe defeat at the hands of combined Latvian and Lithuanian forces at the battle of the Saule. Similar checks were administered to them by almost each succeeding generation. Small wonder they studded the country with their colonizers' fortresses.

Serfdom, the feudal system and enforced Roman Catholicism had arrived with these alien masters. The veil of history has

covered up most of the details; perhaps it is just as well that historians mostly limited themselves to describing the actors, the new masters, not the fate of the peoples themselves who suffered unspeakable horrors at their hands. The parts we know are bloodstained, filled with ruthless medieval cruelty: "With pride and joy," a German Balt sums up, "do we view the days when the sword and the cross—rough as the times were—brought Western civilization to Estonia." The Danes soon withdrew altogether from this field, selling the rest of their possessions in 1347. The Livonian Knights, it was true, were destroyed by the Lithuanians and the Letts, but their colony was taken over by the Teutonic Knights, expelled from Hungary. A trail of blood marked their way. They met with equally stubborn resistance. Not before St. George's Day, 23 April 1343, did the whole of Estonia rise as a man and kill the oppressors by the hundreds: *Jüri öö mäss* (George's Night Rebellion) proved a failure, the knights' hold was not destroyed. Yet it became part of the national conscience of this nation in the making, just as the battles of Lett and Lithuanian against the same foe had strengthened their knowledge that they belonged together. Not that the memory of nations could bridge six hundred years. But an organised effort of this size proved to them that they were, in fact, a distinct unit, separated from their conquerors. The same experience which allowed of no collusion with the invader, repeated throughout the centuries, went to make the three Baltic nations. "We are not wrong", said a German historian, "if we see in this awful rising of the Estonians, in their excitement against the German master, the last, though the weakest, wave of democratic unrest"—democratic, meaning here the popular or national movement of the common man, the Baltic peasant.

* * *

Lithuania, as a well organised powerful State, was saved from the Knights and was even able to help the Letts effectively to intervene against them. By the middle of the thirteenth century Mindaugas, the Lithuanian King-Unifier, temporarily accepted Christianity; politically speaking, this meant a truce and a plea for the support of the Pope who crowned him King in 1252. Yet the struggle was soon resumed, Mindaugas repudiating the new faith to fight the Knights the more determinedly. Lithuania spread far into Ruthenia and in the fourteenth century turned

once more northward against German-ruled Latvia. Gediminas, *Rex Lettovinorum et multorum Ruthenorum*, who set up his capital at Vilnius (Vilna), forced the bishop of Riga to acknowledge his sovereignty. In 1325 he had allied himself with Ladislaus of Poland to safeguard his rear, Polish interest being identical with his, since she was cut off from the sea by the German knights. In fact, the fight for Polish access to the sea was then to last for a hundred years from 1306 onwards, only to be interrupted once by Casimir the Great who signed a peace, or truce rather, with the knights. The fight put up by Gediminas with Polish assistance was continued by his grandson, Jogaila (Jagiello), who married Hedwig, the young queen of Poland. For a while, after 1386, he ruled thus over both States, having formally, on behalf of all Lithuanians, adopted Christianity. This adoption proved to be final, and with the disappearance of the last pagans from Europe, the Popes' interest in the crusading knights began to fade. Together with his cousin Vytautas, to whom he surrendered the government of Lithuania according to the Compact of Vilnius (1401), Jogaila defeated the Knights in the famous battle of Tannenberg on 15 July 1410.

Three years later the Lithuanian nobles were made the equals of Polish noblemen, and the social history of Lithuania thus became not wholly unlike the history of the other Baltic states. A rift opened up between noblemen and peasant that was to burden the history of the Baltic lands down to our own days. The process of Lithuanian-Polish assimilation, on the plane of aristocratic society, was no quick smooth development. There was for instance in 1431 a rising of Lithuanian noblemen who tried to regain complete independence and even accepted help from the Russians and the Knights. They failed, and soon Poland, under Casimir IV, another Lithuanian-Polish ruler of the Jagiellonian line, set out for the final attack on the Knights. By 1466, with the Peace of Thorn (Torun), the Knights were exhausted, and Poland-Lithuania established herself, with the help of Czech mercenaries, along the Baltic Sea. The coast, lost at the beginning of the fourteenth century, had been regained. The importance of this was well recognised—the Czechs taking home, as a token, bottles filled with sea-water. The territory won included Danzig whose merchants acknowledged the Jagiellonian as their king; while they kept their autonomy at home, the king was to levy customs in their port.

Thus the conception of a 'Free City' of Danzig which came to fruit in 1919 dates back some 450 years: the laws of geography lie heavy on man's fate in so ancient a continent as Europe.

Half a century later East Prussia too formally accepted Polish-Lithuanian overlordship. About this time Lithuania was given codified laws, the famous Statute, which came into force in 1530 and contained more than the privileges of the nobles and the rights of their legislative senate: there was, attached to it, a rudimentary codex of civil and criminal law which remained the basis of Lithuanian life till 1839 and 1849. Noblemen alone had the right to exercise authority, to travel abroad, to sell goods and dispose of serfs—though they could not kill serfs without paying a fine. Lithuania was thus ordered on lines very similar to those of Poland and on 1 July 1569 the temporary union, effected between them intermittently by their rulers (Jogaila's marriage to Hedwig; Sigismund's to the Lithuanian princess Barbe Radvila or Radziwill), was transformed into a permanent union, the "Union of Lublin". Part-reason for this was their common Roman-Catholic tradition and their reaction to Luther's teaching which had been accepted by the rest of the Baltic peoples. Jesuits, the modern spiritual guise of the crusading brothers of the Roman Catholic church, founded their first school in Poland a few years before 1569. Vilnius University too was originally a Jesuit school, being elevated to a university in 1575. Lithuania and Poland were to remain bound together. Ironically, it was the work of the last Lithuanian ruler, the last in the line founded by Jogaila. Both States were to go under together. Both were to re-emerge on the strength of the national, not the monarchical principle—two distinct units, Lithuania and Poland, liberated both in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GOLDEN DAYS

With the end of the sixteenth century the forces that eventually went to make our modern world stretched their hand to the Baltic and gripped the peoples on its shores. The laws of sea-power, applied on so grandiose a scale by Elizabethan England, were being learned in the North. The struggle between the feudal State of Polish-Lithuanian noblemen on the one side and the Swedish crown, basing itself on a strongly independent peasantry, on the other, soon ended in Sweden's favour. Thus it looked as if the Baltic nations would develop on the lines of Sweden herself. They were soon on the way to becoming nations of yeomen, as independent as any in Northern or Western Europe. With a Sweden triumphant, the short-lived interventions of the Danes in the West and the Russians in the East were quickly forgotten. When Sweden collapsed under the impact of the new colossus in the East, the awakening, however, was the more fearful. Peter the Great too had learned the lessons of sea-power, and his Northern War brought to an abrupt end the golden days of Swedish rule.

The drama of Sweden's rise and fall opened with Poland-Lithuania holding all the stakes. Sigismund Augustus, the last Jagiellon, knew of the sea—as a means to power and influence—from his mother, a Venetian: Mediterranean experience helped him to shape the fate of the Baltic peoples. Having linked Lithuania firmly to Poland, he pushed northward, winning 'Livonia' and transforming the Latvian province of Kurzeme (Courland) into a dependency. In marrying his own sister off to the Duke of Finland he set his State well on the road to becoming a formidable sea-power. A Polish-Lithuanian fleet was built in the 1570's and maintained against all Danish oncomers who tried to destroy the new rival in time. When Danzig

attempted to break away, she was naturally helped by Danes and even by a contingent of Scotsmen. These threats from the West were soon overcome, however. More serious seemed the threat from the East, from the Russian land-power. Ivan III pushed the Poles back with Tartar help and endangered the Eastern Baltic. But he married his daughter Helen to Alexander, the Lithuanian Grand Duke (in 1495) and left the Lithuanian noblemen undisturbed "on condition that they submitted to the Great Prince of Moscow in all matters of foreign policy." His son, Tsar Vasili IV, married Helen Glinskaia, a Lithuanian refugee, that is one of those Lithuanians who preferred joining the free frontier tribes along the Dnieper to accepting union with Poland. Helen Glinskaia herself ruled Russia a short while during the minority of her son, Ivan IV, who was to lose all his Baltic possessions to Stephen Bathory, the Hungarian King of Poland, by 1582. In spite of his origin, Bathory was taught the secret of sea-power: "You know," his widow told the Lithuanian district councils, "the importance of the rule of the open sea without which the largest States must remain weak. On the other hand, even the smallest State wins immediately in importance through free access to the sea and through the possession of ports."

This, indeed, was the explanation of the new forces at work, turning the Baltic States into the North-Eastern cockpit of Europe, a second Flanders. When a Swede of the House of Vasa became Poland's elected King, the Baltic States formed the battleground for the warring Vasas of Sweden and Poland. Bathory's successor, his nephew Sigismund, was the son of John III, a Vasa from Sweden, and of Catherine, a Jagiello. Twice he crossed the Baltic to regain Sweden for the Roman Catholic faith and to found a kingdom clasping both the Southern and the Northern shores of the Baltic. Yet, instead of becoming the master of a maritime State, he was defeated by the Swedish peasant armies. Saving his life with difficulty only, he made a stand on Estonian soil and soon further retreated, step by step and land by land, to Latvia, Lithuania, East Prussia and Danzig. Only in his drive Eastward did he seem more successful since his son, Wladislaus, was actually accepted by one group in Moscow as Tsar of Russia (in February 1610). But here too he finally failed. The phantom of a united Slav State, comprising Russia, Poland and Lithuania, quickly disappeared. The Romanoffs, in-

stalled in 1613, as well as the advancing Vasas of Sweden saw to that.

Gustavus Adolphus, the greatest of all the gifted members of the House of Vasa, landed in 'Livonia' in 1621, appeared off Danzig, razed the fortress of Hela and advanced through East Prussia after a landing without resistance. His brother fell on the fields of Latvia, but Latvia and Estonia were his; indeed, so was the whole East Baltic shore, including Danzig, by 1630. His strength lay in his peasant armies whom he inspired with the Reformer's faith—a Protestant and a liberator he seemed to more than the Estonian and Latvian farmer. Even his enemies realised this. Polish cavalry having proved useless against him, the rulers of Poland thought seriously of land reform and of taxing even noblemen. They were too late. Unreformed, feudal Poland was defeated. The year 1632 saw the death of Sigismund and the destruction of the Polish fleet. For Latvia and Estonia, however, the golden days of Swedish rule had dawned. With the truce of Altmark of 1629 a long spell of peace began for them. Two, even three generations, for the first time since the appearance of the Teutonic Knights, ploughed their fields without the perpetual fear that yet another neighbour, yet another invader, was on the move.

The seventeenth century, indeed, was the happiest period the Baltic peasant saw before 1917 when he was to begin to shape his own fate. Already in 1601—for the first time in Baltic history!—it was the peasant for whom a King moved. Charles IX demanded "that the peasants of the noblemen and the others here in this country"—he was speaking in Tallinn—"shall be allowed to send their children to school and to let them learn a trade. We further want them to be allowed, without hindrance, to have themselves put to use as they like, because to keep children as slaves is not done in Christendom and has been discontinued there many years ago . . ." The Baltic barons, descendants of the Knights, protested vehemently, saying that the peasants themselves did not ask for any change: had they not told King Eric that it was sheer kindness if they were allowed to keep their lives! Some barons who had emigrated from war-devastated regions to settle in Sweden "did not give up their bad habit of oppressing the peasants so that Gustavus Adolphus threatened to take away the small farms granted them out of kindness." The majority, sitting in their castles in the Estonian and Latvian countryside, carried out even worse

oppression, and it needed very strong pressure from Sweden to improve the peasants' lot.

With the advent of Swedish rule peasant life became almost bearable. The year 1631 saw the foundation of Tallinn's Grammar School; 1632 the foundation of the University of Tartu (Dorpat in German), for centuries to come the most famous seat of learning in Eastern Europe. Its charter had been signed by Gustavus Adolphus himself at Nuremberg. Subsidised by Charles XI a South-Estonian bible appeared in 1686, thus following Luther's Shorter Catechism published in 1554. The first Catechism in Estonian had appeared even earlier, in 1535, eleven years before Martin Luther's death, and had been printed in Wittenberg itself. The Baltic peoples lived close to European thought, formed an integral part of it. Charles X granted a thirty years' patent to a Lett for the first Swedish bank (1656) and transferred the iron and steel industry, already established at Riga, to Eskilstuna. For the first time dates thus stood for progress and work, not for battles by invading forces.

The background to such progress was provided by the great land reform carried out by Sweden. With it Estonia and Latvia joined West Europe once and for all. Whereas Poland and Russia followed a different route—leading through the vale of serfdom for many centuries—there grew up a stock of Estonian and Latvian yeomen who would never be able to forget, even when it was taken from them, the independence gained by them in the seventeenth century. Naturally, it was not mere consideration for the peasant that moved the Swedish Kings. But, as with all great moves forward, it proved practical and effective in strengthening the Swedish State and its army, founded on a strong peasantry, precisely because it corresponded to the longing in man's soul for liberty and freedom. Charles XI of Sweden in particular was a most determined reformer, almost a revolutionary in the lands acquired on the southern shores of the Baltic. He deserved the name of the 'Peasant King', originally coined by the Barons as an expression of contempt. Overriding their protests he set up a Commission for the Reduction of Domains. In the 1680's some five-sixths of the Livonian domains were thus taken away from the descendants of the old Teutonic Knights. The land was leased out to small-holders. The hereditary lease-holders, too, were supervised so that they would not call on peasants for more labour than was fixed and entered in the 'work rolls'. As a result Sweden's income rose by leaps and

bounds and the nobility's shrunk painfully. The very success in the financial field, however, prevented the reforms from being taken to their logical conclusion. Contrary to the proposals made by Charles XI in 1689 no liberation of serfs was carried out. This, originally a drawback only, turned to disaster when Sweden's rule over the Baltic collapsed.

For a short while Kurzeme (Courland), the Latvian province, gained a position of almost international importance under Jekabs—Duke James (1642-82). Like Peter the Great after him, he went to Paris, England and Holland; like Peter of Russia he learned to build ships. He traded with the world and gained colonies in West Africa. A staunch supporter of Charles II of England, he entered into close trading relations with the Stuart King. He was married to a sister of the Great Elector, the man who put Prussia on the political map of Europe. The Duchy, having been firmly established as a sea-power, enjoyed independence and no small measure of prosperity right down to the end of the eighteenth century.

War had moved away from the Baltic lands—to Denmark, to Poland. Yet, it returned in redoubled fury in the eighteenth century when Peter the Great and his long drawn-out Northern War against Charles XII of Sweden destroyed the chance of further peaceful growth under the benevolent rule of an enlightened Sweden. To be subdued thus by Russia was the harder blow not only because they had nothing in common, neither language nor 'race' nor history; not only because progress in the Baltic had been quick—the standard of learning and of literacy was to remain remarkably superior in the Baltic nations; but because Charles XII, helped by Lithuanians like the Sapiehas, had just secured peace to the South as well. When the hopes were highest, disaster overtook them. With the defeat Charles XII suffered at Poltava in 1709 the foundation of St. Petersburg, six years earlier, took on an ominous meaning: the Baltic peoples were doomed to change hands once more. Riga, Pärnu and Tallinn were Peter's in fact by 1710 and by treaty on 30 August 1721, the Peace of Nystad (in Finland). Not even the diplomacy of a Carteret, whom Britain had sent to Stockholm, had helped the Swedish Queen. Russia had secured more than an outlet to the Baltic Sea. She had established her rule over the nations on its South-Eastern shores. For the first time two ancient European nations, Estonians and Letts, had been added to the Russian Empire.

CHAPTER FOUR

RUSSIA JOINS EUROPE

With the foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703 Russia had joined Europe. A new chapter in European history had begun. At about the same time, in 1701, the ruler of Prussia had crowned himself King in the capital of his most ancient possession, East Prussia; Königsberg or 'Kingsborough' was named in commemoration of this fact. The scene was set for the German-Russian struggle over the lands still separating them. Peter had not remained satisfied with opening a window to the West and building ships for peaceful trade with the old world. He had done more than prevent the establishment of a Swedish kingdom on both shores of the Baltic. He had conquered the Estonian and Latvian lands and reduced them to the colonial status they had held under the Teutonic Knights. In fact, the Baltic barons were the first to profit from the new master. Already the Treaty of Nystad had promised the German nobility "full enjoyment of privileges, customs and prerogatives" (article nine). They now bartered their submission to the Tsar for the repeal of the Swedish land reform.

While the peasant set about making good the ravages of war, the nobility, jubilant, had a Commission of Restoration formed to undo the Swedish reduction of domains. Moreover, a nobleman's land was in future to be available for acquisition only by an inscribed member of the Baltic nobility. The so-called Declaration Rosen of 1739, made by the then Baron von Rosen to the Tsarist authorities, simply drew the logical conclusion from this reaction. Since everything, he declared, in and on

the land was the barons' by right of Teutonic conquest, all limits to their powers set by law could be removed at will. What protection the law might give to the serfs was a self-imposed limit of baronial rights, could therefore be cancelled by the barons at will. The peasant in the field felt this change for the worse acutely.

The rest of Europe, on the other hand, took long to appreciate the altered position in the Baltic Sea. If they cared nothing about the common man on the shores of the South-Eastern Baltic, now cut off from his connection with Western Europe, the statesmen of the day ought to have tried to measure the hidden strength of Russia, the new-comer to Europe. Instead, they were satisfied with poking fun at Peter's habits, very un-European and therefore an easy target, and at his entourage of some four hundred women who accompanied him on his visit to European courts. "Nearly all of these creatures carried richly clothed babies in their arms, and when asked if they were theirs, they replied that the Tsar had done them that honour." The appearance of the new-comer was easier to sum up than the political change that Europe was to undergo through Russia's joining Europe. Not even the help he gave to the Jacobites against the new Hanoverian house in England opened British eyes, and Sweden was not saved from the humiliation of Nystad. The British fleet, it is true, appeared in the Baltic every year between 1715 and 1721, and again in 1726-27, but it achieved nothing. "Our fleet," boasted George I, writing to the Tsarina, Catherine I, "has been sent to preserve the peace of the North and prevent your fleet from putting to sea." Yet the squadron off Tallinn in 1726 did nothing of the sort. Like Admiral Norris's squadrons before it proved ineffective, gave rise to irritation at most—and certainly did not help either Estonian or Lett against his baronial master with the Russian knout.

France, more deeply involved in European politics than Britain, awoke more quickly to Russia's strength. With the rise of Prussia she had begun to look to Poland, and with the Polish War of Succession of 1733 she intervened strongly in Eastern Europe, trying to place her own candidate, the father-in-law of Louis XV, on the throne of Poland. To her surprise and dismay she failed. After a first vain attempt she succeeded in landing troops at Danzig in 1734: yet, Danzig fell to the Russians, the French leader losing his life. With a significant gesture to

Central Europe her candidate to the Polish throne was then given the Duchy of Lorraine.

In 1742 Russia, for the first time, took her place in the system of English alliances when Carteret signed an agreement with her on the almost natural basis of promising English ships in exchange for Russian soldiers: if either Power was attacked by a third in the wars they were then waging against Sweden and Spain, twelve English men-of-war or 12,000 Russian soldiers were to move to the assistance of the ally. It was a modest beginning if compared with the alliance another two hundred years later. Neither was it a sign of mutual trust as yet. A similar treaty was signed in 1755 by George II and the Tsarina, Elizabeth, when 55,000 Russians together with forty to fifty galleys were to be kept at the ready in 'Livonia': it caused the famous Diplomatic Revolution when England and Russia found themselves, within the year, in opposite camps, England to win an Empire under Chatham's leadership and with the assistance of Prussia, while Russians did their best to defeat Britain's continental ally. When Frederick the Great urged the dispatch of a British squadron into the Baltic to keep Russia at bay, Britain had no ships to spare, her fleet being in the Mediterranean and, a few, off her newly-won base in the North Sea, at Emden.

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Lithuania, linked for good and ill with Poland, followed Latvia and Estonia into the realm of Russia within the same century. The last Polish King, Stanislaus Poniatowski, entrusted the government of the country to a Czartoryski, the political head of whose family was Grand Chancellor of Lithuania. But no politician could save the kingdom from his three neighbours, Russia, Prussia and Austria, bent on overwhelming the lesser Powers that separated them. In three partitions, classical and infamous examples of the power politics of the past—of the past, that is, if we pursue the peace principles of self-determination—Poland and Lithuania disappeared from the political map of Europe. Practically all of Lithuania went to Russia. The rising of Kosciuzko, the Polish-Lithuanian patriot, while momentarily succeeding in both the old Lithuanian and Polish capitals, Vilnius and Warsaw, could not restore national independence. Yet, like their Baltic brothers, Lithuanians preserved a kind of internal independence—an autonomy granted, of course, not to

the mass of the peasants but to the few, to the privileged landed gentry. The Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian peasant remained subject to the big landowner first, and was the Tsar's subject afterwards. Ironically enough, it was the German-born Tsarina, Catherine II, the Great, who, when visiting her Latvian and Estonian provinces in 1764, recognised the misery of the native farmer under the Baltic barons' rule. The list of reforms she thought necessary was revealing as regards the state of affairs under this master race restored to power after the defeat of Sweden. Peasants, Catherine thought, ought to be allowed to own chattels-personal, even if the land was to remain the gentry's. Peasants ought not to be sold abroad, that was not outside her 'Western Provinces'; nor, she thought, must families be separated through sale, especially no husband from wife.

These Imperial demands were put to the governing body, the nobility's Diet, by the Tsarina's Governor-General, a Count Browne. Yet, with the exception of some pious wishes, vaguely expressed, nothing followed. Even the decree that the peasant's burden ought not to be increased was formulated in such a way as to make it a rule on paper only. Peasants remained the private property of the noblemen, "white niggers"—to be sold, auctioneered or exchanged for dogs or horses as can still be seen on contemporary etchings and paintings. At all times he could be, and was, driven to work. Fugitive serfs, as heretofore, were marked, branded in fact, unless the owner of the fugitive preferred to make doubly sure by cutting noses or ears off. It is true, under the pressure brought to bear by the Tsarina, the nobility granted the peasant the right to bring before a court law cases against his master. But the court itself remained the baron's privilege, and the peasant whose case was dismissed could, naturally, be whipped at his master's pleasure.

No, nothing came of these reforms: public auctioneering of serfs became illegal in 1771—yet in the very year of 1789 Valga, on the Latvian-Estonian border, witnessed another routine auction of serfs. Truly, it ought not to need the sneering of the Nazi-minded at the French Revolution to teach the world how great a day broke when we learned to pronounce the words *Liberté*, *Egalité*, *Fraternité*. We still speak them, I fear, with faltering lips. The world is still nearer to slavery and barbarity than to the fulfilment of the demands of 1789. "It is the inalienable right of every nation to live apart from others if it so pleases,

or, for the vindication of common interests, to unite with others if it likes. We glory in the principle that every nation, even though its territory be quite small, is absolute master in its own house, and must, in its rights, be treated an equal of the biggest." Is this the language of the Atlantic Charter, Franklin D. Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson; is it one of the makers of the British Commonwealth speaking or are the words taken from the American Declaration of Independence? They are, in a very real sense, from all of them. They express the spirit and the political principle of our Western World. They are part of ourselves, even if the actual quotation is taken from Carnot, speaking as one of the makers of the French Revolution.

Thus it was more than a symbolic act when the remnants of the Bourbon army, some five thousand men all told, together with the prince who was to be restored to the throne of the anti-revolutionary France of 1815, went to 'Livonia'. Louis XVIII, indeed, held court in exile at Jelgava (Mitau), Latvia's second town, fitting in perfectly with the baronial society of the land. If he was expelled, in 1801, this was a matter of political expediency as Napoleon's star was rising. Bourbon France and the reactionary Russia of Tsar Paul I, were of the same spirit—the spirit of inherited privilege.

Even the attempt, made by Catherine, to break the noblemen's monopoly at least in so far as could be done by granting their privileges to all big landowners, whether of the baronial guild or not, and by letting the townsmen take part in local administration, had failed. The 'old order' of baronial irresponsibility remained untouched. Subject to this, the Baltic States had become Russian through Peter's and Catherine's conquests. The great Power which had arisen in Eastern Europe had decided to keep open more than its connecting channels to Europe. She held a country twice the size of Ireland that had been part of Swedish and thus of North-Western civilization. It was nationalism, the growth of the national conscience in the conquered Baltic lands, that was to bring about a different solution.

* * *

The reaction to conquest and to serfdom, indeed, was close at hand; it came neither from Russia, though, nor from the privileged nobility, Baltic German or Polish. The religious movement of Zinzendorf's Moravian Brothers with its Christian teaching of brotherhood had touched the Baltic serf deeply. The

same century produced men like J. G. Herder, an East Prussian, who saw early the romantic side of the sources of nationhood. Herder had first found employment in Riga and he realized the need for a radical reform. Following J. J. Rousseau, he felt it was through education that the Baltic peasant could be saved. His sketch of school reforms which he based on comparative studies of schooling in the German States, in Holland, England and France, has been preserved. "Humanity," he wrote, "shudders with horror at the blood which was shed there. Perhaps the time will come when they will be set free, will be established again—for Humanity's sake." He looked ahead and saw what was to go to make the glory of the twentieth century, the liberation of oppressed nations, of Estonians, Letts, Lithuanians . . .

Other teachers and parsons followed in his footsteps. There were J. G. Eisen von Schwarzenberg (1717-79) whose book on the Livonian peasants appeared in the year of Catherine's visit to the Baltic; H. J. von Jannau (1735-1821) and especially Garlib Merkel (1769-1850) whose important book, characteristically called *The Letts, especially in Livonia, at the end of the Philosophical Century*, written in 1796, did for the Letts what J. Chr. Petri (1762-1851) did for *Estonia and the Estonians*. To make their work shine the brighter, Merkel's friend Kotzebue provides us with the touch needed to remind us of the reactionary world around them. Kotzebue had been given an estate in Estonia by Tsar Paul I and was at one time on the High Court of Appeal at Tallinn and President of the Magistracy of the whole of Estonia. He ought to have seen more than any other man of the misery of the Baltic peasantry. Yet, to the liberal and national students of the German universities after 1815 he became the personification of Russia's deadening influence. He was assassinated; his murder provided Metternich and his Holy Alliance of Austria, Russia and Prussia with an excuse for the ill-famed Carlsbad Decrees of 1819 to gag freedom throughout the German-speaking lands. "I deposit this book," said Merkel of his plea for the Letts, "within view of mankind, as evidence in the awful case which posterity—sooner or later—must bring against the suppressors of my country." Schiller's *in tyrannos* echoed round Europe.

The reaction to the Tsarist and baronial regime had originally been an educational movement. It soon became a movement for

the resurrection of national languages. From there to the awakening of national consciousness and to a political movement of liberation was but one step. The beginnings, by themselves, had thus been modest enough. When for instance P. E. Wilde, editor of a weekly called *Der Landarzt*, The Country Doctor, allowed A. W. Hupel, a pastor in Poltsamaa, to translate his medical advice into Estonian, little could he imagine that, one day, his memory would be honoured amongst those who helped Estonian to survive and grow. That was in 1766-67. Pastor Hupel also issued an Estonian Grammar and wrote, in German though, about 'The present local government in Riga and Reval' (Tallinn). Greater fame belonged to Gotthard Stender (1714-96) who set about translating the Latin classics into Latvian, thus giving Letts the reassurance that their ancient tongue deserved comparison with others. Mielke finally issued the Lithuanian-German Dictionary that opened the new, the nineteenth century. Immanuel Kant, the East Prussian who made some of the greatest contributions to the mind of man, wrote a Foreword to this dictionary in which he came forcibly out in favour of teaching Lithuanian children, all children, in their mother tongue. If Kant told his readers that such use of language makes for clearer thinking, how is it that political powers prevented it for so long—or is it just because of this truth that we witness so many attempts to force an alien language upon a powerless nation?

CHAPTER FIVE

IN THE WAKE OF WESTERN EUROPE

Despite the Baltic nobility and despite the Tsarist rule, Europe, at the beginning of the last century, had been told in some detail the story of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian farmer, politically almost extinct, but as a living force distinct and even growing. Europe, abolishing slavery overseas, had been made aware of these suppressed nations, kept in serfdom—slavery—on the Baltic shores for all the ideals of the enlightened eighteenth century. The peasant himself, seeing his customs and his language noted and cared for by some exceptional men, forerunners of a new era, had become keenly aware of his own undeserved fate.

An attempt to transfer this discovery into political reality was made right at the beginning of the nineteenth century when, in 1802, an Estonian Reform Bill introduced new peasant law-courts and enabled farmers to own more private chattels. *Iggaiüks*, that is 'Everyone', were its opening words. *Iggaiüks* caught the imagination of the people and became, to them, their own slogan for a new age of liberty, equality and fraternity. The torch kindled in the days of the Enlightenment, shining over American Independence and the French Revolution, carried by the social thinkers of the new century, this torch was to set aflame, and to set free, the mind of man in the Baltic.

Progress was slow however. In 'Livonia', where the reform bill went further than in Estonia, it went no further than making the peasant a legal person, to be sold only together with, not separate from, the soil he worked. This Livonian Peasant

Law was the outcome of the visit paid to the Baltic by the new Tsar, Alexander I. If his visit thus proved of slightly greater avail than the Tsarina's journey of 1764, after Poland's first partition, this was due partly to the political advance made by Western Europe since; in part, too, it was the result of the work of some at least of the Baltic barons themselves. Baron von Sievers, for instance, had read the signs of the times and had tried to move the nobility's Diet, asking them to ameliorate the lot of the peasant. He had impressed upon the visiting Tsar the urgency of a reform. But the nobility disliked the whole notion and by simply mistranslating the Russian text, they robbed the reform of its meaning. Instead of reform all round, instead of collective measures lifting all serfs to a standard worthy of man, they preferred to hold on to the old order and to grant only individual declarations of liberation later in the century.

In the meantime Tsar and Emperor, Alexander and Napoleon, met at the Lithuanian-Prussian frontier, in Tilsit, to divide the world between them. "Spheres of influence" were marked out as was customary in the days of power politics. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia remained within the Russian orbit. Napoleon's subsequent change of front and attack on his ally of Tilsit brought no real alteration for them. Nor did the Congress of Vienna where the Tsar, with Britain and his continental allies, sat as victor at the conference table. He had acquired Finland a short while ago; he was resolved to keep what he held, Poland as well as the Baltic nations. In fact, the notion of nationality was decidedly unpopular with the Great Powers at Vienna, notwithstanding the fact that the overthrow of Napoleon would have been impossible without the rising surge of European nationalism. More revolutions, civil and international wars had to shake humanity before the principles of self-determination, tempered by self-willed collaboration, were to be proclaimed aloud.

After Vienna Lithuania remained attached to the nine Latvian and five Estonian administrative districts of her 'Western Provinces' set up by Catherine in 1783. So-called 'Congress Poland' remained a pseudo-autonomous Russian province, and when the Poles and Lithuanians rose in 1830, in the wake of the Greek, French and Belgian revolutions, the Tsars merely transferred Lithuania to what now became their Polish province. Nicholas I opened the customs barriers between Lithuania and Poland to strengthen not Lithuanian agriculture but his attempts at general

Russification. The three hundred years old law, the Lithuanian Statute, was done away with and replaced by Russian law. In 1863 the Poles rose a second time. Indirectly the Lithuanian peasant profited from the bloody repression of this rising as the Tsar struck at the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen and thus, quite unwittingly of course, pulled partly away the exploiters' hand. But he hit hard Lithuanian national aspirations at the same time. Having long closed Vilnius University and barred all means of higher education to any but russified students who had forsworn their nationality, the Tsar's Government now banned all publications in Lithuanian. For forty years, from 1863 to 1904, no single book or periodical in this ancient tongue could legally be printed anywhere in Russia. Thus the conquest of the Lithuanian lands was to become, according to the wishes of the police State, a conquest of the mind also.

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Agricultural laws, having once been altered at the beginning of the century, could not remain the same in Estonia and Latvia for any length of time. In 1816 the nobility had to give way and formally to abolish serfdom in Estonia. Kurzeme followed in 1817, 'Livonia' in 1819. To begin with, this freedom meant increased misery to the labourer thus released from bondage. The peasants, it is true, acquired surnames (which were mostly handed out by the German master and were, consequently, German rather than Estonian or Latvian). Legally he was entitled to behave as free men do. Economic slavery, however, became worse, and peasant land actually decreased since the peasant, in winning his personal liberty, lost the hereditary right to the land where he had held it previously. Freed serfs became agricultural workers now, roving landless, unattached to the soil which was the barons'. Tenancies were generally given for less than three years. Small wonder then that even yeomen returned to the status of labourers, to the depressed classes, living at the mercy of the Baltic barons whose estates sucked up land on which whole groups of peasants had lived before.

Agricultural crises followed, turning into unrest and small civil wars at times, for instance into the Holy Lake War near the Wirz Lake in 1841. The Russian Orthodox Church, claiming of old a world mission to bring about harmony of religious outlook and of social order, used these disturbances for a conversion drive against Protestants and Roman Catholics alike. Starting

from Protestant Riga where an Orthodox bishopric was founded in 1836, the rumour was spread that Holy Russia would give land to all who forswore Rome or Luther. Thus Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian peasants were submitted to a religious conversion movement at the very moment when, economically and quite literally speaking, they had lost all ground under their feet. The Tsar's administration was decided to transform all three nationalities into Russians pure and simple. Can one wonder, then, that "the former subject races of the Russian Empire do not love the Russians"? And the Russian writer, G. Soloveytschik, in stating this fact, added: "Whether this is wise or short-sighted; whether this is good or bad, it is nevertheless a fact." In 1864, a hundred years after Catherine's visit, Count Bobrinski was sent to North 'Livonia' to investigate on behalf of the Tsar into the position of the Church. He reported that he was pained to witness "the abasement of Russian Orthodoxy . . . and the violence exercised against conscience." But violence went on, unabated. Lutheran Ministers in particular were persecuted in the unavailing attempts to win the Baltic nations for the Orthodox faith and Russian nationality.

A Baltic Committee or, to give it its full name, The Committee for the Regulation of Living Conditions of Livonian Peasants, finally set to work to overcome unrest and stabilise agriculture which had suffered much. Spurred on by the wave of revolutions that shook all Europe in 1848 and disposed of Metternich himself, the hated personification of reactionary Europe, the Committee produced a new land law within the year. To baronial and slightly increased peasant land it added a third category, the so-called 'quota land'. It could be added to the squire's estate if it was intended for the landless labourers there. In practice this meant that in 'Livonia' one-fifth of peasant land was lost to the barons in the guise of the labourers' 'quota'. To make sure that the liberal ideas of 1848 had no unwanted repercussions Russia proceeded to close all bookshops in Riga and Tartu (Dorpat) for over two years and to seize the books considered revolutionary—like Encyclopaedias and the poems by Alphonse de Lamartine (perhaps the title of his *Meditations* had been obnoxious to the State censor?).

This affected the educated rather than the mass of the peasant population struggling to keep alive. Of literature in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania there was little as yet in the circumstances,

except for folk-songs of great beauty, which have come down to us throughout the centuries. Forty years had passed by since Pastor Hupel's Estonian weekly when, in the year of Russia's and Austria's defeat at Austerlitz, two clergymen issued the *Tartu County People's Weekly*, followed in 1821 by the *Countrymen's Weekly*, edited by O. W. Masing; this lived till 1824. From then onward only official gazettes appeared in the peasants' own tongue. Another thirty years went by until, in the great year of 1848 itself, appeared J. W. Jannsen's (1819-90) periodical *Sannumetoja*, The Herald, which contained stories in Estonian and F. R. Kreutzwald's (1803-82) 'The World—what it contains'. Similarly, a Latvian newspaper had first appeared in 1822, the *Latviesu Avizes*. If unpolitical in their contents, their very existence stirred the imagination of the peasants. The editor of the Latvian paper, Pastor K. F. Watson, thought that "no people can be lifted up except through its own language, given them by God to safeguard their nationality." It took a whole generation until there were enough Latvian students in Tartu to found a national association, as the Estonians had done, with its own weekly, *Mahjas weesis*, The Guest.

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If these were beginnings, signs that the soul of these suppressed nations was about to stir, economic pressure all through the first half of the nineteenth century had been too strong to allow the peasant to take his hand off the plough or to let his mind, for more than a moment, wander away from work. If it had been peace, if no new foreign invader had come to devastate the countryside, the two alien masters, the German baron and the distant Russian governor, had been there all the time. When Russia, in her attempt to gain the outlet of the Black sea, had met with the armed resistance of Britain and France, the peasant on the Baltic shores had remained almost untouched by the difficulties of the Russian Empire. True, looking out across the shining Baltic Sea, he could catch a glimpse of a combined British-French fleet, some of them already steamships, with Sir Charles Napier flying his flag in the *Duke of Wellington*. But the fleet, in Napier's own words, had been "very badly manned, all the officers being perfectly unacquainted with the Baltic and the difficulties of the navigation" in those shallow waters. It had taken the Aaland Islands which rule the Bothnian Gulf; for

the rest it was satisfied with blockading the Finnish Bay: "The lights are all out in the Baltic," Napier reported. Cronstadt he found too strongly defended to take or even to attack. Only Liepaja (Libau), the Latvian port which is quite beyond any Russian power to hold against an attack from the sea, was occupied. No shot was fired though. "The (Tsar's) troops," the occupying officer wrote in his official report from the Coast of Courland, 18 May 1854, "had left the town so pitifully to its fate and the people had assisted in getting the (Russian) vessels out." In fact, the burgomaster's submission was free from any trace of resentment, "there being no Military or Civil Governor"—he must have felt like adding "left". They had been left to their fate.

Otherwise the whole war of 1854-56 passed the Baltic peasant by; his grand-children, though, were to look out for the re-appearance of the British navy, this time to greater effect. By then Sir Charles Napier's words had sunk in: "Behind our fleet," he had written, "there is nothing . . . If at any time our Baltic fleet should, under circumstances of great temporary disadvantages, be brought into action with the very powerful fleet of the enemy, and in that action should sustain defeat, in three weeks from that time (the enemy's) fleet, full of troops, might be on our coasts, and, even as the Dutch once were, on the Thames." Napier had written of the Russian fleet; later it held good of the German fleet. Whosever it was, Britain's interest in the Baltic remained the same.

Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian peasants knew nothing of a naval strategy that could influence their life. They were still concerned, almost exclusively, with the land. And only with the return of more peasant land to the freed labourer, that was from 1858-60 onwards, did their life become easier. The introduction of money rent, moreover, brought greater liberty. It was money, replacing personal servitude, that proved the real liberator. And then came the liberation of the serfs throughout Russia, a part-consequence of the shock of the lost Crimean War. Lithuanians thus followed Estonians and Letts into freedom from slavery. "Now one begins," said the Cornhill Magazine in March 1861, "to perceive that there is a Russian people, and that it has a will, desires, and an intelligence of its own." Serfdom was abolished for well over forty million human beings

(and American slavery was to end within a few years' time); law-courts were to sit in public; some freedom of expression was to be given to the press—and all of this within five years of the Tsar's death. Garibaldi's liberators were more than the talk of the day then. A new light had been kindled for the oppressed, individuals and nations alike. The masters' right to whip the peasant had come to an end. The introduction of passport regulations for all gave the chance to all to move more easily. Emigration was thus added as another possibility of escape from political or economic bondage. Money rent and liberty of movement made the Baltic serf, freed by law in 1816-19 and 1861, almost a free man as far as he himself, as an individual, was concerned. For the independence of his nation, though, he had still to wait and to fight, to struggle for two more generations.

CHAPTER SIX

ON THE EVE

With the 1860's begins, in truth, the story of modern Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, their spiritual awakening going hand in hand with economic reforms. J. W. Jannsen, already connected with 1848 and all it stood for, founded an Estonian daily paper, the *Perno Postimees* in 1857. From then onward the Estonian nation was never to be without its own organ written in its own tongue. In 1869, when his daughter, Lydia Koidula, had already written some of her best poetry, he organised the first National Singing Festival, a colourful mass pageant of folk-lore. It has been held ever since, every five years, right down to 1938: "a choir of 12,000 singing before an audience of eighty thousand", said a description of the ninth Festival. It seemed a nation burst out in song—singing the simple songs that had been taught by generations of Estonian peasants to their children. Through the common experience of these mass meetings and national festivals Estonian unification quickly grew. In 1862, moreover, F. R. Kreutzwald published his compilation of the *Kalevipoeg*, the Estonian national saga, written in the tradition of the old Nordic sagas with which it can rank even if parts of it are Kreutzwald's rather than traditional.

K. Valdemars (1825-91), a leader in Latvia's national awakening, was a man of many perfections. In the 1860's he founded several free schools for naval cadets. Within the first fifteen years of their existence on the Latvian coast about 6,800 young sailors had learned their trade there and helped to lay the foundation of the Latvian fishing and shipping industry. When

Russia, in the wake of her russification drive later in the century, suppressed these schools, the Letts had become a sea-faring nation. Valdemars also built ocean-going ships as well as other craft. For some time he was a Russian civil servant and as such had himself appointed, in 1862, censor of a Latvian newspaper, *Peterburgas Avizes*, St. Petersburg News, to enable its editor, J. Alunans, to take a more independent line in furthering Latvia's national aspirations. At about the same time, K. Barons (1835-1923) collected the innumerable Latvian folksongs and edited them, in some seven volumes, under the title *Latvju Dainas*. A. Kronvalds (1837-75), like the Estonian Jannsen, organised the first Latvian Singing Festival in 1873. For it K. Baumanis wrote what was to become free Latvia's national anthem, *Dievs, Sveti Latviju*, God bless Latvia. Kronvalds had studied in Berlin where he had learned to admire the spirit of 1848 and of the progressive national movement as distinct from the reactionary spirit of national exclusiveness. "My heart leaped," he wrote at the time, "to see and hear men like Virchow . . . But many of the Germans with us are of a different brand . . ." His main work, *National Aims*, became the manifesto of the Young Latvian movement. Like Valdemars in his *Things Patriotic and Useful*, he saw in the promotion of the national language a means only to an end, to the opening up of educational facilities for all Letts. Small nations, he pleaded, have contributed greatly to our common heritage and can well stand on their own feet. "These are questions," another great Lett commented in 1923, "which, to-day, when small nations have proved their ability to live and to create, would not cause any great differences of opinion." Could he say so to-day, when a second world war for the rights of all the nations, big and small, is drawing to its close? Yet, he was right. The right to live, to self-determination, has proved irresistible, can be resisted only at the price of wars.

Lithuania, finally, found her spiritual leader in Dr. Jonas Basanavicius (1853-1927) who carried on the tradition of men like F. Kelch (1801-77). He had lived in Bulgaria as a country doctor before he began to fight the Russian ban on Lithuanian publications by editing *Ausra*, The Dawn, in 1883. Twenty-two years later he presided over the First Vilnius Conference which asked, in that year of the Russian revolution, for Lithuanian independence and the use of her own language in schools. The Dawn

had to be smuggled into Lithuania from Tilsit, just across the border in East Prussia, and this was done with great effect for over three years. By then Russian intervention in Berlin caused its suppression. Yet, while *The Dawn's* forerunners in Lithuanian, like *Lietuviška Zeitunga*, published in Klaipeda (Memel) in 1872, had really been a German undertaking—it was continued under the homely name of *Memeler Steampaddler*—the venture of Dr. Basanavicius bore fruit. From then onwards the stream of Lithuanian literature smuggled into Lithuania by patriots never ceased. Underground papers like *Varpas* (1889), *Užininkas* (1890), *Tevynės Sargas*, *The Country Guardian* (1896) were only a few of these, all carrying on this courageous work. They stirred the soul of the Lithuanian peasantry and prepared them for the coming days of independence when literature as such, without political implications, could flourish in the midst of a free nation—when works like H. Tammsaare's great novel *Truth and Justice* (1926-33) were to appear, a book that can rank with the great novels of world literature.

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Parallel to these national moves went economic improvement, partly based on Russia's increasing interchange with the rest of Europe. Riga, Tallinn, Paldiski (Baltic Port), Liepaja (Libau), Ventspils (Windau) became ports of growing importance. The first railway in the Baltic States was built in 1861 to connect Riga with the interior, Daugavpils (Dvinsk), up the Daugava. 1870 saw the construction of the Paldiski-Tallinn-Petersburg railway; Tallinn-Tartu (1876), Tartu-Valga-Riga (1889) were soon added, all in Russia's broad gauge. With increased trade and prosperity the peasant's lot was improving, even if he was always kept several steps behind the privileged. Since 1863 all except Jews were entitled to acquire land, tenants having been given the right to the first offer or, if they did not, or could not, make use of it, they were to receive compensation before they lost their tenancy. Tenants were also guarded against irresponsible increase or sudden ending of their leases. If only they had been economically strong enough to stand up to baron and nobility, progress might have been quicker. An emigration wave—following the introduction of passports and, as in the Ireland of the Forties, bad harvests—began in 1867-8. Soon there were Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian 'colonies' in the big towns and wide fields of Britain and the United States of America.

These Baltic nationals abroad, living in the midst of the free society of the great Western democracies, helped materially, just as the Irish and Polish emigrants, did, in their own good time so that the people back home reached independence too. Others, a real army of harvest workers, especially from Lithuania, went every summer into Germany to work on the land. Germans read of them in Hermann Sudermann's *Frau Sorge*, Mrs. Worry, and his *Lithuanian Stories*, depicting the poverty of a staunch peasant people. At that time, the Baltic peoples seemed fairly safe from Germany which tried, under Bismarck, to keep on the best of terms with Russia. Even Treitschke, the Prussian nationalist, opposed German expansionist dreams in the East and tersely told the German Balts: "The frightful hatred that fills the native population throughout the centuries, cannot exist without reason."

In 1881, therefore, Russia felt the moment had come to settle once and for all, the baronial as well as the national aspirations in what she called her 'Western Provinces'. Alexander III who then acceded to the throne, decided on Russification without mercy. The new reign had originally been greeted by the three Baltic peoples as another occasion to urge their demands. Jakobson, on behalf of no less than seventeen Estonian organisations, had submitted a list of requests to the Russian Home Secretary. They had asked for a revision of the laws governing the sale of farms, so that peasants might the easier become owners; the price of land, it had been suggested, ought to be fixed by a State commission; peasants should be treated in law as equals of the barons; judges, it had been asked, should not be exclusively nominated by the barons and should use Estonian in court; administrative borders, the Estonians had suggestively submitted, should be drawn in accordance with ethnographic frontiers. These demands illuminated the state of all three peoples. Alexander III received Jakobson personally in audience. In a flash he saw where to begin and what to do to further his own aims, as yet unrevealed, of turning every subject into a Russian after his heart. The Diets of the Baltic Barons were soon faced with an Imperial demand to introduce Russian provincial government rules and thus to admit into their exclusive Chambers non-baronial representation. This, clearly, undermined their privileged position; such admittance, they retorted, would destroy their privileges granted in the days of 1710-21. It "would ruin the

prosperity of the country," they said, meaning their own prosperity based on privileges instead of exertion. In fairness to historical truth it must be added that some barons, again amongst them a Baron von Sivers, had long seen that the privileges of feudalism ought to be given up, and J. von Sivers had actually suggested corresponding regulations in 1866 and 1869—without avail. The so-called reform now, worked out by the Livonian, Courlandian and Estonian Diets, brought no change. The native populations remained excluded from the administrative councils of their own land.

A few years went past. Then the Tsar and his Governors, M. A. Sinoviev in 'Livonia', F. Shakovski in Estonia, acted. In 1887, Russian schools replaced German ones; in 1888 Russian police and Russian police rules were to be the exclusive safeguards of public order; in 1889 Russian law courts replaced whatever courts of justice there might have been before—the appeal court was to be Russian, in St. Petersburg. These were drastic changes, made by Tsarist decree. Rightly, but vainly, could the Baltic Barons, robbed of schools, judiciary and police, call this an "open breach of the constitution". The days of their privileges seemed numbered indeed, the more so when, to their intense surprise and disgust, neither Estonian nor Lett appeared moved, nor did they move to make common cause with them. German writers, down to 1918, have expressed their amazement at this attitude. "Whosoever wanted to educate himself," said one of them, "had to rely on German secondary schools and universities. Many Letts and Estonians, out of their own free will, turned German there." It never occurred to this writer, Baron Engelhardt, that this was hardly reason enough for Lett or Estonian to link up with the barons and protest against the Tsar's decrees. Nor did he understand that his statement was damning enough in the eyes of the young nations concerned. Whether they were taught in German or in Russian schools clearly was of small interest to them; whether they lost their sons and daughters through higher education to Germans or Russians could be of small concern to them—the fact that their own language, their own education, their own nation was smitten, suppressed and persecuted and stood no chance, was all that mattered. A struggle between Baltic Baron, therefore, and Russian administration left them unmoved unless it brought relief to their own persecuted nation.

The eight grammar schools in 'Livonia' in those days, now taken from the German, counted amongst their pupils 73.5% Germans and 4.5% Russians—78% of all students thus belonged, from the point of view of Estonians and Letts, to an alien population. Letts and Estonians, on the other hand, were represented by a combined figure of one hundred and ninety pupils, that was 3.7 plus 8.7% only. While the German writer, in quoting these figures, meant them to show the injustice of the Russian school ordinance, it never occurred to him that it might show up the stark fact of baronial privilege and of peasant suppression. The same applied to his figures for the students of Tartu University:

Students of Tartu University

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Germans	847	1,099	295	524
Russians (*)	135	431	1,293	1,854
<i>Foreigners all told</i>	982	1,530	1,588	2,378
Estonians	15	61	68	269
Letts	18	73	53	114
<i>Native Students all told</i>	33	134	121	383

(*) The figures for Russian students may include a few Poles and Lithuanians.

These figures show, as the German author who quoted them, wanted to show, the decline suffered by his own privileged class and the rise of the Russians, clearly the outcome of the Tsar's policy of russification throughout the land. But how much more impressive are they if looked at through the eyes of the Baltic nationals themselves. It was a very small corner indeed that was granted them, grudgingly, by first Germans and then Russians.

It goes without saying that this russification drive also worsened the position of the Lutherans in Estonia and Latvia, the Roman Catholics in Lithuania. Already in 1871 an international deputation of practically all Lutheran Churches had called upon Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian Chancellor, during his stay in South Germany and had begged him to improve the lot of the Protestants. Since it was a punishable offence for a member of the Greek Orthodox Church to leave it, Lutheran pastors were continually persecuted for supposedly 'inciting', as the State put it, faithful Orthodox to take that step. Ninety-three Lutheran pastors were eventually released from prison (in 1874) but with Alexander's accession a new wave of persecution overtook them,

and no intervention from their brethren abroad was of any avail. In 1890 the figure of pastors on trial was again sixty-six.

In the face of these difficulties the rise of the Baltic nations was nothing if not heroic. In fact, their new nationalism grew stronger under this pressure and from the 1890's onward it became more radical and more political than it had been before in the days of the rediscovery of their languages. Again the parallel to the language movement in Eire, with its political implications, almost personified in Dr. Douglas Hyde, seems remarkable. Renner's famous book on the *Struggle of the Austrian Peoples for the State* made a deep impression; what had been mildly liberal-national after 1848 turned easily social-democratic now. On the one hand, underground groups linked up with the revolutionaries who organised themselves inside Russia, especially in the big cities like St. Petersburg, close to the Baltic peoples: we shall catch a glimpse of them when the revolution of 1905 shook the Tsar's realm, already shaken by the loss of its fleet and the defeats suffered at the hands of the Japanese. Incidents like the deportation of some 138 Latvian Socialists in 1897 are thus easily understood. On the other hand, we witness open activity with increasingly successful attempts to further the national aims by legal means. Local Council after Local Council returned a native majority: 1901 saw an Estonian mayor take over in Valga; in 1904 the Estonians carried Tallinn so that by 1910, as a German baron sadly admitted, most local administrations were in Latvian or Estonian hands. This was the more remarkable as property owners only could vote in Tsarist Russia: "The Germans," another German writer stated openly, in 1915, "are favoured by this election law since they are generally well-off. Moreover, a clever trick is being used to give the vote to Germans who are no property owners. Well-to-do simply parcel their land out and nominally transfer parts of it to the have-nots amongst their followers . . ."

No legal tricks could save either privileged baronial society or the other alien ruler, Russia, from the pressure of the advancing Baltic nations. The short period of intensified russification under Alexander III hampered, but could not undo the rapid growth of their movement towards national independence. At the beginning of the twentieth century we find in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania a well organised national movement, based on the mass of the peasants, well served by a sound press of its

own. There were in Estonia *Postimees*, The Postman, edited since 1896 by Jaan Tonisson in Tartu, speaking for a Liberal group; the social-reformist *Teataja*, The Announcer, written since 1901 by Konstantin Päts and his friends in Tallinn and, also in the capital, the socialist *Uudised*, News, edited since the end of 1903 by Peeter Speek. Writers and readers of these dailies formed the basis for the final change from Russian rule to independence. The men who edited them were to play leading rôles in the drama of liberation and the establishment of self-government. What was true of Estonia was true of Latvia and especially its big capital Riga, the fourth largest city on the Baltic Sea. Lithuania's progress, if slower, was essentially the same. The Revolution of 1905 gave new hope to them all. Their exertion towards the end of the Four Years' War brought liberty to all three nations.

* * *

The Russian Revolution of 1905 found an immediate echo in the hearts of the Baltic Nations. In Lithuania the peasant union under J. Gabrys organised a mass meeting in the country's old capital; some two thousand Lithuanian leaders took part in this, the First Vilnius Conference which was presided over by the recognised leader of all Lithuanians, Dr. Basanavicius. "Since the present Tsarist Government," they declared, "is our worst enemy, we demand autonomy for Lithuania with a Diet in Vilnius, to be elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage." The State frontiers were to be drawn according to the freely expressed wish of the people concerned—the district of Suvalki, therefore, having sent delegates, would undoubtedly form part of it. In the meantime, until the demands were fulfilled, the Conference advised passive resistance, that was refusal of tax payment. The reaction of Tsarist officials to this was remarkable: "Aware of the conditions in which the population live," stated the Governor of Kaunas (Kovno) publicly, "I cannot but acknowledge that many of the wishes of the Lithuanian nation are just." He formally endorsed the need for reforms but urged Lithuanians to use the newly opened channels and address themselves to the Duma, Russia's Parliament-to-be. Soon afterwards, General Freze, Governor-General of Vilnius, Kaunas and Grodno granted the use of the mother tongue in schools.

In Estonia and 'Livonia' the consequences of the revolution were different only in so far as the main attack here was still

directed against the baronial privileges rather than a Russia which had given up, as patently futile, the attempts of turning Letts or Estonians into Russians. The drive of the Greek Orthodox Church, for instance, had stopped and religious tolerance had been proclaimed. In Tartu the Estonians held two meetings in that turbulent year of 1905, one under the Liberal Jaan Tonisson, another more radical meeting, under Jaan Teemant and Peeter Speek. These meetings put forward what must appear in retrospect as moderate demands, such as the return of 'quota' land to peasant ownership and the fixing of leases for at least twelve years. They also attacked the exclusive rights, held by the Baltic barons, of brewing beer, distilling and selling alcoholic drinks, who thus levied a kind of indirect tax of their own on the land. The Russian State reacted to these demands violently, a fact which showed once more the hold exercised by the German Balts over the Tsarist administration. Teemant and Päts, for instance, were condemned to death. They saved their lives only through immediate flight abroad.

A conference of county delegates, meeting in Riga on 2 December 1905, adopted similar resolutions. They looked forward to a "constituent assembly of Latvian counties which will draw up a final municipal project and will decide the land question in accordance with the actual needs of the farm hands." In the meantime, if noblemen were to try to dismiss their farm hands, their estates should be seized and all state intervention be repulsed. Another, very radical meeting, was held at the end of December in the 'Volta' factory at Tallinn and from then onward incendiarism swept the countryside, many baronial country seats suffering destruction at the hands of a landless population whose demands, all of them, had once more been refused. The baronial Diets only offered the introduction of three separate electorates, one for the barons, one for other property owners and one for the native peasant: in short, the Estonians and Letts were asked to become, at the most, a *tiers état*, a third 'estate'. This offer, if accepted, might have taken the country as far as the *ancien régime* of pre-revolutionary France. This was no empty rhetoric; the figures of representation suggested by the barons spoke for themselves: in Riga for instance eighteen German Balts would have been faced, at the most, by twelve Letts; in Cesis (Wenden) and Valga the proportion suggested was sixteen to twelve, in Tartu eighteen to fourteen. The landless and the poor, even under this scheme,

were not represented at all. They took the law into their own hands; they burnt down some of the country-seats of their exploiters who denied them all constitutional means of expressing their grievances. In reply, the barons and the Russian State took military measures. The usual beating up, the familiar whipping, martial law and deportations, all the trappings of the timeless Russian police State put in their ugly appearance to beat down the national movement of the Letts and Estonians together with incendiarism.

The Russian experiment with a parliament and the convocation of a Chamber of Deputies, the Duma, was hardly meant seriously. None of the Dumas was given a chance, each speeded home before it had time to settle down to work. In the first Duma (May 1906) Tonisson, as Estonian Liberal leader, and four others took their seats; in the second (March 1907) we find K. Parts with four others—in the third Duma (1907-12) we discover two Estonians only whereas the Baltic Germans, having recovered their position of privilege through the amended electoral law of 16 June 1907, sent more representatives than ever. The Letts fared no better. Two socialists from Riga, J. Osols and Dr. A. Priedkalns, penetrated into the second Duma but at the outbreak of the war, there were only Goldmans and Zalits who could speak for Latvia. Of practical work done, even less can be reported. When the Estonians submitted their Tartu demand for instance that 'quota' land ought to be put at the disposal of peasants rather than of barons, the latter quickly buried the suggestion. And thus it was with every reform Baltic nationals asked for.

Lithuanians were so far in a slightly different position as they had to make up their mind about their attitude with regard to Poland. One group, the National Democratic Polish Party whose programme was published in Vilnius in 1906, joined the Polish deputies, hoping for Lithuanian autonomy within a politically independent Polish nation. Yet, to all others, less susceptible to Polish influence, Polish noblemen represented as alien an element as did the barons to the Letts and Estonians. The Lithuanian and White Russian Country Party, chiefly composed of the Lithuanian bourgeoisie, recognised "sincerely and fully the importance of the Lithuanian nationality for the country, and the vitality it has shown, as well as the right to develop fully its own culture." Another group, centred around the *Vilnius*

News, propagated that higher education in Polish had merely been grafted upon the Lithuanian nation. With the help of the Lithuanian-language papers and books, now allowed, they were soon to show how right their interpretation of history was, how correctly they interpreted the national aspirations of all Lithuanians. The Lithuanian-speaking Socialists endorsed this view. They were strengthened even by the Polish-speaking Socialists in Lithuania who preferred joining their ranks in 1906 to linking up with the Socialists of Poland. Thus, with the exception of the negligible National Democrats, the Lithuanians sat apart as a distinct group of their own in the Duma, their mere existence being a constant reminder to the rest of Russia that they, too, claimed autonomy.

Naturally, the rise of the three young nations did not pass unnoticed abroad, apart from the emigrants who had left their Russian-ruled home country to find freedom in the West. In 1903 already Letts assembled in Berne to formulate a national programme. Similar declarations by exiles were noted as voices heralding coming changes. In 1906 for instance, the German Socialist leader, August Bebel, one of the best popular orators of his day, denounced Baltic baronial privileges in the Reichstag; his paper, *Vorwärts*, Forward, attacked with fine vituperation "A German Balt: Baron and Beast." In Roman Catholic circles, similarly, "the excess of pan-Polonism" was criticised by members of the Lithuanian clergy in protests noted by Rome: they particularly complained of services for Lithuanians held in Polish. All these signs were indications of the fact that life had quickened, that the Baltic nations had become conscious of their own distinct community and were marching fast towards their national goal: liberty and independence—or, in more technical terms, self-determination.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WAR

With the outbreak of the last world war in 1914 the Baltic Nations realised once more, as they had been made to realise throughout the centuries, that they lived at the crossroads. Danes, Swedes and Poles had stepped into the back-row by now, leaving the field of battle to the Germans on the one hand and the Russians on the other. For the small nations this meant once more destruction of life and loss of their most cherished achievements. In vain could they declare—if expression were allowed them—that they had no stake in this struggle, were neither cause of, nor partner in, these wars of the Great Powers. Placed between the juggernauts, they had to suffer in the hope of survival. As long as the world preached and acted upon the gospel of power politics, there was no escape.

The Baltic bastions were well known to the Great Powers. The German Emperor's policy willingly subscribed to the Baltic baron's motto that "the Baltic Sea is an essentially German Mediterranean." With the construction of the Kiel Canal in 1895 Germany secured for herself an outlet, well sheltered behind Heligoland which she had gained from England in an exchange treaty of 1890. Yet, she had to reckon with Russia as the second Great Power bordering upon "her" lake. When the shadows of the Russo-Japanese war darkened, the German Emperor was therefore only too pleased to hear the Tsar propose: "If the Danes, as is the case, cannot uphold the inviolability of their home waters, they must empower us two, who are endangered by this state of affairs, to do it for them so that we may prevent

any enemy entering the Belts and the Sund; we must use the Danish forts and Copenhagen as a base for operations, instead of waiting till the invader has reached the open Baltic . . . ” How often have Small Nations heard such words—as often as there have been invaders. The German-Russian dispositions with regard to the smaller powers had a familiar ring indeed.

The political scene in the Baltic next changed when, in June 1905, Norway cancelled her union with Sweden. Already in August of that year the English fleet, an ally of Russia's ally France, moved up the whole length of the Baltic, visiting such places as Danzig on the way. Moltke, the German army chief, called it a demonstration which meant no good. “If England, fighting us,” the German Emperor noted, “wants to, she'll take over immediately the South-Norwegian ports.” Russia, too, did not close her eyes to what she called the possibility of Britain wanting to use those ports. Thus, by 1907, both were ready to join Britain and France in a declaration guaranteeing the integrity of Norway. But Russia, moving ever closer to Britain, wanted to make doubly sure. In August of the same year (1907) her Foreign Secretary handed the German Chancellor the draft for a separate and secret treaty aiming at the “maintenance of the actual territorial status quo on the basis of the complete exclusion from the Baltic of all foreign political influence.” In this sense the two, Germany and Russia, signed a secret protocol on 29 October 1907. Publicly, they joined two vague North Sea and Baltic agreements which were as full of pious words as they were empty of practical value. The Baltic had become a close sea, the exclusive hunting ground of Germans and Russians. As far as the Baltic was concerned the Powers had moved into position. In 1914 the war began.

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War came quickly to the three Baltic nations. They were caught between the German hammer and the Russian anvil. While the small German cruiser *Augsburg* shelled Liepaja (Libau) on 4 August 1914, the Russians advanced from Lithuania into East Prussia. They met with defeat between the Masurian lakes, a battle pointedly christened later on after Tannenberg, some distance away. It suggested itself to the Germans as proof that the disaster that there befell the Teutonic Knights five centuries before had now been wiped out—the German drive Eastward could be resumed. Lithuania, offering no defensive possibilities,

was quickly overrun; and with the Germans came an attempt at Polonisation. By giving Polish nationalism an outlet there (at the cost of others), so the Germans argued, their position in Poland herself might be strengthened. Lithuanians, moreover, had declared their enmity as early as 4 August 1914 in a statement issued at Vilnius: "The Prussian branch of our people," they declared in memory of the old Borussians, "was the first to perish, to perish entirely, the German destroyer usurping the name of the nation he slew..." Germany now set out to destroy the rest of Lithuanian nationalism, leaving the initial work—if they only undertook it—to the Poles. German colonisation of the East was soon to follow.

Yet, on their forward march the German armies were soon halted. Mid-way in Latvia a front was established, and held, until 1917. "The master of Germany," said a Latvian speaker in the Duma, "was profoundly mistaken if he thought that these shots—the shelling of Liepaja—would be the signal for the population to act against Russia . . . We have one aim at this moment: to repulse the pressure of the enemy. To reach this aim I declare on this solemn occasion in the name of the Latvian people and in the name of the Estonian representatives and the Estonian people, we shall go together to the end with the Russian people." Already in July 1915 Letts were allowed to form their own regiments under Latvian officers with their own colours, the Red-White-Red flag of Latvia. The two Duma deputies, J. Goldmans and J. Zalits, issued a long appeal. After seven hundred years of foreign domination, they said, "the fate of our nation once more is in the balance. After seven hundred years of suffering and waiting the dream of the cultural rebirth of our people must come true. Forward, under Latvia's colours, for Latvia's future!" More than cultural aims could not be mentioned. But the political object was obvious. Some 130,000 Letts in all followed the call and about 35,000 riflemen helped to hold the front-line before Riga till the end, the Russian revolution in 1917, when the Germans were able to advance further, into Estonia. Most of the Letts then fell back to give continued assistance to the Russians as long as they resisted the Germans. About thirty to forty thousand Letts fell in this struggle against Imperial Germany.

The Lithuanians, at the outbreak of the war, had founded a Lithuanian Relief Association for War Victims; with its hundred

and fifty branches it became a nation-wide and national well-knit organisation. When the Germans occupied their homeland, the association split. One part, under the Duma deputy Ytchas, joined the Rev. Laukaitis and his fifty branch-organisations for Lithuanian refugees in Russia and set up headquarters at St. Petersburg. The other part took a course no less hard and arduous than that of exile. Headed by A. Smetona, they stayed behind to share in the humiliation of foreign occupation and to save the patriotic movement at home from destruction through secret organisation. No heavier task could be set any man. The Germans, of course, openly declared that "the character of a colony must be maintained." That was in 1915, and in April of the following year the Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, told the Reichstag that the Baltic countries were to be annexed. No answer to all this could be given by the muzzled Baltic nations themselves. It fell to the handful of leaders abroad, as it has fallen to them so often with the enemy in occupation, to speak out. In July 1916 their voice of protest had been heard by the Congress of the United States of America who asked President Wilson to set aside a day for Lithuanian relief and thus to recognise their national aspirations. The 1 November 1916 was accordingly used for a collection on Lithuania's behalf. Conferences of Lithuanians at Chicago and New York City asked for complete political independence and sent a message of good wishes to the Letts. Latvia, it was hoped, might join them in a federation.

As regards Russia, there were clearly, at that time, two currents discernible in the national movement of the war-torn Baltic peoples: some, especially those used to co-operation with anarchist as well as with socialist underground movements inside Russia, were thinking of autonomy within a federated Russia. The open letter, for instance, which Latvian Social-Democrats sent to their German comrades in August 1915 professed belief in the victory of the Russian revolution and refused to accept a solution brought about by "German or Russian guns, zeppelins or U-boats." Whether they would be ready to join such a Russia, purged by a revolution, remained at least open. Even Tsarist Russia tried therefore to keep this idea of a federation to the fore-front; this applied to German-occupied Lithuania anyway. The Russian delegation which visited London in 1916 formally called on the Lithuanian colony there under

the Rev. Matulaitis. In the presence of the Lithuanian Duma deputy Ytchas, who had come with the delegation from St. Petersburg, the Russians formally expressed their hope to see arise a liberated Lithuania. Yet, how free and how federated was she to be? How could Lithuanians trust a federation with Russia?

Lithuanian patriots, meeting at The Hague in April 1916, protested against the Russian régime instituted as a consequence, they reminded the world, of the Polish partitions. They protested against the cancellation of the Lithuanian Statute, the dissolution of Vilnius University (1831), the pressure exerted by the Greek Orthodox Church and the banning of books (1864-1904), the settling of Russian peasants in Lithuania, the forced emigration and evacuation . . . Neither the German nor the Russian yoke, they declared, was acceptable. Complete independence alone could bring peace and happiness to their nation. This, indeed, was to become the declared policy of all three Baltic nations.

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Their chance came with the Russian revolution early in 1917. The hour of liberation was at hand. While the Western democracies, naturally, watched first of all the military disaster that befell their Russian ally, the suppressed nations saw in the fall of the Imperial Russian régime their great opportunity. Last time, in 1905, the tottering régime had tried to mend things by making promises and by admitting Baltic deputies to the Duma. But the Baltic nations remembered the end of 1905 with its military expeditions, the shooting of several hundred Estonians and Letts, the whipping of thousands of their countrymen, the deportations and the exile imposed on so many national leaders. They also remembered the failure of the Duma system. This time they made sure.

Estonia's chance came first. There, Jaan Poska took over. Nominally he was the Commissioner of the Russian Provisional Government in autonomous Estonia, the territory of which was delimited by decree on 12 April 1917 so as to include, as ethnographically the best possible borders, Narva and the Northern part of former 'Livonia'. Whatever Poska was in name, he was an Estonian patriot. Instead of acting as Russia's executive officer, he left a free hand to the National Council and its appointed, wholly Estonian, administration. He made J.

Jaakson Vice-Commissary in North and K. Parts in South Estonia. Parts, it will be remembered, was a former Duma deputy; he became later President of the State Court of independent Estonia. Tallinn, as a German Balt bitterly remarked, "saw a grandiose festival of liberation, so did Tartu, where the hatred of Germandom, nobility and social order was mightily stirred by Tonisson." The 23 May 1917 already witnessed general elections for an Estonian National Council which met on 14 July—surely a suitable date for any liberation movement. In October O. Strandmann was elected Speaker of the Assembly and Konstantin Päts President of the Executive. Moreover, Estonia, unlike Latvia, could tap unused resources and command a national army at this critical moment. She had not been able to form her own units early in the war. When the *Tallinna Eesti Sõjaväelaste Büroo*, the Tallinn Estonian Military Bureau, together with the corresponding Petersburg Committee called for volunteers, as early as April 1917, they were able to muster many thousands.

Latvia, still within partly German and partly Russian reach, had to move more warily. It was true, a Congress of the Landless Letts, at Wolmar, met within a week of the Estonian transformation and asked for immediate confiscation of all land held by the gentry and the churches; the barons, they demanded, were to pay seventy million rubles as amends for past exploitation. More important proved a Provisional Council composed mostly of local council members who met on 26 April 1917 and decided to work for a united Latvia. On 30 July, finally, at a time when Estonia had already an elected Executive and Parliament, all Latvian groups—including Soviets of workers as well as soldiers and the landless—decided to act likewise and to work for an autonomous Latvia within a democratic Republic of Russia. Those who knew in their hearts that only complete independence would save the Baltic nations, and who said so, nevertheless accepted this temporary compromise in order to secure a completely united national front of all Letts. Elections, which were to give an answer to all these questions, were fixed for September. By then, however, the military front was crumbling. Riga was under shell fire, the Germans advanced and the Latvian patriots had to flee. A Provisional Latvian Government was set up in Valga, on the Estonian border, while Goldmans and Zalits, the former Duma deputies, re-organised a national centre at

Petersburg. In Riga itself, visited at that time by the German Emperor in triumph, the patriots went underground. United in the "Democratic Bloc" their aim was, as they put it, to resist all attempts "to turn them into Germans, Russians or colonials." The same autumn, September 1917, the Lithuanians, led by Dr. A. Smetona, called the Second Vilnius Conference. They set up a Representative Council, the *Taryba*, of twenty Lithuanians and six representatives of the various minorities.

Thus, for a moment, in the autumn of 1917, the Baltic scene looked stabilised with an autonomous Estonian Government working in what was in theory still Russian-held territory; with a Lithuanian administration set up in what appeared to be still German-held territory; and with a Latvia, torn in two between a weakened Germany and a weakened Russia, with two refugee centres of resistance and an active underground movement. Obviously, this situation could not last. The forces of independence were precariously placed between armies and revolutions. The final reckoning was at hand.

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With the decisive change in Russia, where Kerensky had followed Prince Lvoff, only to be turned out himself by the more radical wing of the revolutionaries, it was natural that Poska, Päts and their friends, elected as they were, should come under fire from the followers of the Soviet gospel that swept Russian towns. The elections in May had shown little tendency towards radicalism or even Communism anywhere in Estonia: the peasant hoped for land and for peace, for freedom from outside interference, baronial or imperialist, and for liberation from all alien master races. The extreme followers of Lenin thought of quite different things. The world revolution, they believed, had begun and was to sweep away all other dreams. The Estonian Soviet leaders, Anvelt and Kingisepp, therefore, tried to establish themselves by declaring the newly elected Assembly dissolved. The deputies, naturally, took no notice and refused to part with their mandates on outside orders. Instead, they decided formally to withdraw from the Russian State altogether, a resolution they accepted on 28 November 1917. As chosen representatives of the Estonian people they resolved to exercise all State powers until *Eesti Asutav Kogu*, the Estonian Constructive or Constituent Assembly, could finally be elected to take over and work out a Constitution.

In the meantime the Germans steadily advanced from their Lithuanian bases through Latvia into Estonia. In spite of this new threat, the Committee of the Assembly proclaimed formally the Independence of Estonia, asking Päts, Wilms and Konik to form the Executive. The same proclamation demanded the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Estonian soil. The arrival of the Germans the following day momentarily swept all this away. Yet, the 24th February 1918, *Isestevuse Päev*, Independence Day of the Estonian Republic, could not be undone by the invader. The Baltic barons thought they had come into their own once more. Wilms was shot, Päts and Konik were imprisoned. About to impose on Soviet Russia the ill-famed Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Germans felt their hour of triumph had struck. Annexation, urged for so long by the German Balts, was to be carried out forthwith. "What constituted the most daring of hopes," one of their spokesmen declared, "what patriots only dared whisper amongst themselves, has become a fact. Saved from Slav treachery, released from the mad mob, freed through German strength, Old Livonia breathes with relief and thankfulness. The circle is closed. After an enforced separation of three and a half centuries, Livonia returns home to find the protection of her German mother. . . We owe our salvation to the will of the great Hohenzoller who sits on the throne of Prussia, the leader of the united German people at the height of his power." General Baron von Seckendorff occupied Tallinn, the Emperor's brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, visiting the new colony by March. German heavy industry, headed by Krupp, subsidised a Courland Co. Ltd. (*Landgesellschaft Kurland m.b.H.*) which was to have the first offer of all land transfers until 1948. Big estates were to put one fourth of their land at its disposal at pre-war prices, so that German farmers could be settled. "To transplant within a decade a human wall of five to six million strong German peasants to the Baltic and to Lithuania would be a grand work of blessing, a mighty stroke for peace, worthy of the war deeds of our nation which surprise the world." The Association for the Settlement of German Soldiers, with its own weekly, *The East*, seemed to see all their dreams come true.

Imperial Germany met the Soviet representatives at Brest-Litovsk: Latvia, she there proclaimed, was to be split into four. Kurzeme (Courland) was to become a Duchy united to the Crown

of Prussia, Riga was to be treated as a kind of Free City, 'Livonia' was to be a German protectorate (whatever that may be) and the Eastern part was to go to Russia. It was no settlement since it contradicted the historical development, contradicted the national consciousness gained by the foreign-ruled nations of the Baltic, and was sheer power politics. The *Latvijas Tautas Padome*, the Latvian National Council, in Valga with its Petersburg branch repudiated on behalf of the Latvian nation this "act of violence contrary to democratic principles and the right of self-determination;" they also protested against the German behaviour in their occupied country where "freedom of expression, freedom of the press are gone." "The Council demand an independent integral State of Latvia, composed of all Latvian territory, with international guarantees," J. Goldmans, the Foreign Secretary of the Council, declared.

These demands, coming in so many voices from the three Baltic States, found an echo in the allied world whose peoples fought for the same principles. Estonia, the first to win independence, was the first to find allied recognition. Both France and Britain, through their Ministers at Stockholm, recognised the Estonian Committee as the *de facto* Government "until the Peace Conference takes place when the future of Estonia ought to be settled on the principles of self-determination. His Majesty's Government will not recognise any settlement which is contrary to this principle." This binding declaration, made to the Estonian leader J. Tonisson who had gone as his country's representative to Stockholm, was in accordance with the very principle on which the British Commonwealth has been built. "Changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned," as the Atlantic Charter of 1941 put it—such changes cannot be recognised by us unless we give up ourselves and peace at home and abroad.

Negotiations, first begun by Poska in the British Embassy at St. Petersburg and continued by Tonisson and his friends in Stockholm, were then taken to the Western Powers themselves. The United States, it is true, refused to admit an Estonian delegation but by April 1918 Estonia had a diplomatic representative in London in the person of Ants Piip, followed in August of the same year by Meierovics to represent Latvia. A. J. Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, wrote to Piip on 3 May 1918 that His Majesty's Government "are glad to reaffirm their readiness

to grant recognition to the Estonian National Council as a *de facto* independent body," and that he would do his utmost to see Estonia established in accordance with the wishes of the Estonian population. The same answer was received by Estonian representatives from France and from Italy. Thus, in spite of German penetration and annexation, the Baltic nations marched on. Of equal allied determination spoke yet another statement made by the London Foreign Office on 10 September 1918: "I am to assure you," it ran, "that His Majesty's Government would be entirely opposed to any attempt to impose on Estonia, either during or after the war, a Government which would not be in accordance with the desires of her population or which would limit her claim to self-determination."

At home, in German-occupied Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, patriots had to lie low and to keep on believing in their good cause, in spite of Germany's military successes. Lithuanians, nearest to Germany, and occupied since 1914, seemed to be the first to take the measure of Imperial Germany. Baron von Falkenhausen who replaced Prince Isenburg-Bierstein as Governor in Kaunas appeared less resolute. On 16 February 1918 the Lithuanian National Council at Vilnius succeeded in re-stating their decision to set up "the independent Lithuanian State, built upon democratic foundations, with Vilnius as capital." German democrats, Erzberger and his friends, urged the acceptance of this programme but were fiercely denounced by the German nationalists of the *Lokalanzeiger* type who charged them with "initiating" an agitation for Lithuania's independence! In March 1918 the new Chancellor, Count Hertling, and the Emperor himself, recognised a kind of independent Lithuania; the Lithuanians, on their part, thought it best, on 11 July 1918, to offer the Crown to the Roman Catholic Duke of Urach, a Württemberg descendant of their King-Unifier Mindaugas of the thirteenth century. Voldemaras, the Lithuanian leader, defended this action in a democratic German paper, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, as an expedient act of a sovereign nation. The same *Tageblatt*, on 26 March 1918, had printed the Estonian protest against German military rule made by Tonisson at Stockholm. The Duke accepted the offer and took the title of Mindaugas II; but before Imperial Germany could make up her mind whether to fall in with this arrangement, she, too, followed Tsarist Russia and collapsed, freeing the road to the establishment of independ-

ent Republics. Suppression of nationalities had come to an end. With it, too, disappeared the so-called *Landesrat*, formed by the Baltic Barons in order to pass, on 12 April 1918, a resolution asking William II to accept Latvia and Estonia as satellite Duchies.

With the German Republicans taking over after the military defeat suffered by the Emperor's Germany, the thought of Baltic satellites and all expansionist dreams had naturally vanished. On 11 November 1918 the Estonian National Council resumed office, J. Poska quietly going back to his desk while K. Päts once more exchanged the internment camp for the Premier's power. The Germans fell back. As they withdrew, however, the Russians advanced—to clash on Latvian soil. The tragedy of 1914-17 repeated itself on a smaller scale. Latvia herself, through the Democratic Bloc at Riga, made the most of the breathing moment: on 18 November 1918 her Provisional Government declared Latvia's independence. The German representative, A. Winnig, was merely told of the change and had to accept it in an agreement he signed the same day at Riga. J. Tschakste became Poska's counterpart, while K. Ulmanis became head of the Latvian Executive, with the gifted Z. A. Meierovics as Foreign Secretary. Already on 11 November Balfour had extended them *de facto* recognition as well. In Lithuania, the *Taryba* or National Council, freed from the nightmare of a German King, authorised Smetona, Staugaitis and Schilingas to carry on the Government of the country until general elections could be held, that was until the last foreign troops had been disposed of. On 5 November 1918 these three patriots asked Voldemaras to form the first Lithuanian Cabinet of the independent Republic of Lithuania.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WARS OF LIBERATION

The diplomatic battle won by Estonia was won by her for all three Baltic States. The military battles, however, had to be fought all over again and the end was not yet. On 22 November 1918 Soviet forces appeared off Narva, the old fortress town where Hermann's Castle faces the fortress Ivangorod across the quickly flowing river. The Russian armies were bringing, at the point of their lances, an 'Estonian Soviet Republic', at whose disposal their Government were placing some ten million rubles, in a devalued currency though, through a decree published on 8 December 1918. The War of Liberation had entered its final, military stage. General mobilisation throughout Estonia was declared and the national army supplied with much needed weapons when British warships landed supplies in Tallinn on 12 December. They also handed over two Russian destroyers, *Spartak* and *Autroil*, re-christened *Wambola* and *Lennuk*; these, together with a former German ship, *Lembit*, were placed under the command of the versatile J. Pitka, a captain in the Estonian merchant navy who was also in charge of the five armoured trains Estonia could muster. The army, under the leadership of General Laidoner, gained particular fame in the battle of Cesis when the German invaders were routed.

Within a month a defence line North and South of Lake Peipus, one of the largest lakes in Europe, and thus a good defence towards the East, had been established. Except for the unclear position to the South, Estonia was free from Russians by February 1919. "In Estonia," the Council of Ten of the Paris Peace Conference was told by a French military expert on

15 February 1919, "the Bolsheviki, after having taken nearly the whole of the country, have suffered an absolute defeat." In Latvia the struggle between Germans and Russians was complicated by the heritage of the war: Letts who had fought under their own colours throughout the war side by side with the Russians, were inclined to stay and continue the fight now that liberation seemed near at hand; many of them, especially from Riga, were filled by the new revolutionary zeal of Lenin's followers. Others saw in the Russians, whether Tsarist or Red, foreign intruders who had to be resisted for the sake of their country's independence. Thus there were Letts on both sides, and the first Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army was, from September 1918 to July 1919, a Latvian, Colonel Joachim Vacietis. He actually commanded the troops who took Riga on 3 January 1919 and placed there a Latvian Soviet headed by Peter Stuchka while the established national Government under Ulmanis had to flee, first to Jelgava (Mitau), then to Liepaja (Libau). Their adventures did not end there. Evading the Soviet grip meant entering the territory to which the remnants of German units were still clinging.

Germany still hoped for "free passage by sea for ships carrying troops, military stores and coal, in order to continue the struggle against the Bolsheviks on the frontiers of East Prussia and in Latvia." But the Allies would not hear of it. There began now, in defiance of their wishes, the mad adventure of the last Imperial German general, Count Rüdiger von der Goltz. He it was who had asked his troops to hurrah the Kaiser three days after William II had fled to Holland. Arriving in Liepaja on the 1 February 1919 he realised that "we cannot base ourselves on the Balts alone, a mere eight per cent of the population." As a preliminary to widening his hold he therefore ordered his troops to cease plundering the Latvian villages. On the other hand, he could not bring himself to make peace with the Letts, colonials to him. He disliked "the clever, creeping ways of the former pig dealer Ulmanis" and thought the Latvian wish for independence quite unnatural. A change of ministers seemed to him "wholly in the German interest." This was duly arranged. While he went for a walk on the beach, his troops raided the houses of the Latvian Cabinet Ministers. Ulmanis himself, however, escaped to a ship protected by a British man-of-war; Sahlit and Goldmans, too, evaded the raiding

party, but Walters, the Home Secretary, and a few others were imprisoned. Through this putsch of 16 April 1919 the Baltic barons, and in particular one von Stryck, hoped to fulfil their wildest hopes of annexation. To Goltz's disgust, Balodis, the Latvian Commander of the national militia, remained loyal to the Ulmanis Government. All Goltz could do was to issue a brutal Order of the Day, threatening that any disturbance would be quelled with an iron hand and, of course, without pardon. By now, the Allies had sent a protest and Goltz told his Baltic German associates: "The new Government—of collaborationists—must be formed by to-morrow noon otherwise the game of the Balts is up." A pastor Niedra now promptly appeared and formed, together with Kupsche, Wankin and Alberts, a pro-German 'administration'. It was doomed to die within a fortnight, as worthily as it had been born, the Rev. Niedra having been taken for a ride by a few patriots. When he re-appeared in Liepaja five days later, he had made good his escape without his trousers.

The new German Republic proved powerless and could not prevent Goltz's military adventure from being carried out to its very end. Count von der Goltz himself, publishing his model-memoirs of repulsive Prussian aggressiveness in 1922, heaped on the Republican leaders abuse which does them honour. They had, in fact, nothing to do with these last attempts of Imperial generalship. Herman Müller and Otto Wels, the Social-Democratic leaders, expressly joined in the protest made by the Socialist International meeting at Amsterdam on 30 April 1919 and confirmed that the general's actions were "contrary to the wishes of the German Government."

The German units in the Baltic, collected by the notorious Majors Bischoff and Fletcher, now advanced easily on Riga which von Medem took on 22 May, thus incidentally, bringing to an end the Soviet régime there. The following day the Allied Military Mission under General Sir Hubert Gough arrived on the scene but could do nothing else but take note and report home, a duty which soon fell mostly on Colonel (later Sir Stephen) Tallents. Tallents had originally come to help in provisioning the three Baltic Republics. It was, however, the Republics themselves who cleared the situation. The German troops, pushing on, unperturbed by protests, were suddenly met, to their utter surprise, at Cesis (Wenden) in North-Latvia on 23 June 1919 by

some seven thousand Estonians assisted by two Latvian regiments which had been mobilised by the Ulmanis Government and were commanded by Colonel Semitan. This battle of Cesis was perhaps the last battle fought—and lost—by an Imperial German general. The German defeat at Cesis, indeed, was the turning point in these Wars of Liberation: from now onward it was retreat for von der Goltz, retreat all the way. The three Estonian ships appeared off the mouth of the Daugava and forced him to withdraw his defeated troops hastily across the river to its Southern banks. The Latvian troops to the South-East under Balodis (their original commander, Kalpaks, a national hero, had been killed shortly before by a German bullet) were now able to link up with the forces coming from the North. Together they shielded Riga, their capital, to which Ulmanis now returned, still on board the *Saratov* which had given him protection from the German troops and had brought some five thousand rifles from Britain for loyal Letts. On 6 July 1919 he resumed work at Riga as first Prime Minister of liberated Latvia. Sir Stephen Tallents who had been Acting Governor of the town for a few days stepped back to resume his real rôle as allied observer.

Goltz in his retrospect sorrowfully admitted having “underestimated the Estonians”. Having been defeated by them he was forced by Allied intervention, expressed for instance in telegrams from Balfour, to promise a general withdrawal from the Baltic lands. The Baltic Militia, he was told, could stay and help to secure the integrity of Latvia only if all Germans went home and if the remaining troops were placed under British command. Thus it came about that a North-Irish Lt.-Colonel, twenty-eight years of age, third son of the Earl of Caledon, the Hon. H. R. L. G. Alexander, was given his first independent command. Another twenty-five years passed before the world knew him as Commander of the armies liberating Italy. Goltz himself tried to spin out his withdrawal as long as possible “because, in the meantime, the formation of the Bermondts corps could be completed.” This Bermondts, who styled himself Prince Avaloff, a Tsarist adventurer, was held by Goltz to be “Germany’s last chance”. This ‘last chance’ was the ten thousand German free-booters who had been promised Baltic land by way of loot. He advised them to turn Russian and fight under pseudo-White-Russian colours—“outlaws” indeed, as one youngster in their ranks described them. Only a trickle of

German soldiers thus returned home in accordance with Latvian and Allied wishes. On 25 August even that trickle stopped since a gang of scoundrels—*Lumpen*, Goltz's words—mutinied at Jelgava, preferring to ransack the town to taking the train into a Germany which had become a Republic and thus had nothing to offer to militarists.

Goltz, pleased with yet a further delay, now turned towards "saving Lithuania" and his German Free Corps actually moved towards Kaunas on 11 September 1919 until he had to call it back. The Imperial general for ever regretted not having been able to find a suitable pro-German 'Lithuanian' government of the Niedra type. On 3 October he himself was recalled; of course, he did not take this seriously since the order came from a Republican Government in Germany, traitors he thought, and publicly declared, to everything he held dear. Even the public announcement by a responsible Minister, Hermann Müller, who hoped to have seen the last of political generals, did not move him. He remained in command till 12 October, leaving two days later—only to go to East Prussia where he wanted to hold himself in readiness, so that the troops knew "he was still looking after them."

Bermond's adventure misfired. No generalship of a Goltz, no supply of German-printed money could make his motley of troops effective in the face of a Latvian national army under Colonel Balodis, strengthened by Estonian reinforcements. By tapping the telephone wire of the Latvian Minister of War Goltz knew that they were to launch an attack on his positions. But neither such knowledge nor yet another puppet government under a Dr. Wankin could secure him victory. The Germans advanced on 8 October. They reached the Southern banks of the Daugava and Riga's suburbs on the 12th when Goltz formally resigned his command. For some four weeks fighting went on near Riga, the town itself suffering some damage from shelling. On 10 November the Latvian-Estonian troops attacked. Once more they were forcibly assisted by the guns of Sir Walter Cowan's Baltic fleet. For the German freebooters this was the end. Bermond fell back, finally to be disposed of by the Lithuanians at the end of December 1919.

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While the military affairs of the three Baltic nations had thus prospered, they were less successful in the diplomatic field after

their initial success. The breach, made for all of them by the Estonians' winning *de facto* recognition, could not be widened and turned into *de jure* recognition. This was not the fault of the delegates they sent for this purpose to the Paris Peace Conference—Piip for Estonia, Tschakste and Meierovics for Latvia, Voldemaras for Lithuania. It was the fault of the Russian riddle which the Great Powers were unable to solve. First, all interested were asked to attend a meeting at Prinkipo in the Marmara Sea; the Baltic Nations accepted the invitation but the conference never met. Next, half-hearted intervention against the Soviets was tried by the Allies, especially the French, General Kolchak being treated as almost a legal Russian Government. Against this the Baltic Nations protested: surely their fate could not be left to the mercies of the White Russians. Yet, they were forced to let General Yudenitch advance from Narva, Estonia being charged with being selfish when she showed no belief in this adventure. The support given to him was to form the test of their being worthy of allied recognition! How impossible such an attitude was seems obvious now: had Yudenitch succeeded in restoring a Tsarist Russia, the Baltic Nations, naturally, would have suffered suppression once more. Thus, when Yudenitch "appointed" a Russian Governor for Estonia, in October 1919, the Estonians broke with him. In November they put his broken army into internment cages while Yudenitch himself sought the healthier climate of the Riviera.

The Baltic Commission of the Peace Conference heard the representatives of the three nations—as they listened to others, Russians, Baltic Germans—and read their memoranda. They discussed Baltic autonomy, Baltic Free City status on the model of Danzig, and all kinds of other proposals; but they had, clearly, to wait for the decision about Allied-Russian relations. Thus, only outside the legal sphere of recognition and status, could the Baltic States register success. On 1 April 1919 the blockade was lifted for them and trade with the West was resumed. Allied Missions collected data about needs on the spot, for instance through Sir Stephen Tallents who sent in lists of needed materials to make good some of the ravages of war (500 locomotives and 10,000 trucks were asked for by Lithuania alone). After the German Niedra putsch "the question was whether the Allies would continue to feed the Letts, or not." It was thus bluntly put by Mr. Herbert Hoover, the Food Admin-

istrator, to the Council of Foreign Ministers on 19 April 1919. "On the one hand, there was no desire to starve the people of Latvia; on the other hand, there was equally no wish to support the German Government." The Allies, therefore, decided to continue sending supplies, to enforce German withdrawal and to recognise no other government but the Ulmanis administration. On 9 May A. J. Balfour urged the dispatch of more supplies, on credit, to "the remote people" of Estonia who, he said, were enabled to carry on their struggles "largely by that small contribution" made by British naval forces. Hoover ably seconded him, thinking that the Estonian Government "only possessed three locomotives, two of which were broken down and un-serviceable." The United States seemed reluctant however to do more than spend £400,000 a month in relieving the situation in Estonia; nor were they ready, as the American Foreign Secretary put it, to dissect Russia. As to Latvia, Lansing obviously based himself on a pro-German observer on the spot (subsequently praised by von der Goltz) and thought that the British forces there ought to collaborate with the Germans against the Russians. This, Balfour thought "rather a strong order"; he firmly repudiated Lansing's assumption that the Allies, by their Armistice, had become "Allies of Germany in the Baltic provinces." In truth, as Balfour understood the position, the Allies were neither pro-Russian nor pro-German, but simply in favour of Baltic independence so that peace could come to that harassed land.

It was decided to rely mainly on native forces and it was suggested to place a credit of £10 million at the disposal of the Baltic States. "The key of the situation," Hoover summed up, "lay in Estonia. The people there had shown powers of organisation and had set up a form of orderly Government. If helped, they might by degrees solve the German problem in the Baltic Provinces." No greater foresight was shown by any Allied statesman in Paris at the end of May 1919, even before the battle of Cesis that defeated Goltz. "Estonian influence," Balfour agreed, "might spread downwards, save the Letts and Lithuanians from the strange combination of German and Bolshevik oppression." That this collaboration of the two Powers in oppression, in the destruction of smaller States, was not a strange, but a familiar feature of German and Russian power politics throughout the last two centuries, we—and they—have witnessed only too often.

Lithuania figured even less than her two Baltic sister nations at the Conference table. The reason, of course, was the fact that Poland held the stage. "Let me ship five hundred people out of Lithuania," the Polish leader R. Dmovski was reported to have told an American observer, "and the national movement would disappear"—he snapped his fingers sharply—"like that! I assure you—five hundred would be quite enough." The notion of killing the national spirit of a nation through "shipments" is not a new one; while it has never yet killed spiritual forces, it has been left to the twentieth century, with all its technical efficiency, to carry out such "shipments" on a huge scale—with no different result. Dmovski told the Paris Peace Conference as early as 29 January 1919 that Lithuania should be united with Poland, a Poland herself re-erected on the strength of the right of each nation to live in freedom. The Lithuanians themselves were not even allowed to state their case to the Commission on Polish Affairs until its chairman, M. Jules Cambon, protested, at the end of April, that "for two months he had been trying to obtain permission to interview the Lithuanian representatives in Paris, but so far had received no mandate." It needed this protest to clear the way; they were at least heard. Both Poles and Lithuanians, moreover, were informed that any *fait accompli* "in the regions of Vilna and Grodno would in no way affect the final decision" as to whom the districts were eventually to go. In truth, it not only affected, it even effected the disposal of those lands. The promise, formally made on 26 April 1919, was not kept.

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At home, meanwhile, the wars of liberation had taken a decisive turn. In June 1919 Soviet Russia had been faced by the formal wish for independence of no less than seven of her border States—the three Baltic Republics and Azerbaidjan, Georgia, North Caucasus, White Russia and the Ukraine. While the latter finally stayed within the framework of the Soviet Republics, the Baltic States, whose history pointed West, gained complete national independence. On 31 August and on 11 September 1919 the Soviet Foreign Secretary, Tschitscherin, proposed to Estonia an armistice; he was also ready "to discuss questions relating to the immediate recognition of the independence of the Estonian Republic by the Republic of Socialist Federative Soviets of Russia." This offer J. Poska accepted. But he was anxious to

carry the two other Baltic States with him. The three Foreign Secretaries thereupon met, first at Riga, then at Tallinn and finally at Tartu where the formal negotiations with Russia were to take place. They agreed on a common policy and decided to negotiate together on similar lines. It is true, as long as the interventionist General Yudenitch was on the war path, issued orders to Bermond-Avaloff to join him (they were disregarded) and installed a Russian Governor for Estonia (which caused Estonia to break with him altogether), the negotiations with Russia hung fire. Yet, with Yudenitch disposed of and the remnants of his units in Estonian prison camps, the road to peace had been cleared.

While the Western world still refused to grant the Baltic States full recognition, it was obvious that these newly liberated countries could not let slip the chance of establishing their relations with Russia on a firm footing, an early peace and eventual friendship. For Russia it meant that for the first time their new Soviet Government was treated as the legal administration of the country. Fortified by Swedish (11 September) and Polish (6 October) *de facto* recognition, Estonia sent her ablest man, Professor Piip, just back from London, to Tartu where he was joined by the bearded Lithuanian representative, Dr. Sliupas, back from the United States, and by two Latvian delegates, Friedenburg and Bergs—the latter, very appropriately, the author of a book on *Latvia and Russia*, just published in Paris. On 5 December 1919 they met the Russian delegate, M. Litvinoff, back from his London exile and from his tentative negotiations with the Allies in Stockholm. The deliberations lasted three days and were quickly broadened from mere armistice discussions to formal peace proposals. Negotiations, as always with Russians, were slow but thorough. By 31 December the armistice was in force and the definite Peace Treaties were signed on 2 February 1920 by Estonia which thus became the first Power to grant *de jure* recognition to Soviet Russia, by Lithuania on 12 July and by Latvia on 11 August 1920.

The second article of these Peace Treaties said: "In view of the proclaimed principle of the Republic of Socialist Federative Soviets of Russia, establishing the right of all peoples to self-determination—going as far as total separation from States in which they find themselves incorporated—and owing to the wish for an independent national existence expressed by the Estonian/

Latvian/Lithuanian people, Russia recognises without any reserve the independence and sovereignty of the Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian State and renounces voluntarily and irrevocably all sovereign rights formerly held by Russia over the Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian people and territory by virtue of the former legal situation and by virtue of international treaties, which, in respect of such rights, shall henceforth lose their force." The latter part of this clause formally did away with Baltic baronial rights derived for instance from the Nystad Peace. For the rest, self-determination had formally been recognised. The Baltic States, by thus winning Russian recognition of that great principle of the Western world, had established peace along the shores of the Baltic Sea. Clearly, this act could have led, in Mr. Churchill's words, spoken in the Council of Ten in Paris on 15 February 1919, to making Russia a living part of Europe and a living partner in the League of Nations. That it had no such results was the fault of the Big Powers. The Small Nations had made their contribution, and more, to the reconstruction of Europe and the great experiment of organised peace.

The horizon had suddenly cleared in spite of some Allied doubts about the wisdom of the Baltic peace treaties when Poland was still engaged in warfare with the Soviet Union. Peace with Russia, easily and quickly followed by peace with Republican Germany, laid the foundation for a happy life for all in the Baltic States. Lithuania alone had to face one more grievous inroad by yet another neighbour before she too could concentrate on building up a new nation-state, enjoying as her two Baltic brothers the flower of freedom for the first time. Lithuania was faced by Poland who had achieved independence at the same moment. While the Lithuanians hardly felt like the further experiment in linking up with her, some Polish patriots, in their hour of triumph, thought of Lithuania as just one of the component parts of their dream-state from the Baltic to the Black Sea—Ruthenia and the Ukraine being others. On 19 April 1919 the Polish armies commanded by Marshal Pilsudski occupied Vilnius. When the Russian troops advanced against Poland in the following year, the Lithuanians, like Estonians and Letts, signed peace with them. Vilnius, their ancient capital, was returned to them by Russia. The Poles, meeting the Lithuanians at Suvalki, agreed to a Southern demarcation line which cut both railways running out of Vilnius; two days after signing

this armistice agreement, on 9 October 1920, General Zeligowski occupied Vilnius, establishing there a Polish-ruled so-called "Government of Central Lithuania."

Polish writers quite rightly point out that, to the average American and Englishman, Vilnius is associated "with the name of General Zeligowski, a kind of Polish d'Annuncio." No denunciation of Lithuanian patriots—as either German-inspired or Russian-fostered puppets—can cover up the fact that the military occupation of Vilnius was a gross breach of faith: an armistice had just been signed and Prince Sapieha, the Polish Foreign Secretary, told the British Consul, R. B. Ward, on the very eve of the *coup* that no such attempt was even contemplated. The elections in the occupied territory were organised by the general-conqueror himself and were held under the shadow of a Polish force of occupation, no Jews and no Lithuanians going to the polls. One of the reasons moving Pilsudski, who was behind this occupation, must have been the call for assistance he received from the big Polish landowners of the district who feared—rightly—the coming democratic land reform in Lithuania. Himself of Lithuanian origin, Pilsudski knew full well that Lithuanians, from "fear of Polonisation", as C. Smogorzewski put it, would not join Poland. Yet he believed that, standing alone, she would not escape either German or Russian overlordship. How much he himself, a supporter of Zeligowski's *coup* and the maker of the dictatorial military régime in Poland after 1926, did to bring this danger about and to re-establish power politics stands written in the history of Eastern Europe.

The historic capital and the Eastern part of the Lithuanian Republic had thus fallen into Polish hands. Lithuania had originally hoped for some 46,000 square miles with an estimated population of five million inhabitants. But she found herself left with some 23,000 square miles and only two and a half million people. The eventual gain of Klaipeda (Memel) could not make good the loss either of this valuable hinterland or of the common frontier with Russia.

CHAPTER NINE

HIGH TIDE: LIBERTY AND LAND

Once established the three Baltic States set out on the high road of independence. Never before, not even in the golden days of Swedish rule two and a half centuries ago, had the Estonians or Letts had such scope for free development; never before, not even at the height of power exercised by their kings, Gediminas or Vytautas, five or six centuries earlier, had the mass of the Lithuanian nation known such prosperity: above all, never before had any of them been master of their own destiny. It was their high tide of happiness indeed to live a free people on liberated soil.

They made the most of it. Their record bears comparison with any nation freed in 1918. If they were politically inexperienced—which amongst the Great Powers of Central or Eastern Europe could show the same spiritual and material progress, which could claim the same record of international goodwill without fail? But such comparison may seem invidious. The work accomplished by Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians after their liberation from alien rule can well be judged, and perhaps ought to be judged, on its own, be measured by its own standard.

Two duties had to be fulfilled at the outset. One was to give their independent States a settled form—a written Constitution without which no European nation, except English traditionalists, seems to be able to develop. The other task was to give each citizen the means of employment and of earning a decent living. Being peasant nations, they had to carry out vast land reforms.

All three States became Republics modelled on the democratic constitutions of the United States or Belgium. Undoubtedly, this involved a risk since a Parliamentary democracy requires political gifts of judgment and of moderation which it takes time to learn—and large European nations, like the Germans, have not acquired them as yet. Parliaments, elected by general suffrage, had to learn the difficult art of checking and steering

an Executive whose members, in turn, had to learn the art of government. If they were successful in so large a degree the reason must be sought in the fact that each member of these liberated nations felt intensely that he himself had a share in the new venture. Participation of all, therefore, was secured. At the same time they were peasants, and peasants are not generally given to rash action; they are deliberate rather than rash, anxious to take action only after all the arguments have been placed before them.

Success seemed furthermore helped by the lack of foreign minorities within their borders. Estonia, in particular, commanded a homogeneous population of one and the same historic reminiscences. Estonians spoke the same language, were a people suffering from no sharp social contrasts. Four-fifths of the population belonged to the Lutheran faith, the rest being mostly Greek Orthodox. Of Estonia's 1.1 million inhabitants ten to twelve per cent were non-Estonians; these, in turn, formed closely-knit social groups, like the Baltic barons and the former officials of Tsarist Russia, or they lived together as a community of their own, as did the primitive Russian peasants round Pskov, in Estonia's South-Eastern corner. None of them, therefore, could either endanger the internal harmony of the Estonian State or the development of the Estonian nation itself. They were given complete freedom and the rights granted them were generally considered a model solution which could with profit be imitated elsewhere.

Latvia's position was different only in so far as her capital, Riga, naturally attracted a great number of Russian refugees as well as former Baltic German landlords who now sought a living in town. Of her population of 1.9 millions about twenty per cent were non-Letts (of whom the Russians, with nine per cent, were the most numerous). Almost a quarter of the population were Roman Catholics, Lutherans being in the majority (69%). A Concordat with the Holy See was signed by Cardinal Gasparri and the Foreign Secretary, Z. Meierovics, in May 1922, securing the Roman Catholics in all their wonted rights.

In Lithuania, finally, a country as Roman Catholic as Estonia was Lutheran, national minorities counted some sixteen per cent out of the two and a half million finally left within the borders of the Republic; Jews accounted for about half of this minority figure so that the statistics did not refer to people any less loyal

to, and any less anxious to make a success of, the new Republic than Lithuanians were themselves. The anti-Jewish legislation of Tsarist Russia had prevented them from settling anywhere else but in Lithuania, Poland and Bessarabia. Well might they feel linked with Lithuania as only Lithuanians themselves. Vilnius, of course, is to Jews everywhere a citadel of their traditional culture, with the Great Synagogue and the *Schulhof* as its centre, with the Rabbi Elijah (or Gaon) as the greatest Talmudical authority since the Middle Ages. The Polish minority, some sixty-six thousand of them, represented only just over three per cent of the total population. More Lithuanians, indeed, were left on the Polish side than there were Poles in Lithuania. Compared, moreover, with the large number of foreign nationalities—a third to a quarter of thirty-four millions—in Greater Poland, the national minorities in the three Baltic States were insignificant, fitted in well, and rather added to than detracted from the fullness of public life there.

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The Estonian Constituent Assembly, the election of which had been forcibly suspended by the Tallinn Soviet of Russian soldiers in January 1918, met on 23 April 1919, the second freely elected Parliament to be formed in Estonia. No foreign troops were left on Estonian soil at the time. Päts now resigned as head of the Executive and a government formed by all the moderate parties of the middle took over under O. Strandmann. The Assembly confirmed formally the establishment of an independent Republic (26 April) and set to work on the text of the Constitution which came into force, in its definite form, on 21 December 1920. Like the Eirish Constitution it knew of no head of the State, only of a Chief of the Executive, the President or Prime Minister who was directly dependent upon a single Chamber of Parliament, of a hundred members, elected in accordance with the system of Proportional Representation. By then Estonia's frontiers had been finally drawn—with Russia they had been fixed through the Peace of Tartu which, as an additional security for the transition period, provided for neutralised strips near Narva and near Pskov (until 1 January 1922); with Latvia through the good offices of Sir Stephen Tallents who had been asked to mediate and had drawn the line straight through the frontier town of Valga (on 22 March 1920). As he himself has told, the Estonian and Latvian frontier commission

was simply left with a map on which he had inscribed what he thought the fairest demarcation line. The National Colours of the Estonian Republic were Blue-Black-White.

Latvia took slightly longer to settle down. Its Constituent Assembly was elected a year later than Estonia's, namely in April 1920; the new Constitution was adopted in February 1922, coming into force on 7 November 1922 when the general elections for Parliament could be held. Like the Estonian, it provided for a single Chamber of a hundred members, also elected for three years in accordance with Proportional Representation. Unlike the Estonian Constitution it provided for a President of the Republic; he was to be elected by at least fifty-one Members of Parliament (sixty-seven, on the other hand, could depose him). The electoral law made it possible for any hundred citizens to nominate a candidate and for any seven to register as a party. The theoretical fairness of such extreme provision for individual wishes contained threats which showed themselves only too soon to an efficient working of the whole Constitution. Another drawback was the further limitation of the President's office. He could dissolve Parliament only if a referendum had empowered him to do so; new elections had to follow the successful referendum almost immediately (art. 48). J. Tschakste who had presided over the Constituent Assembly was elected the first President of the Republic by the first Parliament assembled at the end of 1922. He held office until his death in 1927. The frontiers of the Latvian Republic had been fixed with Estonia through the Tallents award of March 1920; with Russia through the Peace Treaty of August 1920, and with Lithuania to the South by the arbitration undertaken in March 1921 by another close student of Baltic affairs from Britain, Professor J. Y. Simpson of Edinburgh University. The National Colours were Red-White-Red.

Lithuania's Constitution took about as long as Latvia's before it could be worked out. Here, too, provision was made for a President and a Parliament of seventy-eight members elected every third year in accordance with Proportional Representation. The Constituent Assembly had been elected in April 1920 and met in what was thought of as a temporary capital, Kaunas, the only sizeable town left to the Republic. A. Smetona resigned and A. Stulginskis, after presiding over the Assembly, was elected the first President of the Republic, an office he held till 1926. The Constitution came into force on 1 August 1922, slightly

earlier than Latvia's; but, of course, both Letts and Lithuanians were almost two years behind Estonians who had throughout been favoured, partly by their geographical position, partly by their capacity to organise quickly. The Lithuanian frontiers, moreover, were to remain under dispute as long as Poland insisted on holding Vilnius, a *fait accompli* recognised by the Allied Conference of Ambassadors on 15 March 1923. To the West she herself took action and occupied the Memel district along the river Nemunas in order to secure at least one harbour, Klaipeda (Memel). These territorial difficulties were to overshadow much of Lithuania's life. The National Colours were Yellow-Green-Red.

* * *

The next concern of the three Republics thus erected was to give each citizen the necessary basis for a good life. He was to find it, of course, in work of which the fruits were to be his own. In other words, the land hunger of the peasant population had to be met at the expense of the alien landed gentry. As in the case of so many modern Republics—Eire and Spain are ready examples—agricultural reform was the fundamental issue of their home policy.

The problem was easiest in Lithuania where the big estates over 375 acres, mostly granted by the Tsarist governments in the form of *majorats*, were taken over by the Republic to be distributed amongst the landless and small tenants, now all turned into independent farmers. Those who had been favoured most by the Tsars suffered most—Russian and Polish noblemen, the Nobles' Bank and the Greek Orthodox Church. The Land Bill of February 1922 which crowned this work provided for a compensation to be fixed by a subsequent law. The new Republic, clearly, was too poor to burden itself with outright compensation which might have jeopardised all future progress. Besides, the Baltic peoples naturally argued, as the Eirish did, that they were under no moral obligation to pay the landlord, whether absentee or not, whose claims, they said, were based only on historic conquest, thus in their eyes both immoral and illegal. That the land reform had been a contributory reason for the Polish move against the Vilnius district was a bitter truth but could not deviate the land reformers from their course.

In Latvia and Estonia it was the Baltic Germans who had to give way. "Baron E. von Dellinghausen defended manly the

prerogatives of the Estonian knights," a Baltic baron commented upon the first reforms; "he refused to hand over the administration and property of Estonian knights. In an ultra-cynical decree the Estonians proclaimed the end of class privileges." Some of these German knights held districts the size of West European principalities, some families, like the Stackelbergs holding at one time forty-four country seats while the Ungern-Sternbergs came second with thirty-three estates. On the other hand, at least every other Estonian and Lett, or Lithuanian for that matter, was landless. These landless knew the fields their forefathers had cultivated for generations. Yet they had never enjoyed the fruit of their labour. Now, they knew, their time had come. They claimed the land they worked as their property and they received it. No doubt, this involved great hardship for the depossessed. An American witness has described movingly the personal tragedy of a Baltic baron whose sleeves were still kissed by the older of his former servants wherever he went on his former estate; but he was already 'camping out' in his own castle, without servants, waiting for the final sub-division of his land which was to go to his farm labourers. Like all such individual suffering in times of great reform, it must be set, on balance, against the blessing it brought to hundreds of thousands of human beings, now freed for the first time. While the lights were dimmed, flickered, and went out for a while in many castles and great country seats, new warmth spread through an endless number of new cottages where man lived free, free to garner himself the fruit of his labour, withheld for so many centuries from his forefathers. And when, after some years of hard work, life returned to those country seats which had temporarily been shut up, they were peopled by students, bent on research; by visitors, anxious to learn in the newly arranged museum about the past and the folklore of their nation; by school boys and girls, housed there in ideal surroundings.

As early as 27 February 1919 'Regulations Concerning the Distribution of Land to the Landless' had been issued by the Ulmanis Government of Latvia. Distribution indeed it was, since the Constituent Assembly decided on 16 September 1920 that no single person, none of the former big landowners, was to hold more than 123½ acres. No compensation, moreover, was paid since a bill providing for some payment was thrown out in April 1924 by the combined votes of the Left and the Barons,

the latter thinking the proposals inadequate. The Minister of Agriculture, H. Zelminsch, submitting the Land Bill to the Assembly on 27 August 1920, stated that as much as forty per cent of agricultural land was not then cultivated. He took Denmark as the model to be imitated by Latvian farming and aimed at the setting up of farms large enough—without being larger—to give full employment to a peasant and his family. In contrast to the wishes of the extreme Left, stronger in Latvia than in the other two Baltic States, he too held out for individual ownership. In this, the Assembly followed him and all three nations were thus agreed in this respect also. The expropriation of land included stock and inventory, of which normally just over half was claimed by the State on behalf of the new smallholders. About one hundred and twenty thousand Letts applied for farm land. The first year saw the foundation of between thirty to thirty-five thousand new farmsteads, and within the next two or three years some eighty thousand had been created. A careful plan had to be worked out so that the required new farms could be completed within five years and sufficient machinery, fertilisers, stock and grain—as well as advice in their use—were available. Before the reform half of the Latvian soil had been in the hands of big land-owners: after its completion only three per cent were still thus listed. By 1935 Latvia had 275,698 individual farms with only an odd thousand which could be described as big estates.

In Estonia the problems had been the same. The Baltic Germans there held over half of all agricultural land. A similar position prevailed with regard to forests. In October 1919, first amongst the three States, Estonia was able to pass a Land Bill nationalising almost all large domains—there were 1,149 big estates of an average size of 5,220 acres each. The remainder, averaging 85 acres each, was held by 51,640 independent farmers. There were also 23,000 small holdings rented from the landlords. A compensation law, dated 5 March 1926, slightly softened the blow to the former masters of the land. In figures the reforms meant that 55,104 new holdings (of an average of 43 acres each) had been created by 1933. The total number of farms in Estonia amounted to 140,000 in 1939.

Since it might rightly be argued that social policy cannot alter the laws of fertility of the soil, it seems worth adding that even

German economists like Max Sering, writing on *Interior Colonisation of Eastern Germany*, showed long ago, and long before these reforms were carried out, that a splitting up of domains was necessary in the interest of production. Another well-known economist, Schmoller, came to the same conclusion. Moreover, since the proof even of the economist's pudding lies in the eating, the staggering rise in production and prosperity throughout the three Baltic States during the time of their independence fully vindicated the land reform as both socially and economically sound.

The result of these reforms was nothing short of an agricultural revolution. The individual peasant, in all three Baltic States, became the owner of the land. His ancestors, since days immemorial, had worked it for the benefit and at the behest of foreign masters—Danes, Germans, Poles, Swedes and Russians, but mostly Germans. Now, with the independence of the Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania established, the peasant learned what it meant to live as a free man on his own ground. A spiritual rebirth, above all, thus took place. In September 1919 the University of Riga had been re-opened, in December of the same year the ancient University of Tartu had followed suit and opened its door to the students of its own land. Re-opened was perhaps the wrong term to use. Whereas before Baltic nationals had been unwelcome guests at a foreign-language University—German or Russian—they were now at home in their own institutions. An Education Bill, passed in Estonia on 7 May 1920, made elementary education free and compulsory. The same was true of Latvia and Lithuania. Secondary education was greatly helped by the use of former country seats. Agricultural Academies, like the one in Jelgava, provided the countries with specialised knowledge needed on the land. Educational standards had always been considerably higher here than anywhere in Russia. With facilities for university study freely available, progress was quick and could compare well with other European nations.

Never before, in all their long history, had life been so much worth while for the common man in the Baltic States. Let us pause and remember this before we condemn, root and branch, the twenty years' truce between the wars—and when we rebuild after this War. To the Baltic nations it was the high tide of their happiness.

CHAPTER TEN

PARTY POLITICS

With a democratic Constitution worked out and a sweeping land reform agreed upon, the three Baltic States set out on their high adventure. Difficulties there were, and the difficulties inherent in so radical a Parliamentary régime as set up by their Constitutions soon made themselves felt through the inexperience of the body politic. Party politics showed a quickly changing picture less stimulating than the steady progress shown for instance in the economic field. Not that there were no definite trends discernable. One was for instance the constant loss in support suffered by the Socialist parties—a drift toward the moderately conservative groups. The reason for this is easily detected. The Russian collectivisation of farms, the state-ownership of the land, the destruction of the independent farmer-owner, all this was in direct contrast to the land distribution, the individual holdership, the careful building up of a broad mass of small-holders. The yeomen in the Baltic Republics did not intend to lose what they had just won. Thus the fear inspired by the Soviet system merged with the historic reminiscences of Russian policy since Peter the Great. Utterances across the borders that Russian security could be found only when others, falling away from capitalism, joined the Soviet Union, seemed to confirm such doubts about everything of Socialist leanings. Thus, as the Left-wing parties lost support, the peasant parties of the moderate Right gained.

The first Lithuanian Prime Minister under more or less normal conditions had been the leader of the People's Socialists, Slezevicius, who took over when Voldemaras left for Paris and when Smetona had been elected President. Only once, in 1926, did he return to power for a few tense months. Otherwise, from

1922 to 1926, while Stulginskis, a leader of the Peasants' Party, was President of the Republic, it was that party, in conjunction with the Christian Democrats, who could command a majority in the House. The Christian Democrats resembled the German Centre party; they too were pronouncedly Roman Catholic, were opposed to socialist tendencies and, again like the German *Zentrum*, had a labour wing of their own. The comparative party strength in the elected assemblies was:—

LITHUANIAN DEPUTIES

	1920-22	1922-23	1923-26	1926-27
Left	43	35	26	37
Centre and Right	59	38	40	35
Minorities	10	5	12	13
Total	112	78	78	85

What happened to the Parliament of 1926, and the reason why it seems wrong to add, on a comparative basis, the figures for the last assembly, elected in 1936, will need our special attention.

In Latvia, the Social-Democrats, while decreasing in numbers, remained the strongest single party throughout. Yet, they participated only three times in the formation of a government, providing the Premier in the person of Skujenieks from the end of 1926 to January 1928. Generally speaking the government here was also dominated by the peasant parties, the Peasants' Union and its innumerable brother peasant groups. The Peasants' Union counted amongst its leaders both Tschakste and Kviesis who were Presidents of the Republic from the outset to 1927 and again from 1930 to 1936, as well as Ulmanis himself who was Prime Minister off and on all through Latvia's independence and who was to head the State from 1936 to 1941. Since the multitude of parties would need a wealth of detail unnecessary for an understanding of Latvia's development, here too a summarised survey of the elections to Parliament seems of greater value; the figures show this picture:—

LATVIAN DEPUTIES

	1922-25	1925-28	1928-31	1931-34
Left	38	37	36	28
Centre and Right	47	47	46	55
Minorities	15	16	18	17
Total	100	100	100	100

This list, like the Lithuanian list, is misleading in so far as it has been produced by adding up the twenty to thirty different parties who had, at all times, to be carefully considered in whatever coalition government they were represented. Just this difficulty of adding them up into an effective government majority was the main art of cabinet construction in Latvia. On the whole, the list shows that down to 1934 moderate administrations were in power. In that year a break-down of parliamentary institutions occurred.

In Estonia, finally, the development was similar. As in Lithuania a non-Socialist Labour party joined with the peasant party in sustaining a programme of social reforms. The Social-Democrats, on the other hand, succeeded only once—in 1928—in providing in A. Rei a President of the Executive; they took part, though, in five other administrations in 1919, 1924, 1931 and 1932. The Communist party, as in Latvia and Lithuania, was banned when it engineered a putsch in 1924 which was immediately met and overcome by a coalition of all other parties, from the Socialists to the Right. One of its instigators, Kingisepp, was honoured by the Soviet Union which renamed Yamburg after him—it is the first halt on the railway line to Leningrad. The elections in Estonia showed the following changes in party strength:—

ESTONIAN DEPUTIES

	1919-20	1920-23	1923-26	1926-29	1929-32	1933-34
Left ...	48	34	30	30	31	27
Centre & Right	67	61	63	65	64	65
Minorities ...	5	5	7	5	5	8
Total ...	120	100	100	100	100	100

Here again the real problem is hidden beneath this simplified summary. It consisted in binding together a great number of parties and satisfying their demands so as to keep them within the coalition government. Again the seats won by the moderate men of the centre parties have been added to those of the Right because that was the way they generally voted, the economic programme of socialism being throughout unacceptable to the majority of the people, the small-holders and peasants. If the list of Estonian elections breaks off, as does the Latvian in the same year of 1934 (and as did the Lithuanian in 1926-27), this does not mean the end of parliamentary government. New

elections were held in Estonia in February 1938 but it would be unfair to the Left who suffered most through the suspension of Parliament for four years, to place the new figures side by side with the previous ones. The same would apply to Lithuania's Chamber of 1936.

* * *

How then did this suspension of parliamentary elections occur? Reasons for the weakness of representative institutions have been noted already, especially the extreme form of practically unchecked and completely inexperienced Assemblies, based, to make worse the multiplicity of parties, on the same system of Proportional Representation that helped to sound the death-knell of Republican Germany. In this situation it needed only one deep shock, just as it needs only a hard knock to make water form ice crystals when it is on the point of freezing. That shock was administered by the biggest of the Powers in East Europe created in 1919, namely by Poland. In May 1926 Pilsudski established a military dictatorship there, interrupting, as he had done in the Vilnius district in 1920, any further tendencies towards a more far-reaching land reform, doing away with democratic institutions and eventually forcing men like Sikorski and Paderewski into exile. Trends towards violence now crystallised across the border as well. Lithuania, like Latvia, had a Socialist administration at the time, and the contrast to the new Polish régime appeared the more striking. The President of Lithuania, Dr. Grinius, who had just been elected to succeed Stulginskis, also belonged to the Peoples' Socialists. Moreover, while Dr. Slezevicius, the Prime Minister, had visited Moscow to improve relations and sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, the Vatican signed a Concordat with Pilsudski. This appeared to the Roman Catholic Lithuanians as a Papal recognition of both the dictator across the border and of his personal policy of the Vilnius conquest. Vilnius had become a Polish diocese. All this prepared the ground for a military putsch. It was Dante who showed how, in the struggle between a human form and a serpent, the two opponents changed their form till, at length, the serpent stood up a man and the man sank down a serpent and glided away, hissing. Thus it was with Lithuanian nationalists whose eyes were fixed on Poland and on Vilnius, lost in the very hour of liberation. On 16 December 1926, Lithuania too found herself with a dictator—Professor Voldemaras, the man who had formed

the first national government in 1918, who had been kept waiting by the Allies in the ante-rooms of the Paris Conference for months on end. He forced Slezevicius to resign. The President himself, Dr. Grinius, had to give way to Dr. Smetona who was appointed President by only forty votes of the Assembly, the representatives of the Left not being allowed to take their seats. Clearly, all this constituted an open breach of the Constitution.

The Voldemaras régime grew more radical and anti-democratic as the months passed by. He dissolved Parliament altogether and used police and imprisonment even against the Christian Democrats. It was only natural that one of the first steps he took abroad was to approach the Holy See in Rome, and to sign, in 1927, a Concordat, as Pilsudski had done. In May 1928 he issued a new Constitution which was to be submitted to popular vote within ten years' time. Its provisions, if sincerely meant, would have provided a more stable and at the same time democratic administration: the President was to remain in office for seven instead of three years; Parliament was to be elected every five instead of every three years. More important still, the proposal did away with Proportional Representation which had proved so disastrous and introduced majority voting as in Great Britain. A State Council was to be nominated as a kind of second Chamber, and the President, Smetona, actually signed the decrees setting it up while Voldemaras was away in Geneva, in September 1928. This was another open sign that the dictatorial régime was about to end. Within a year's time President Smetona had come into his own. The Voldemaras storm-troopers, *Iron Wolf*, were dissolved. Voldemaras himself had to flee, and when he tried to stage a come-back in June 1934, the month of the Röhm massacre in Germany, he was tried for high treason committed with the support of Hitler's Germany. Though he was condemned to twelve years penal servitude he was amongst the many who were granted an amnesty in 1938 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Lithuania's liberation.

Smetona—linked up with Lithuania's liberty from 1917 to 1940—while never re-establishing a fully representative system, certainly avoided extremism. He entrusted the Premiership to a financier, J. Tubelis, his brother-in-law, married to the sister of his politically interested wife (née Chodakauskaite). Tubelis held office till 1938. He began by lifting the ban on

the Social-Democratic party and generally secured a return to the normal. Provincial elections were held in 1931. The district assemblies thus formed, in their turn elected Smetona at the end of his three years' term of office for a further term of seven years. Yet new difficulties began to crowd in. On the one hand there was a series of Voldemaras unrests, all more or less fascist in nature, to be viewed against the background of the Hitler movement then in power in Germany; there were also peasant unrests and some strikes, to be viewed against the background of the world economic crisis. New elections were held not before June 1936 when about sixty-eight per cent of the electorate went to the polls, endorsing the Tubelis administration in spite of its many illiberal features. A new Constitution, worked out in 1938, based once more on general, direct, equal and secret suffrage, but no longer on Proportional Representation, was to provide the basis for a full return to parliamentary institutions—when the war overwhelmed the whole nation.

In Latvia and Estonia democratic institutions stood a better chance. Yet the basis of the Latvian governments under Ulmanis, Meierovics, Zelminsch and others was unstable—as unstable, in fact, as was the basis of the administrations formed in Estonia by Pāts, Tonisson, Piip. All of them relied on a Diet elected according to the proportional system. This prevented the formation of working majorities by means of a few large parties. Instead, there was no end to new parties: Latvia, in 1928 for instance, had twenty-five, all represented in Parliament; nine of them had one deputy only; seven commanded two representatives. A similar picture of impotence could be seen in Estonia where governments followed one another in quick succession even if there was not the same abundance of parties. Under the impact of Hitler's dictatorship which attracted particularly the Baltic Germans in their midst, Estonians and Letts began to try to put their governments on a firmer footing. In January 1934, in a third attempt, a new constitution was accepted in Estonia through a referendum and Tonisson's government gave way to one headed by Pāts. The reform granted greater powers to the President, an office newly created, but equality before the law, freedom of expression and of the press, remained untouched. The democratic basis of life remained secure.

For that reason it did not satisfy the fascist wing of the *Vabadus Sojalased*, the VAPS or Freedom Fighters. They pre-

pared to strike when the Premier, Päts, intervened, dissolved their organisation and asked Laidoner, the popular leader of the days of national liberation, to administer emergency measures. Three days later, on 15 March 1934, he reported to the Diet why he had taken action. In the autumn he dissolved Parliament and soon suppressed all organised parties. His aim, however, was not fascist: "We do not want," he told the Estonians in his New Year's message of 1935, "to lead our people to unknown destinies. We want to create a democratic body, really worthy of the nation, as in England, where Parliament is held in high esteem. The life of the nation must be reorganised but its basis remains democracy. We do not rely on one particular bloc of parties; we are not dependent upon any one party."

Two months after Estonia had shelved representative institutions until Europe became a saner place, Latvia did the same. Ulmanis, who had become Premier once more on 17 March 1934, dissolved Parliament on 15 May. "Even from the floor of the House," he said, "deputies have talked of sending armed forces into the streets." Unlike Päts who by temperament is a moderate man looking for the middle way acceptable to most, Ulmanis soon introduced press censorship and such self-contradictory institutions as trade unions organised by the State (20 March 1935). Like De Valera who is referred to as *Taoiseach*, he introduced yet another word into the language of political affairs: *Vadonis*, Latvian leader, he called himself, combining with his Premiership since 1936 also the office of President. In that year the second term of President Kviēsis had come to an end. He intervened strongly in the economic life of the nation as well. Guilds, like Italian corporations, were formed; they were to send deputies to a National Economic Council. It seems that Ulmanis intended at one time to link this Council up with a Cultural Council and a new kind of Diet.

In Estonia, meanwhile, the President had been authorised by a referendum (474,218 voting in favour, 148,824 voting against it) to convoke a new Constituent Assembly which was to work out a new Constitution. It chose J. Uluots, a Professor at Tartu University, to preside over its First Chamber. Its proceedings ended in 1937 and the new Constitution was accepted in July 1937. As Uluots explained at the time, the Constitution repudiated "complete power of the State and communism", upheld individual liberty and adhered to the doctrine of the partition of

power. It made sure that never would all power be concentrated, as he put it, "in the hands either of one person or one class." These were clear and brave words from the spokesman of a small nation living in the close neighbourhood of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It remains remarkable, as a proof of his real convictions, that Päts had thus used the wide powers he acquired under the emergency measures of 1934 to lay the foundation for a new democratic Constitution. It came into force on New Year's Day 1938. Elections were held in February and Päts was re-elected President for a term of six years in April of the same year. As many as ninety per cent of the electorate went to the polls. Fifty-five supporters of the President as against twenty-five opponents were returned. Amongst the latter was N. Ruus who was to reveal himself over three years later as Secretary of the Communist Party. But most opposition members were men like J. Tonisson and A. Piip: they too were to rally to Päts's side and join the ranks of a truly National Government in the hour of need, in the autumn of 1939, when Piip returned to the Foreign Office.

Estonia had thus found her way back to free parliamentary institutions. Yet, whether ruled by a strong President or governed with the help of a freely elected Parliament and by popular coalitions, the three Baltic States were soon faced by an international situation that threatened with destruction the work of twenty years. This deadly danger was not of their making. "These men of peasant stock," judged a close observer who as a British business man spent some seven years in the Baltic States, "justified the belief of those who had struggled to gain the independence of the Baltic States. In freedom they could develop qualities that the serfdom of their ancestors had repressed." He was surprised, as only an Englishman can be who has never tasted servitude, by their undoubted capacity for social and political work: "It is surprising that these countries could and did produce such a large number of men of international calibre."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NATIONAL ECONOMY

If the multitude of names and parties throughout the twenty and more years of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian independence down to the outbreak of the present war made it at times difficult to survey the scene, progress in the economic field had been steady. It is quickly sketched. The three Baltic States were peasant countries and, except for oil-shale in Estonia, had no mineral wealth. Cattle breeding, dairy farming, timber from the forests and fish from the sea and lakes provided the Baltic peoples therefore with a living. Of the whole population no less than sixty-six out of every hundred were employed in agriculture. Compared with the thirty-six Frenchmen or a mere six of every hundred gainfully employed in the United Kingdom, these figures show what is meant when one calls the Baltic States peasant countries. Incidentally, such a comparison shows the population figures themselves in their proper light: perhaps their size ought to be compared not with modern Belgium or Britain but rather with a Belgium or Britain in the days before coal had enabled them to build up huge industries and thus provide a living for three or five times, or more, the original population?

After their liberation the three States had first to make good the ravages of war—and in Latvia for instance there had been constant fighting for something like five years. Land distribution was not enough; the land had to be cultivated in a manner which would enable the peasant to compete in the world market. In this too success could be registered within a very short time. It was no chance utterance when, at the introduction of the Land Bill in Latvia, the responsible Minister had reminded his hearers of Denmark's example. As in Denmark the co-operative system

soon led the way. In Lithuania the co-operative movement had begun to grow in 1900, and already in February 1915 many smaller societies had merged to prepare economically for the day of national liberation. The net of co-operative societies was thus nation-wide; assisted by the famous *Maistas* meat packing combine, it became the decisive factor in Lithuania's national economy. In Latvia and Estonia the growth of the co-operative movement was hardly less striking—in Estonia for instance ninety-five per cent of all exported butter was handled by the co-operative societies. Besides the producer co-operatives there were consumer societies with some six hundred shops of their own in each of the three countries. They provided credit too, and in this they were readily assisted by the State, even if the credit co-operative societies were generally small. The democratic principle of mutual help and of self-government—which is of their essence—thus pervaded the economic life of the three nations.

Agriculture which steadily declined in the United Kingdom and even in France—to 79 and 94, in 1938, if we take the 1923 production as representing 100 units—increased in the Baltic, on the same basis, to 101 in Estonia, 104 in Lithuania and 119 in Latvia. This was achieved not simply by increasing the land under cultivation, as one might think, witnessing the decline of agriculture in the West, but by increasing the yield per acre as well. Owing to their position in the North, rye, barley and oats constituted the main crops. The particularly great increase in wheat explains itself by the fact that this used to be imported before 1914. Potatoes too constituted an important crop, for direct consumption as well as for distilling and fodder. Flax on the whole maintained its position, providing some 10-12% of the world production. Sugar-beet, newly introduced, experienced the same astonishing progress as in most other countries where the need for home-grown sugar made itself felt. These crops, important as they were in themselves and for a national industry of distilling, of textiles and sugar, took second place to cattle rearing. This was an achievement the more remarkable as the war had left the Baltic peoples few animals only, most of them moreover of poor quality. Yet, by 1939, when Denmark counted some 3 million and Sweden some 2.9 million head of cattle, the corresponding figure for the three Baltic States was 3.169 million (Estonia 0.725; Lithuania 1.159; Latvia 1.275). To

this must be added about two and a half million pigs. Flourishing agricultural communities had indeed grown up here, in spite of their lack of capital, the absence of climatic favours, in the face even of the world-wide depression from which all agricultural products suffered.

What the world saw of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian products was particularly butter and wood, dairy produce and timber in all its forms, from pit-props to wood-pulp, from tomato cases to tea boxes and building material. Estonian butter, at the World's Dairy Congress of 1937, ranked second to Danish only. The export figures for 1938 were:—

BUTTER EXPORT (in metric tons)		
from Estonia	13,180
from Latvia	19,211
from Lithuania	15,058
		47,449

While Holland exported slightly more than the three States together, namely about 53,000 tons, Eire exported no more than Latvia. More impressive still than these absolute figures, to those of us who deal with butter in ounces rather than in metric tons, is the effort this represents per head of the population:— while every Dutchman or Irishman exported 12 pounds of butter a year, he was equalled in this by every Lithuanian. Every Lett, however, exported 20, every Estonian 24 pounds of butter that year. They had started from scratch at the end of the last war—who could deny that all three nations had proved their worth as dairy farmers? Of timber, on the other hand, it is more difficult to speak, since exact figures for re-planting are not available. It was obvious that the large fir and pine forests covering one quarter of Latvia and a fifth of Estonia and of Lithuania would yield an important source of income, especially in the first years when fields were devastated or had been out of cultivation for long years, when cattle were rare and no cash crops within sight. Forests where fighting had taken place had suffered too: a piece of shrapnel in a tree trunk ruins any saw. But building material, timber, fuel, wood-pulp, cellulose—all were provided by the forests. At the same time they provide winter work to the farmer during the long months when his fields are covered by snow.

Industry played a less important part in the economic life of the three nations. 23 Estonians, 22 Letts and 10 Lithuanians, out of every 100 gainfully employed, were engaged in industrial work. The absolute figures for Letts employed in industry were in the neighbourhood of 100,000, of Estonians half that figure: Lithuanian industrial undertakings, non-existent under Tsarist rule, had to be built up out of nothing. In Latvia metal workers headed the list (with 20,000 workers), followed by the food and textile industries (18,000 each) and by timber works (16,000 workers). In Estonia the textile industry headed the list (with 12,000 workers), followed by metal (6,000) and timber works (5,000 workers). These industrial undertakings, in turn, depended in no small degree on agriculture: on beet for sugar, on potatoes for distilling, on timber for cellulose, on flax and hemp for textiles, on cattle for meat-packing. These undertakings were steadily enlarged as production of raw materials grew. From Tsarist days, however, a few different enterprises were inherited which, through their very size, seemed top-heavy: there were the Kreenholm works at Narva, for long the largest cotton mills in Europe, built there because the rapids of the river do not freeze and thus provide power the whole year round; there were the big shipbuilding yards at Tallinn, the important metal and textile undertakings in Riga—all of them had to find new markets.

Both Latvia and Estonia made good use of their water power. With Swedish help Latvia erected a huge power station at the Keguma rapids of the Daugava some thirty miles above Riga which was to supply about 77,000 kW and was comparable in its importance for Latvia to the Shannon work in Eire. In Estonia an additional source was found in oil shale. It constitutes the only oil centre of North-Eastern Europe. It is found, as is the soft 'brown coal' in Western Europe, close to the surface and shafts are generally not needed. It can, of course, be used as fuel without having been worked up, but its real importance lies in its high percentage, some 18-20%, of crude oil which is extracted and transformed in Estonian refineries and cracking plants, some for use as high-grade aviation spirit. Benzene, gasoline, lubricating oils are won, as well as the usual by-products, pitch and asphalt. The output of crude oil rose from 10,000 t in 1930 to over 160,000 t in 1938, of gasoline from about 6,000 t in 1934 to 15,000 t in 1938. The industry, having once

been established, continued to expand quickly and the output was still increasing when the war broke out.

Surveying the whole field a severely critical German economist, questioning whether Estonia, as an independent nation, could keep alive, was driven to this conclusion: "A searching study of Estonian supply of power leads to the conclusion that she has proved she can meet all demands of her industries and can also provide, out of her own resources, all that towns and farms may want—she feeds her power stations almost exclusively with Estonian shale and peat. Thanks to the special features of her agriculture—flax and cattle rearing; thanks also to her huge forests and the existence of valuable shale and peat, Estonia is in the position to secure the supply of her industries as of her population out of her own resources or out of the well-balanced exchange of goods." If this makes heavy reading, this summary seems fair enough.

Social legislation in the Baltic States corresponded to West European principles and working conditions generally were fixed in accordance with the recommendations of the International Labour Office, to which they naturally belong. Estonia for instance had a Ministry of Social Welfare with local labour inspectors throughout the country. Workers were free to organise themselves in trade unions and to elect shop stewards. The eight hour day, a strict limitation of overtime and annual paid holidays were laid down by law. Health Insurance (*Haigekassa*) was run on a co-operative basis; contributions of 1-2% of the worker's wages, to which the employer added twice as much, were also compulsory; the fund was administered by elected workers' representatives. Industrial Accidents Insurance was wholly paid for by employers. Medical treatment was free—an important point. Payments during sickness etc. came generally to about two-thirds of the wages. There was no unemployment insurance since there existed at times a shortage of labour which attracted foreign workers to meet the need. Estonia had machinery which was set up on 12 March 1937 providing for the settlement of labour disputes. When employers and workers, meeting on an equal footing, could not agree, they could appeal to State arbitration. In Latvia and Lithuania the position was different in so far as free trade unions there had not been reconstituted by the time the war broke out—neither, of course, had they been re-introduced by any of the Great Powers surrounding them

—and the State had thus a much more direct say in social and salary questions. Most of the social legislation, it is true, had been passed during the parliamentary period, and the benefits then granted were not diminished in any way.

* * *

When the three nations had surveyed the field around them, measured the havoc of war in town, industry and countryside, there remained the urgent need of credit:— without credit, no work could be planned; without investment first, no production could be started. If the three States began almost from nothing, they started without the burden of a national debt. In the Tsarist budgets the so-called 'Baltic Provinces' had shown a surplus— 36.6 million gold rubles in 1913 (as compared with 72.9 of the Central Provinces, including Moscow, or 32.5 of the Black Sea Provinces—not to speak of the deficit shown by Finland of 12.8 or St. Petersburg with 390.1 million gold rubles). Soon their national income showed even greater prosperity. This time, there was no drain on their resources, no transfer to an alien Power of the surplus they had gained through their own work. Instead the surplus, once gained, remained available for new investment in their own land.

The first obstacle to be overcome was the disposal of the variety of devalued foreign currency that floated through the lands in the form of every kind of *rubles* and *ostmarks*. Estonia founded a State Bank straight away, in February 1919. But this *Eesti Pank* was both a bank of issue and of credit, and credit was most willingly given to breathe new life into Estonia's economy. The bank proved unable to stem the flood of inflation surging around her and almost all the State Banks of Europe. In 1924, with the help of the League of Nations, stabilisation was practically effected though it was not before 1 January 1928 that the Estonian *kroon* was formally based on gold. The 7% loan issued under League auspices was used in part (£350,000) for a new bank, the National Mortgage Bank which took over the loans given to industry and agriculture by *Eesti Pank*; the rest and by far the larger part (£1 million) was used as a reserve for the Central Bank itself, now confined to acting as a bank of issue only. Most of its foreign assets were in pound sterling so that Estonia suffered severely when Britain went off the gold standard. She had to follow suit in June 1933. From

then onward the economic situation improved again steadily without further setbacks.

Latvia, too, found herself face to face with inflation at the outset. In 1922 she founded her own Central Bank, *Latvijas Banka*, and mainly through the efforts of Kalning, her Finance Minister, introduced the *lat*, based on the Swiss gold franc. The same year the State Land Bank was founded to deal first of all with old debts. Over six thousand farmers in Kurzeme owed the Baronial Credit Association about 11 million rubles; another eighteen thousand owed some 31 million rubles to similar institutions in 'Livonia', a great part of which now had to be shouldered by Letts. The Land Bank also supplied long-term loans to farmers so that the land reform could become a reality. The Latvian Mortgage Bank, similarly, provided industrial credits and saw to the reconstruction of Riga and other towns which had suffered in the war. With the help of these institutes progress was steady. But the financial crash of 1931 throughout the world led to a severe crisis which forced the State, as in Germany, to forbid any but the smallest bank withdrawals.

In April 1935, after the shelving of representative institutions, the Latvian Credit Bank, *Latvijas Kredīta Banka*, was set up. Thenceforward "the Cabinet, on the proposal of the Finance Minister, could declare any credit institution to be in difficulties which could not prove the contrary, and after such a decision was published in the Government Gazette, the Credit Bank took over." Thus it was not the State who had to show why a banking institute was to be taken over, but it was up to the bank, the 'accused', to show that it was worthy of being left alone. Through this radical interference the number of joint stock banks was reduced from twenty-one to seven, and the State became absolute in the economic field as well. Even L. Ekis who was the responsible Finance Minister at the time—he held office from 1934 to 1938—thought that the Credit Bank "later interfered too much with the private and free development of Latvian economic and financial life." It must be added, however, that economic progress as a whole was suddenly quickened and export trade in particular began to flourish as never before. There are no means of proving whether this was only a temporary turn for the better. Finally, following the Franco-British-American currency agreement, the *lat* too followed the Pound Sterling and was devalued.

In Lithuania an independent currency, called the *litas*, was introduced by Professor Jurgutis on the basis of one tenth of the American dollar. As in Latvia, stabilisation came in 1922; the German *mark* was then toppling and the old *ostmark* had become useless, even dangerous to the economic reconstruction of the country. The Central Bank, *Lietuvos Bankas*, used the 3 million gold rubles, received from Russia under the Peace Treaty, as security for the note issue. Lithuania never went off the gold—or dollar—standard though currency regulations had to be applied in the thirties to withstand the devaluation going on all around her.

* * *

The foreign trade of the three States was quickly resumed after the last war. The main customers for Baltic dairy products and timber were the United Kingdom and the United States as well as Germany, the same Powers also constituting the main sellers. Expressed in percentage of the whole foreign trade of the Baltic States the figures were:—

	FOREIGN TRADE (in per cent of total)								
	Estonia			Latvia			Lithuania		
	1936	1937	1938	1936	1937	1938	1936	1937	1938
<i>Exports:</i>									
to U.K. & U.S.A.	40	37	39	40	40	43	52	50	42
to Germany	23	31	31	31	35	34	11	17	27
<i>Imports:</i>									
from U.K.									
& U.S.A.	27	25	25	28	28	26	39	31	35
from Germany	30	26	31	38	27	39	9	22	25

Thus, never less than one quarter and generally one third of all imports of finished products came from Britain and the United States of America, while two fifths to one half of all Baltic exports went to the same two countries. In money value this represented in 1938 almost £10 million of dairy produce, timber etc. sold to the United Kingdom alone and over £5 million worth of coal, textiles and machinery bought from Britain. In the same year the Baltic States sold to the United States about \$2.5 million worth of dairy produce, cellulose etc., while buying \$4.5 million worth of raw cotton, agricultural machines etc. Their trade balance with America remained adverse for the Baltic States all along from 1919 to 1939. The Latvian trade balance, as a whole was unfavourable, except in the last pre-war years

when the State intervened. Estonia's trade generally almost balanced while Lithuania's constantly showed a considerable surplus.

Russia's foreign trade, organised in accordance with the political principles of the Soviet Union, practically avoided the Baltic States, another confirmation that they were irrelevant as far as Soviet economy was concerned. This attitude the Soviet Union maintained in spite of repeated exertions made by the Baltic States to attract at least some Russian trade. Their trade agreements always provided, through the Russian clause, for exceptionally favourable terms to be granted exclusively to Russia. For a short while Latvia received some Russian timber in transit; it was sent down the Daugava. But, on the whole, traffic had practically dried up by the mid-thirties. The exact figures were:—

RUSSIAN TRANSIT THROUGH THE BALTIC STATES			
(in tons, 000 omitted)			
	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
1929:	29	635	284
1931:	120	791	232
1936:	14	201	1

In this list the year 1931 represents the peak figure. What foreign trade Russia desired to carry out and send through the Baltic Sea was easily handled by the large port facilities of Leningrad.

Trade relations with the West, however, were close, as has been shown. Between them the Baltic States bought as much from the United Kingdom alone as the whole Soviet Union, namely about £4.5 million worth of industrial goods. It seems remarkable also that for instance Estonia, when she too was forced to have her foreign trade for some time steered by currency regulations, increased her trade with Britain and severely cut down her German trade. England's participation in Estonian imports rose from 7.7 to 18% between 1931 and 1933 while German imports were reduced in the same time from 30 to 22.5%. Compared with other Central European Powers, the Baltic States bought five times as much per head of their population; this applied to Poland as well as Czechoslovakia. Every Estonian bought 18s. 2d. worth of British goods (on an average of the years 1936-38), every Lett 15s. 9d., every Lithuanian 15s. 2d. worth; this could stand comparison

with the Swiss (19s. 7d.), though hardly with the Belgians (£1. 3. 4d.) or the Danes (£4. 9. 5d.). It might however be compared with an American buying 3s. 10d. worth of British goods, a German 6s. 2d., a Frenchman 8s. 8d. Russians, with 'a jolly old sixpence' per head per year are clearly out of the picture, in the relative table as well as in the absolute value as a whole. One could well understand Colonel Walter Elliot, a former British Minister of Agriculture, paying tribute to "those small, friendly, happy countries who were anxious to make progress, anxious to trade", and with whom it was a pleasure to be engaged in negotiations.

Finally, since such figures are as much a commentary on the living standard and customs of a people as on trade relations, here is a list of total imports per head of the population, expressed in gold dollars:—

IMPORTS PER HEAD OF POPULATION 1938 (in gold dollars)			
Norway	58	Germany	19
Denmark	56	ESTONIA	15
Belgium	54	LATVIA	13
Holland	53	Czechoslovakia	11
Switzerland	52	Greece	11
Great Britain	52	LITHUANIA	9
France	19	United States of America	9

Much of the trade in the Baltic Sea was done by German ships, the Russian flag hardly putting in an appearance. Estonia and Latvia disposed of a merchant fleet of some 200,000 tons each to carry on trade throughout and well beyond the Baltic Sea. Lithuania, on the other hand, with only one port, Klaipeda (Memel), had no sizeable fleet of her own by the time the present war broke out.

What did all this amount to for the individual citizen of free Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania? It meant, first of all, economic independence and the enjoyment of the fruit of their own work. It meant steady employment in a steadily expanding economy—the flail of the Western world, long-term unemployment, was never a problem in the Baltic States. It meant that West-European living standards were fast approached and, if we except Lithuania for a moment, had actually been reached. The Baltic peasant's life could well be compared with the standard familiar to the French farmer. All three Baltic nations ranked with the

best fed amongst the Central European peoples. Estonia, with Czechoslovakia, could claim to represent the best clothed. As Sir Kenneth Stewart, a member of a British delegation to the three States, reported in 1936: "Members of our party who knew them in the old days told us of the great contrast between the underfed and ragged appearance of the country people then and the well-clothed farmers of to-day." And he added: "These three States, under any decent conditions of peace, will increase in population. There is plenty of room for growth and virtually no unemployment. There is ample goodwill towards this country." Thus, to political liberty—that quite immeasurable blessing—had been added economic prosperity. Surely, then, we are entitled to call the years after their liberation the high tide of happiness for Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians.

CHAPTER TWELVE

FOREIGN RELATIONS: PEACE IN THE EAST

The twenty years or more of independence brought, first, democratic institutions, witnessed later a partial suspension of the parliamentary régime and saw, finally, a return to coalition governments backed by the nations as a whole. Who could say that the record of these States compares unfavourably with the story of the other States founded in 1918 or, for that, with the rest of the European Powers, small and big? If their home policy, and especially their economic policy based on agricultural co-operatives and a careful development of their industries proved sane, their foreign policy too can stand the searching test of time. There is about Baltic foreign policy nothing of barren isolation, nothing of weak neutrality and withdrawal from the common problems.

Peace with Russia and with Germany in 1920 had provided them with the security needed to attend to reconstruction at home. Their foreign policy was next directed towards the establishment of strong links of friendship with the Western Powers. *De jure* recognition came with a change of government and of heart in Paris, when Aristide Briand became Prime Minister. He quickly fell in with the other Allied Powers. On 26 January 1921 he informed Latvia and Estonia, on behalf of the Allies, that final recognition had been granted them. Credit for this must go, in no small measure, to the able Foreign Secretary of Latvia, Z. Meierovics. Lithuania, on the other hand, had to wait another two years, till December 1922, owing to Polish resistance

as a result of the struggle over Vilnius. The United States which had all along been almost mute whenever Baltic claims were discussed still held back and refused even to accept consular representatives. This attitude, however, changed suddenly in the summer of 1922 when, on 25 July, the Secretary of State, Hughes, instructed the American 'Commissioner' at Riga: "Advise Foreign Offices of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as nearly at the same time as possible on the morning of 28 July that the United States extends to each full recognition. The fact will be communicated to the press at Washington for publication in the morning papers of 28 July, and the following statement will be made:—

"The Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been recognised either *de jure* or *de facto* by the principal Governments of Europe and have entered into treaty relations with their neighbours. In extending to them recognition on its part, the Government of the United States takes cognizance of the actual existence of these Governments during a considerable period of time and of the successful maintenance within their borders of political and economic stability. The United States has consistently maintained that the disturbed conditions of Russian affairs may not be made the occasion for alienation of Russian territory and this principle is not deemed to be impinged by the recognition at this time of the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania which have been set up and maintained by an indigencous population."

This was a deserved, if belated, tribute to the three nations which had won their liberty through their own persistent fight for it. American tardiness from 1918 to 1922, however, had not been due to any doubts on this score; fear of Japan had made her hesitate. As long as Japan held the Maritime Provinces of Russia, the United States refused to recognise any territorial changes affecting pre-1914 Russia, however well founded they were. When the Japanese occupation forces were withdrawn on 23 June 1922, the overdue recognition of the Baltic States followed forthwith.

All three States became early members of the League of Nations, and were admitted on 22 September 1921. They kept scrupulously the conditions laid down for the protection of national minorities to which they subscribed as had all newly

formed States. Their delegates—like General Laidoner, attending the Disarmament Conference, or A. Schmidt (A. Torma), the Assistant Foreign Secretary and later Estonian Minister in London; Ministers like Munters from Latvia or Zaunius from Lithuania—were familiar figures at Geneva. Their deputies took part in the *Conférence Parlementaire Internationale du Commerce*, being represented for the first time at the Paris meeting of 1922. Their trade agreements were based on the treatment granted to the most favoured nation but made provision too for their immediate neighbours by means of the Baltic and the Russian Clause. Latvia and Estonia signed a Customs Union (1 November 1923 and 5 February 1927) which, however, had not yet become effective when the war broke out.

* * *

Since Lithuania continued to shut Poland out and engage her in something like 'economic warfare', she remained outside this proposed customs union though she took part in shaping a civil and criminal law common to them all. The decision of the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris had gone against her in the Vilnius question and Poland's influence had outweighed hers. It cannot surprise, therefore, that Lithuania took the law into her own hands to gain at least one sea port. As first established she held only a short and practically useless stretch of sandy coast, about a quarter of what she was to hold eventually. Having been robbed of the upper reaches of the Nemunas and its tributary on which Vilnius stands, it was the more easily understood that Lithuanian eyes should follow its course seawards. Yet, there, for the length of some seventy miles, East Prussia jutted out, right across the river, holding a strip of land some ten to twenty miles broad. At the river mouth lay Klaipeda (Memel), originally founded by the Teutonic Knights. The population of the town, as in Danzig, was mostly German-speaking, and the so-called 'Memel District' along the right bank of the river showed a mixed population. As always in such districts, statistics about the respective strength of Germans and of Lithuanians differed. As always, members of the more numerous nationality had spread their language, their religion and customs further and faster than the minority group.

With the setting up of the new State the process of assimilation came to an end; the process might even have been reversed

through the slow disappearance of the foreign varnish where, indeed, it was lacquer and not nature yet. The position on the right bank of the Nemunas corresponded to this familiar pattern. What made it important was its position. In the words of the Paris Peace Conference "it formed the only possible outlet to the sea for some two million Lithuanians;" on balance it appeared only right therefore that some eighty thousand Germans in the Klaipeda District had to give way and to allow themselves to be looked after by the Lithuanian Republic. What to Germany was a small town and a stretch of land along a frontier river meant to Lithuanians more than Hamburg and Kiel, more than the Rhine, Elbe and Oder taken together—namely their only outlet to the sea. The Allies therefore administered the district at first, when Poland held the stage and Lithuania was hardly heard. Finally the Lithuanians decided they had waited long enough, and on 15 January 1923 they marched in and took over, as originally planned by the Allies themselves. The French High Commissioner with his two hundred men withdrew discreetly and Norman Davis was asked to work out a Memel Convention which was eventually signed, not without difficulties though, on 8 May 1924. While it secured Lithuanians an outlet to the sea, it curtailed Lithuanian sovereignty in so far as it gave the Memellanders home rule with a responsible Directorate and an elected Diet, subject only to a Lithuanian Governor.

Russia throughout had backed the Lithuanian claims and had successfully prevented Poland from gaining special privileges in Klaipeda. On the other hand, Lithuania felt that her relations with Germany were liable to suffer, and suffer they did from a series of clashes between the Governor sent by Kaunas and the German majority in the Memel Diet. In March 1925 she therefore proposed to Germany to enter into a security pact: "It cannot be doubted," V. Sidzikauskas, her Minister in Berlin, told the German Foreign Secretary, Dr. Stresemann, "that East Prussia is threatened by the aims of Poland, and it would be assuredly in Germany's interest if Lithuania were situated as a buffer State between Poland and Germany." Stresemann, however, refused to entertain any such proposal of alliances of the old type, not even when Russia, through Tschitscherin's note of 28 September 1926, once more backed Lithuania's claim to Vilnius. Tschitscherin himself had visited Kaunas in December 1925 to prepare the Russo-Lithuanian non-aggression pact. Lithuania's in-

tegrity, Stresemann declared publicly in November 1927, remained Germany's aim in the interest of peace. Further than that he would not go; but indirectly he thus backed Litvinoff's protest to Poland in which the Soviet Union expressed her fears lest Pilsudski's Poland might make use of Lithuanian refugees from the Voldemaras régime to bring about another Polish-Lithuanian Union. Already in 1926 Russia and Lithuania had signed their non-aggression treaty which was twice renewed and was to remain in force until 31 December 1945.

* * *

Throughout the first few years of the 1920's the foreign policy of Latvia and Estonia, free from any special liabilities such as the Vilnius and Klaipeda questions constituted for Lithuania, tended towards a closer union between themselves, and with others only if this would not affect satisfactory relations with the Great Powers. Estonians had originally hoped for an internationally guaranteed neutrality like Swiss, Belgian or Norwegian. Just as they had liked the provision of neutral strips along their Russian border, so they had been glad to secure Russia's assurance: "In case the perpetual neutrality of Estonia should be internationally recognised, Russia undertakes to respect this neutrality and to take part in guaranteeing it." Lithuania, too, had been given the same promise in the Peace Treaty. Yet nothing came of this article 5 of the Tartu and Moscow Treaties. Nineteenth century neutrality, last invoked by Norway, seemed to have had its day and to have been replaced by co-operation through an all-embracing League giving security to all small nations. Having become a member of the League of Nations all three States persistently refused to join any exclusive group of alliances that might be misinterpreted by one or the other of their bigger neighbours. Plans and schemes for such pacts flew thick and fast. But the fact remains that the only firm bond was established between Estonia and Latvia. Not once did they lend themselves to schemes which could lead to new suspicions instead of the promotion of new international trust.

The Polish plan of forming an exclusive bloc from the Baltic to the Black Sea thus came to nothing. In 1920 and in 1922 agreements providing for periodic meetings of the Baltic Foreign Secretaries with their Polish and Finnish colleagues were signed, Lithuania, owing to the Vilnius question, no longer taking

part in the second set of these negotiations: but even these plans came to nothing, the one because of the Polish-Russian tension, the other because of the Polish-Lithuanian dispute. None of the other countries wanted to touch these sources of international unrest or to take sides. Russian uneasiness about these wider blocs was clearly expressed at the Conference her representatives attended at Riga in March 1922 at the invitation of Meierovics. The establishment of neutral zones was once more recommended and so was an increase in trade—both assuredly forming at least as much—if not more so—part of the policy of the Small Nations as of the Soviet Union. Fortified by the treaty signed with Republican Germany at Rapallo the following month, Litvinoff invited the Baltic States, together with Finland and Poland, to resume negotiations at Moscow in December. Lithuania, it may be noted, had been invited only at the last moment and then, necessarily, without Poland's knowledge. They easily agreed on non-aggression and arbitration treaties. But deadlock was reached when disarmament agreements were to be linked up with them, Soviet Russia refusing to pledge herself to desisting, in future, from Communist propaganda abroad. In those days, it must be remembered, Russian leaders proclaimed their hope for world revolution: "A revolutionary victory in Germany", said Stalin in 1924, the year of Lenin's death, "is a victory all over Europe."

If these were the hopes entertained about Republican Germany, the smaller nations near by could only look after their moat. In the same year, 1924, occurred the Communist *putsch* in Estonia. Clearly, it disturbed Baltic public opinion, especially when the Soviet Union, now under Stalin's inspiration, gave Anvelt, the leader of the affair, a position in the Soviet administration and renamed the small town of Yamburg, a few miles beyond the Russo-Estonian border on the Narva-Leningrad railway line, after Anvelt's deputy, Kingisepp. In January 1925 the Estonian and Latvian Foreign Secretaries were therefore ready to agree at Helsinki to a pact of arbitration; Lithuania was represented by an 'observer' only, since Poland was to be a partner to the agreement. Excluded were, as before, all disputes arising out of territorial claims—this already gives the lie to an insinuation, made sixteen years later by an anonymous Russian writer, that it implied military assistance as well. The treaty provided for a conciliation commission and, if desired,

for submission of disputes to the Permanent Court of International Justice. Needless to say, the agreement was duly registered with, and published in the 'Arbitration and Security' series of the League of Nations.

But for the Estonian-Latvian alliance of 1923 the Baltic States never went beyond such arbitration agreements. What interested them were the possibilities of closer friendship between themselves. In 1923 Latvia and Estonia signed a defensive alliance. There followed the Kaunas talks about economic collaboration in 1924 and Latvian-Lithuanian negotiations in the following two years, chiefly concerned with the export of Lithuanian grain to Latvia. The next move of greater consequence came from Russia. Just as after Rapallo, she approached the Baltic States again following her new agreement with Germany, the so-called Berlin Treaty. The Socialist Premier of Lithuania, Slezevicius, visited Moscow and was only too anxious to win Russia's support just at a time when Pilsudski had taken over in Poland. A non-aggression treaty, as already mentioned, was signed in September 1926. Two letters, exchanged between the Russian and Lithuanian Foreign Secretaries, confirmed that Lithuania would remain faithful to her obligations under the League Covenant (Russia was still outside the League and suspicious of the sanctions article) while Russia not only confirmed her treaty of 1920 which had handed Vilnius to Lithuania but expressly repudiated any frontier alterations carried out since.

Diplomatically speaking the position of Estonia and Latvia had been weakened by Lithuania's separate agreement, and negotiations dragged on, the two Baltic Powers watching uneasily on the one side the Polish protest to Moscow about the Lithuanian treaty and, on the other side, the breakdown of the Russian negotiations with Finland over the Finnish demand for a neutral chairman of the proposed conciliation board. Russia was not ready to accept this, just as she had refused to have the Aaland Isles discussed by the International Court of Justice. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, Latvia too was ready to sign and told the Russians so in March 1927. Since December 1926 she had a socialist Government under the moderate Skujenieks. He was able also to secure a trade agreement with the Soviet Union which he signed on 2 June 1927. It granted most favoured nation treatment, provided for the estab-

lishment of a Soviet Commercial Delegation at Riga and the reduction of tariffs. Ratification, however, proved very difficult, and it was accepted by the Latvian Diet with only a few votes to spare since fear of Communist propaganda was strong in the peasant parties.

From then onward Russia worked steadily for general Baltic security pacts. Such agreements, the German Foreign Secretary told the Latvian Minister in December 1927, would be "very agreeable" to Germany. Britain, however, was not then ready to give any additional promise beyond her Western Locarno pledges. It took her another twelve years to learn the lesson of collective security—by then Stresemann's Republican Germany had vanished and Hitler had effectively destroyed security anywhere. Russia's new starting point was the Briand-Kellogg Pact of Paris, the famous Peace Pact, one of the great state papers of the twentieth century. It is true, this renunciation of war, thus put on record for the first time, lacked what might be called executive clauses. But what was of greater importance in contributing to its destruction was the fact that some of the signatories were not in earnest when the test came. And yet, when all has been said, as an expression of the definite aim set to our century, it constitutes a landmark. What concerns us here are the three Baltic States and Russia and Germany. Whatever may be said about the Small Nations, their very nature meant renunciation of war. Their essence, therefore, is thus in accord with the basic aim of our times.

The Pact of Paris became valid as between Soviet Russia and Latvia (5 March 1929), Estonia (16 March) and Lithuania (1 April) through special protocols; it was thus not necessary for them, as it was for the other signatories to the pact, to wait for the ratification by the other participating Powers. From now on the ground seemed cleared of many of the old suspicions and by the beginning of 1932 pacts of non-aggression in Eastern Europe were ready for signature. Latvia and Estonia gladly accepted these guarantees from their Russian neighbour, the more so since they provided for Mixed Commissions to meet at least once a year to settle any differences that might have arisen. Together with Lithuania's non-aggression pact of 1926 they formed a complete system of mutual guarantee and security, valid until 31 December 1945.

In July 1933 Litvinoff's famous definition of the Aggressor was laid down in a Convention signed at that time by almost all of Russia's neighbours, that is by Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. Through it these States tried to give the Pact of Paris still greater precision (as defined by the Politis Report to the Disarmament Conference of 24 May 1933). In its *Annexe* they confirmed that the political, economic or social structure of any of them could never be made the excuse for an act of aggression, nor, of course, could *des défauts allégués de son administration*.

To the three Baltic States these manifold treaties with their Eastern neighbour meant but one thing: safety. Russia, they felt, had thus renounced the Tsarist idea of imperialism and conquest, had renounced also the idea of bringing the Communist system to other nations at the point of the sword. Peter the Great, they thought, had been buried.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FOREIGN RELATIONS:

THE DANGER FROM THE WEST

With the downfall of the German Republic and the rise of Hitler, peace in Europe was in jeopardy. The system of collective security, built up through trial and much error, within a mere twelve years, proved too flimsy to resist methodical destruction by those who believed in guns, not life—in military force, not self-determination and collaboration. The quickly growing power of Nazi Germany placed the Baltic States, it seemed, once more into the centre of international interest. "We begin," said *Mein Kampf*, "where we left off six centuries ago. In speaking of new land and soil in Europe, we must think first of all of Russia and her subject Border States. For centuries Russia has lived by her Teutonic kernel of her superior leading circles. This Teutonic colonisation constitutes one of the three greatest features of all German history." He was to begin where the master race of the Teutonic Knights had left off. These were ominous words.

In January 1934 Joseph Stalin, reporting to the Congress of his Party, saw no need for a clash with Nazism were it not for a change in German policy "resembling the policy of the German ex-Kaiser who at one time occupied the Ukraine and sent his troops marching on Leningrad, turning the Baltic countries in the process into a training ground for this campaign." Hitler glowing in the memory of conquering Teutonic Knights—Stalin thinking of the Baltic States overrun by Imperial Germany: the sky had indeed darkened. Were the Great Powers once more to clash on Baltic soil, were the Baltic nations to suffer, yet again, the horrors of invading armies from East and West?

Hitler's first move was his pact with Pilsudski, signed on 26 January 1934, which effectively torpedoed all possibility of an Eastern Security Agreement. When asked by Litvinoff for an exchange of guarantees of the Baltic States, he replied as he was wont to reply until he had actually committed his aggression: who threatens them? Three weeks before this haughty answer of concealment, the Baltic States had already renewed their non-aggression pacts with Russia. They had a shrewd idea of what was coming from the West, from Hitler's Germany. Poland, on the other hand, developed an almost feverish activity. In January she spoke of guaranteeing together with Soviet Russia the Baltic States; immediately afterwards she signed up with Hitler; then she turned East once more, renewed her non-aggression treaty with Russia, not without having extracted a declaration that the Soviet Government was no longer interested in the Vilnius question (5 May 1934). Was Lithuania to suffer first and to foot the bill? Munters, of the Latvian Foreign Office, told the Polish Foreign Secretary in Riga "that the security system has, so to speak, developed with greater success in Eastern Europe than in some other parts of our continent." He spoke for the Baltic States, for their good faith—but what of the Great Powers?

S. Lozoraitis of Lithuania and J. Seljamaa of Estonia then proceeded to Moscow, there to be joined by A. Bilmanis, the Latvian Minister to Moscow, to initiate action for a regional Eastern Pact for Mutual Assistance. In a public statement they declared themselves strongly in favour of such an agreement. It was rightly called an Eastern Locarno since it was to promise help to the aggrieved party, irrespective of which of the participants fell victim to an act of aggression, and which turned out to be the aggressor. The plan was actively furthered by France and found the approval of Britain, but met with a blunt refusal from both Germany and Poland. Hitler, aiming at the isolation of his possible victims by destroying any collective security plans, declared himself in favour of bi-lateral treaties—just as he was to be in favour of bi-lateral wars, with Nazi Germany as the stronger Power. Poland—the same Poland that had urged the Baltic States before her Hitler Pact to accept a Russo-Polish guarantee—now refused to consider guaranteeing her Lithuanian or her Czechoslovakian frontiers. Clearly, the

shape of things to come was visible. Lithuania or Czechoslovakia—which was the first on the list, to be isolated and to be subdued?

Lithuania, of course, had never been able to establish good relations with either Poland or Germany. Her frontier with Poland had been wired off, no train, no car, nothing getting across this Chinese wall in modern Europe. The most dramatic moment in this slow-moving tragedy—before its climax in 1938—was Pilsudski's personal encounter with his Lithuanian opposite number, Voldemaras, in Geneva in December 1927, when only the quick intervention of Dr. Stresemann saved the situation and brought the question from 'Peace or War' back to the realm of discussions. With Germany difficulties about the Memel district were ever present since the German majority in the Diet there hardly ever agreed with the Lithuanian Governor. In 1931 a dangerous dispute arose when the Tubelis administration accused the President of the Memel Directorate of negotiating direct with Berlin (instead of through the Lithuanian Foreign Office); he was arrested, Colonel Merkys at that time being Governor of the District. The next clash came when the Germans organised two Nazi parties, one of which, under a Dr. Neumann, was finally recognised by Hitler as his real associate. Yet, Neumann was arrested for seditious activities and both movements were suppressed by Lithuania. In December 1934 a mass trial of Memel Nazis began. It ended in March of the following year, most of the accused being found guilty of high treason against the Lithuanian State and of having prepared the forcible transfer of the Memel District to Germany. Hitler, with his never-failing sense for perverting the ideals of his enemies for his own ends, denounced Lithuania as "ignoring the most primitive laws of human society." His own refined laws were, at the time, still reserved for his own acquired countrymen; they were applied to Lithuanians and the wider world only after another period of military preparations had gone by.

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While the preparations for the collective undertaking of an Eastern Locarno were speeded up, the Baltic States amongst themselves strengthened their own machinery of co-operation. On 17 February 1934 Estonia and Latvia agreed to unify their system of laws, to give one another military help in case of

need and abroad to work as one. Lithuania asked to be admitted (25 April) to the latter, the diplomatic union, and when this was agreed to (19 May), the final shape of their tripartite 'Baltic Pact' was hammered out. This Treaty of Friendship and Collaboration was signed at Geneva on 12 September 1934 and provided for a common foreign policy (art. 1) through periodical conferences of the three Foreign Secretaries to take place at least twice every year (art. 2). What the treaty called "special problems" (art. 3), however, were to be excluded so that Lithuania's demands on Poland and her difficulties with Germany would not hamper the Baltic union. Needless to add, all these agreements, including the Estonian-Latvian defensive alliance, were registered with, and published by, the League of Nations, Russia accepting them as a visible and valuable contribution to Eastern peace. The Chiefs-of-Staff of all three Baltic States were received in Moscow in April 1936 when they were the guests of Marshal Jegeroff. The Baltic States too, unlike other small nations, were amongst those who signed the invitation to Russia to join the League.

When the Russo-French Protocol of December 1934 proclaimed again the need for an Eastern Security Pact, the Baltic union, in their first meeting under their new pact of collaboration, heartily endorsed this aim. They took the same decision after the similar Anglo-French declaration of 3 February 1935. How strongly they worked for such a guarantee was shown even more clearly when Hitler, again, loudly repudiated any such plan (15 April 1935), a repudiation which was echoed by Poland the following day at Geneva; Poland, Colonel Beck said, was suspicious of any such Eastern pact. Even in the face of this resistance the Baltic union, in its second periodical meeting of May of the same year, issued a repetition of its demand for such an Eastern guarantee. They did not, not even temporarily for the sake of expediency, try to placate Hitler. Yet, the continued opposition of Nazi Germany made the security agreement, and security itself, impossible of attainment. Mussolini's march into Abyssinia, moreover, soon absorbed all attention. The Baltic States, again unlike a few others, fulfilled their League obligations and applied full sanctions against the aggressor, Italy. They proved, indeed, faithful members of the League. Yet, the League system was allowed to fail. The Baltic States which had been willing to go all out in the interest of collective security and

had in fact strengthened it through all their actions, found themselves thrown back on the policy of so-called neutrality. Unlike some small Western powers they had not sought it, knowing full well that it was a sign of despair, the breakdown of international collaboration—they knew that there was no security in neutrality.

The years before the war were thus uneasy enough. At home the Baltic States forcibly suppressed all Nazi organisations (the Communist parties having been banned already). At the risk of causing Hitler, who was strongly influenced by Rosenberg, a German Balt, to strike and destroy their independence, they took firm action against all fascist-like organizations such as the 'Baltic Brotherhood' in Latvia, the 'Iron Wolf' in Lithuania or the 'Freedom Fighters' in Estonia. Trials like the action taken by Lithuania against the Neumann Nazis were carried out publicly and efficiently. The Republics stood their ground and admitted no outside interference whatsoever. Abroad, legal and political union with the other two Baltic States had been achieved, so much so that they were satisfied with a single spokesman for the three of them, a task that fell in Geneva since 1936 on the Latvian member of the League Council. They had fulfilled meticulously their international obligations and shown themselves both capable of resisting Nazi encroachments and of being reliably good neighbours of the Soviet Union. This was the more remarkable as they could not help hearing the words which Zdhanoff, the Secretary of the Communist Party, used in November 1936 when addressing the All-Union Congress: "We wish to live in peace with the Baltic States, but if these tiny nations," he was reported to have said, "allow big adventurers to use their territories for big adventures, we shall widen our little window on to Europe with the help of the Red Army." The Baltic States had proved all along that they successfully resisted encroachments from anywhere, and that they feared nothing more than seeing their countries overrun once more by aggressive neighbours in pursuit of conquest and annexation. Why then this threat in the language of Peter the Great?

The Baltic States gave it the best possible interpretation—perhaps it had been a warning to Hitler rather than a threat to themselves. But they were to meet Zdhanoff again—in 1940. Meanwhile they continued their policy of the good neighbour, resolved to defend the neutrality and integrity of their homeland against all comers.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

UNEASY NEUTRALITY: 1939

From 1938 onwards events moved quickly. While the eyes of the world were directed towards Hitler's march into Austria, Lithuania was faced by a Polish ultimatum with a time limit of forty-eight hours demanding the immediate opening of the frontier, that is the recognition of the loss of Vilnius. Dr. Tubelis, the Lithuanian Premier, thereupon resigned. He made room for Father Mironas, former Chief Chaplain to the Lithuanian forces, who tried to comply with Poland's wishes. It seemed useless to try to stand up to the Polish army at a moment when the German danger absorbed the attention of all Powers.

Within the year, Lithuania was to suffer a second serious humiliation, this time at the hands of Hitler. When the Lithuanian Foreign Secretary, Urbsys, on his way back from Rome, called on Ribbentrop at the German Foreign Office (February 1939), he was told that the time had come for a 'settlement' of the Memel question. Settlement, in German, meant of course the transfer of the whole district to Germany. Thus Lithuania was to lose her only port, the lower reaches of her single notable river. Urbsys informed Britain and France, the Allies who, in 1919, had made Germany release the strip of land and who were co-signatories of the Memel Convention. Yet the statesmen of the world watched—and vainly tried to meet—Hitler's preparation for his attack on Czechoslovakia. As in the previous year, against Polish demands, so now no help came to meet the formidable German foe. As in March 1938, so in March 1939, the blow fell. Aboard the battleship *Deutschland*, Hitler went to Klaipeda. He had chosen a ship too big to enter the port—

how long will it take the world, a Lithuanian was heard to mutter, before it notices that he was getting too big for his boots? If his welcome in Klaipėda, organised by the notorious Neumann, was less stately than planned, Hitler had had his way, had received the coveted, and to him useless, strip of territory through yet another 'bloodless conquest'. Lithuania had been mutilated. The Lithuanian Government resigned and a National Government, headed by Chernius, was formed, Urbys remaining at the Foreign Office. The day after the loss of their port and its hinterland, to complete Hitler's story of pledges and promises, a non-aggression treaty between Lithuania and Germany had to be signed. The other two Baltic States were asked to follow suit by 1 June 1939.

All through the spring and summer of 1939 the Great Powers tried to build a Peace Front capable of withstanding the Hitler onslaught. Only a Grand Alliance of East and West, it appeared, could save Europe from war. In these negotiations the Baltic States held a peculiar place—were they to become an object of discussion once more, without having a say in the matter? The draft treaty worked out by Britain and France on the one side and by Russia on the other was to crown the edifice of Franco-British guarantees given to Poland, Rumania, Greece and Turkey. Russia argued that she was to act in the case of German aggression against Belgium, Holland or Switzerland: it seemed right therefore that Britain and France were to guarantee not only Turkey, Greece, Rumania and Poland—as they had done in the pursuit of their Peace Front without waiting for Russia—but also Latvia, Estonia and Finland. By May this all-inclusive alliance seemed acceptable to all three Great Powers. But the real difficulty now appeared. Russia declined to enter into any tripartite pledge of mutual assistance there and then while the details of the wider scheme were worked out. She wanted to know first how the guarantee of all of her neighbours was to be formulated. How, indeed, was it to be done without drawing upon the small States the very wrath from which it was intended to save them? By June Russia had worked out a formula to cover these States without naming them. Mr. Churchill, still outside the Government, thought it wrong to ask the small States to commit themselves: "It is sufficient for the three Great Powers to declare that the invasion or subversion of the Baltic States by the Nazis would be an unfriendly act, in the

full diplomatic significance of the term, against the Grand Alliance." This was insufficient from the Russian point of view but was accepted by Mr. Chamberlain's Government: "There remains," the Prime Minister said, "one or two difficulties to be resolved, in particular the position of certain States which do not want to receive a guarantee on the ground that it would compromise the strict neutrality which they desire to preserve."

The Baltic desire not to become first the diplomatic and then the real battlefield of the armies of the Great Powers was natural. What caused them anxiety was that the Western Powers alone showed understanding for this attitude, whereas Russia seemed ready to ride roughshod over their interests. Was this only a difference in temperament and method, as apologists of the Soviet Union pronounced it to be, or was the Union intentionally attempting to compromise the safety of the three Baltic nations? Suspicions, as always, were no Russian monopoly. "The Russians," said Mr. A. T. Cholerton, a British journalist resident in Moscow, "want to force Latvia, Estonia and Finland into line by imposing on them an Anglo-French-Soviet guarantee, whether they want it or not. The British and French attitude is still that the entire system of security now proposed is based on the voluntary principle, even when small States are involved." Even small States? To add point to these divergencies, the Russian General Staff announced on 29 June that the autumn manoeuvres of the Red Army would be held in the Leningrad District, adding that all previous manoeuvres had been held far to the South, in the Minsk or Kiev command. "I have been informed on the highest Russian authority," Sir Bernard Pares has since stated, "that Russia proposed to the little Baltic States a joint occupation and guarantee by Britain, France and Russia."

While a British-French military mission was in Moscow—reaching there, as mutually agreed, on 11 August—to prepare the ground for action the moment the mutual assistance pact was ready for signature, negotiations between Hitler's Foreign Office and Moscow went on—to end, through an announcement sprung on the world on 23 August, in the signature of the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact. What rôle had been allotted to the three Baltic States in the Russo-German agreement? The rights of third parties, particularly if they were small nations, and collective security had no room in the world of those who claimed to be realists relying on power alone. Like Tsar and

Napoleon, meeting at Tilsit, it was 'spheres of influence' and the carving out of Empires once more. "In speaking of the division of spheres of interest," Stalin told the Latvian Foreign Secretary soon afterwards, "the Germans mentioned the river Daugava, dividing Latvia into two parts." The Russians did not agree with that particular line; it was the line held against them by troops of Imperial Germany in the last war. Hitler had therefore to leave Latvia and Estonia to Stalin and to promise the withdrawal of all German-speaking people living there. Lithuania, on the other hand, still seemed to be left to Hitler's mercies rather than to Russian. By 3 September Britain and France were at war with Nazi Germany which was then carrying out its lightning war of destruction against a Poland to be partitioned forthwith for the fourth time, its Eastern part being added to the Soviet Union in compliance with the German-Russian agreement. Within a cruelly short space of time the nature and contents of these agreements between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia revealed themselves to the world.

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When the war came, the Baltic States remained faithful to their policy of neutrality, forced upon them by the failure of the Great Powers to implement the League system of organised peace. It was Lithuania, bordering on both Germany and Poland, which was first drawn into the whirlpool. Between 8 and 14 September a member of the Nazi Foreign Minister's staff, a Dr. Kleist, called on the Lithuanian Minister to Berlin, Skirpa, no less than three times: would Lithuania, he asked, occupy Vilnius now while the going was good? If Lithuania felt too weak to act, Germany would send help most willingly. It was a great temptation. For upwards of twenty years Lithuanians had hoped for the day when they would be able to regain their ancient capital. Now they could have it for the asking. Yet, Lithuania declined the offer. Not even for priceless Vilnius would she deal with Nazi Germany. On 11 September she confirmed once more her strict neutrality. Six days later Russia moved West, into the parts of Poland she had lost in the war of 1921 and had now decided to regain. Ribbentrop, Hitler's Foreign Secretary, now personally urged Skirpa to tell his Government at Kaunas that act they must, act at once, if they wanted to recover Vilnius. On 21 September he saw the Lithu-

anian Minister at Danzig's seaside resort, Zoppot. The balance of power in Europe, he said, has been altered; Lithuania must realise that she was within the German sphere and had better send her Foreign Secretary to Berlin. Meanwhile he, Ribbentrop, would arrange with the Russians that Vilnius be transferred to her.

Again Lithuania refused. She would not travel the road to Berlin, would have no truck with Germany. Ribbentrop, going to Moscow to fix with Molotoff the details of the demarcation line dividing the Russian and German Empires while Germany fought the Western Powers, had not been supplied with a Lithuanian bargaining proposition. In fact, Molotoff demanded the inclusion of the third Baltic State in the Russian zone. Ribbentrop, on instructions, gave way. Lithuania, Hitler judged, had no military value to him. Soon afterwards Stalin told the Lithuanian Foreign Secretary that he had saved Lithuania from being included in the Nazi sphere. Saved, the Lithuanians have asked themselves since, for whom? for themselves? for what? for independence?

Meanwhile Lithuanians went their way. The thought of Vilnius never left them, yet, when Poland fell, they opened their frontiers to Polish refugees caught between the German hammer and the Russian sickle. They helped Britain's first ally in this war ungrudgingly. Camps were opened, for instance in Kalautuva, a Lithuanian spa, to accommodate Polish officers. Credit was given to the penniless, in restaurants and shops; the exchange of Polish *zloty*, the currency of a country that had disappeared under the Brown and Red of the occupying armies, was arranged. Over eighteen thousand refugees were officially admitted, not counting the soldiers, the officers nor the thousands of 'illegal' refugees, many of whom found their way back to the fighting front via Britain. These 'illegal' refugees constituted a danger to Lithuanian independence since they fled from the Russian and the German-occupied parts of Poland. Any help given them officially could easily cause Russian or German intervention.

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The other two Baltic States, separated from the battlefields of Poland, watched anxiously. Latvia too saw at least a small trickle of refugees from Poland, most of them bent on escaping to Britain to continue the good fight. Then, one day, a Polish submarine, *Orzel*, limped into the roadstead of Tallinn. A

guard was put on board, in accordance with Estonia's obligations as a neutral. The Polish crew, desperate in their desire to get back into the fight—in which they were to play so gallant a rôle—escaped, taking the guard prisoner. Russia had just signed with Germany the famous Moscow Declaration charging Britain and France with the unnecessary prolongation of an unjust war; she now decided to make use of German pre-occupation in the West and to exploit the incident of the Polish submarine's escape to Britain by demanding military bases first on Estonian, then on Latvian and Lithuanian soil as well.

K. Selter, the Estonian Foreign Secretary, had just gone to Moscow to sign a new trade agreement, when he was confronted with military demands by Stalin and Molotoff. After consulting the President, K. Päts, and the Prime Minister, K. Eenpalu (who, as Einbund, had been Home Secretary in the days of the Communist putsch in 1924), he accepted the Russian requests. On 28 September, "for the purpose of developing the friendly relations established by the Peace Treaty of 2 February 1920 based on the recognition of the independence of the State and on the non-interference in the internal affairs of the other party", Estonia and Russia signed an agreement of mutual aid: under it Russia leased for ten years air and naval bases at Paldiski (Baltish Port) and on Saaremaa (Oesel) and Hiiumaa (Dagoe); the territory involved remained Estonian, but Russia was given the right to maintain troops and personnel there. The sovereign rights, as especially mentioned in article 5, and the political and economic structure the Estonians had developed according to their own light, were not to be touched. Russia, moreover, promised to supply the Estonian army with military equipment.

This had been no easy step for Estonia to take, and it was with a heavy heart that she threw her neutrality overboard. But, she was ready to accept the argument that extreme neutrality was unpracticable in the face of Hitler's ever-growing hold on Europe. Having made up their mind that any siding with Germany must lead to destruction, Estonians realised that it seemed best to accept Russia's terms, to rely on Stalin's explicit guarantee and to hope for the eventual withdrawal of all Russian troops once the war in Europe had ended. In assisting Russian defence, they were, Stalin promised, to see their independence, their sovereign rights and social structure, secure and guaranteed. Having signed the pact of mutual aid, Eenpalu's

administration resigned to make room for an all-party, truly National Government, headed by J. Uluots, the author of the newly accepted democratic constitution. A. Piip, a Liberal and one of the leaders of the early days of the Republic, returned to the Foreign Office, replacing K. Selter.

Next, Latvia was invited to sign a similar treaty. Her Foreign Secretary, V. Munters, saw Stalin and Molotoff twice on 2 and 3 October 1939 for some four-and-a-half hours to discuss the details of a mutual aid pact. "War is raging, and we have to see to our safety," Stalin told him. "Peter the Great saw to it that an outlet to the sea was gained. We are now without an exit. We wish to ensure ourselves the use of ports, roads to these ports, and their defence. I tell you frankly: a division of spheres of interest has already taken place. As far as Germany is concerned we could occupy you. However, we want no abuse." The shadow of Peter's the Great conquest loomed large and dark. Neither could it appear re-assuring that "Stalin began to rattle off all kinds of figures"—how many submarines, guns, planes, troops he wanted to place, and where. But then came Marshal Stalin's promise: at the end of the war, he said, "we shall withdraw."

Munters tried to limit the Russian troops to be stationed in Latvia to the figure of the Latvian army itself, that is about 20,000 men. But Stalin would not budge: "You do not trust us, and we do not quite trust you either. You believe that we wish to seize (*zakhvatiit*) you. We could do that now, but we do not do it. A German attack is also possible. We must be prepared in time. Others who were not ready paid the price." Details were then settled, all after an equally frank discussion. Molotoff, Munters noted, "was peeved that the Estonians had let others know of the 25,000" men to which the Russian troops had been limited on Estonian bases; but, then, Estonia and Latvia had a defensive alliance since 1923, as all the world knew. Surely then such information had to be exchanged. On 5 October the pact of mutual assistance was signed and published. Liepaja (Libau) and Ventspils (Windau) were amongst the Latvian bases leased to Russia for ten years. Once again, the agreement in no way affected "the sovereign rights of the contracting parties, in particular their political structure, their economic and social system and their military measures."

There remained Lithuania which had withstood the Ribbentrop blandishments all along. To Lithuanians the treaty was more than welcome in so far as it gave them Vilnius. Urbsys, Bizauskas and Rashtikis followed the invitation to Moscow and signed, on 10 October, a Treaty of Restoration of the City of Vilnius and the Region of Vilnius to the Republic of Lithuania, as well as a mutual aid pact which was to remain in force for fifteen years. The Lithuanian Government then moved to Vilnius. Finally, Lithuania was promised, as had been Estonia and Latvia, that an increase in trade would be arranged by the Soviet Union—thus another old demand of the three Baltic States seemed about to be fulfilled. The Poles in Vilnius constituted a galling problem. Lithuania, naturally, was anxious to rid herself of a Polish majority in her new capital. How could this be done without causing further misery, even if Lithuanians might feel that they were only righting a historic wrong? In all this, Lithuania stood the test. Never having treated with Hitler, she remained faithful to the standard of Western heritage where man comes first and foremost, where the State, the party, the class, the leader can never rank in value as high as—or even higher than—man's soul.

As far as Stalin was concerned, the Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians were safe, guaranteed in their independence once more until at least 1949. By then, it seemed reasonable to hope, Hitler would be destroyed and all danger to international co-operation be gone. To reach such an aim, the temporary leasing of bases to Russia seemed a risk worth while taking. Summing up Soviet intentions, V. Molotoff told the Supreme Council in Moscow on 31 October 1939: "The Pacts with the Baltic States in no way imply the intrusion of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, as some foreign interests are trying to have it believed. These Pacts are inspired by mutual respect for the governmental, social and economic systems of each of the contracting parties. We stand for an exact and honest fulfilment of agreements signed by us on the basis of mutuality and declare that foolish prattle of sovietization of the Baltic States is of use merely to our common enemies and to all kinds of anti-Soviet provocateurs." Foolish prattle of sovietization—the Baltic peoples were happy to have such official reassurance on record. It was echoed by the Russian envoy to Estonia, Nikitin, who said: "Throughout the past

twenty years of Estonia's existence as an independent State the friendliest relations have existed between the Estonian nation and the peoples of the Soviet Union."

The same autumn the Baltic States were freed from their oldest problem—from the Germans. Hitler ordered the withdrawal of all Germans from the East, a promise he had made to Stalin just as he had promised Mussolini on 21st October to withdraw all Germans from South Tyrol. Thus some 16,000 Germans from Estonia, about 60,000 from Latvia and 35,000 from Lithuania found themselves forced by the Nazi Government to leave their homes and, in Rosenberg's words, exchange them for a *Vaterland*. Himmler himself was in charge of all arrangements for their reception—small wonder it was a 'day of panic' for the German Balts. He settled them in Poland. Amongst the 110,000 who were thus uprooted and compulsorily transferred were some four hundred officers of the Latvian army and a von Salza, head of the Estonian navy. On Hitler's orders everyone of German extraction had to go, quite irrespective of his personal loyalties.

With the last vestige of baronial influence gone, with Russia's promise of military assistance in the interest of their own security, and with Stalin's personal pledge that Estonia's, Latvia's and Lithuania's independence and integrity would be respected—with the help of all this, could the Baltic nations not hope to weather the storm that Hitler loosened and that was fast sweeping the world?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THREE TIMES OCCUPIED: RUSSIA

The regular meetings of the three Baltic Foreign Secretaries, first instituted in 1934 and continued ever since, took place as before: the tenth at Tallinn in December 1939, the eleventh at Riga in March 1940. The Foreign Secretaries confirmed "the positive results" of their policy of neutrality based on the mutual aid pacts with Russia. Yet, there was no denying that the war had almost closed in on them. Finland, unlike the three Baltic States, had refused to lend bases at Hangö at the mouth of the Finnish Bay; compliance with the Soviet wish, they thought, would have meant "the complete strategic dominance of Finland and in turn the loss of Finnish independence." Russia therefore tried to force her, and after a bitter fight Finnish resistance succumbed and a treaty was signed in March 1940. Was it peace after all for the Baltic? All through the Finnish campaign the three Baltic peoples had watched in agony. Now Molotoff declared himself satisfied with the working of the Baltic aid pacts. The bases had been occupied in a satisfactory manner without an incident. General Laidoner, the Estonian Commander-in-Chief, had visited Moscow to implement the Russian promise of war supplies; on his return he could report that all the Soviet leaders were interested in what was a strengthening of the Baltic defence forces.

Denmark and Norway were invaded by Hitler in April—the Baltic Sea was sealed off in the West and President Roosevelt's voice seemed to sound muffled now, was hardly audible in the Baltic States above the din of battle: "If civilization is to survive," that great voice said in condemnation of Hitler, "the

rights of the smaller nations to independence, to their territorial integrity, and to the unimpeded opportunity for self-government must be respected by their more powerful neighbours."

What happened to the governmental circles in Moscow in that fateful summer of 1940 while France fell, we do not know. All we know is that Stalin, in mid-June, decided to break the many pledges made three times over to the three Baltic States, only eight months ago, and to do away with them and their independence altogether. Many explanations have been offered. There was the military one, always called upon when there is no moral justification: that he wanted to get ready to withstand Hitler's coming onslaught. This may be so—but he knew of it when he pledged himself to maintain their independence in October 1939. Moreover, in wiping them off the map of Europe, he threw away the military support those three liberty-loving nations would have given us against Hitler. He had promised to strengthen their armies by supplying them with war material. They would have fought for their liberty and life as they had fought before—many well-trained divisions he lost us through the destruction of Baltic independence. On the other hand, he might have misjudged the position. The forces of nationalism in others, even if and particularly when we disapprove of them, are hard to measure in their mountain-moving strength. Or he might have been misled as he had been when he told Munters in October 1939 that Britain had already "demanded from Sweden certain airfields" and that she tried to buy the naval bases of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa Islands off Estonia. Whatever the surmise, and many others can be made, the fact remains that he ordered the complete occupation and annexation of the Baltic States. The world was back where Peter the Great had left it.

On 28 May 1940 the Lithuanians were charged with kidnapping and torturing Russian soldiers—a preposterous charge from a Soviet Government ruling some 170 and more million people to a Republic of some two-and-a-half millions. No inquiry was admitted (Lithuania, trying to take the charges at their face value, had naturally offered one); no witness was brought. Instead, an ultimatum followed. It was accepted on 15 June. No other way was open to Lithuania since even a show of resistance, with all key positions already in Russian hands, would have been madness. The following day Estonia and

Latvia too received an ultimatum. They were charged with endangering Russian security through their defensive alliance (and through the publication, in English and French, of a little monthly review). Their orders were to change their Governments and to allow their countries to be occupied by the Red Army. A stream of tanks and lorries was already moving across the frontiers. A British observer on the spot has testified to the efficiency with which this occupation was carried out, has also testified to the courtesy and politeness of the Red soldiers. But he failed to add that it was occupation all the same. He left the country—while Lithuanians, Letts and Estonians had once again become the servants of an alien master, suffered the humiliation of foreign occupation troops within their own villages and towns.

Soviet Russia disposed of the existing National Governments in all three States and replaced them by Communist sympathisers who were to provide a façade while the Red Army authorities got to work; they were Justas Paleckis in Lithuania, August Kirchensteins in Latvia and Johannes Vares in Estonia. The last Lithuanian Premier, Merkys, was forced to appoint Paleckis—as if he could appoint anybody without usurping the powers granted to the President under the Constitution. President Smetona, however, had made good his escape, eventually to reach the United States of America where he died in January 1944. Merkys, on the other hand, having been made to sign what was required of him, was deported into the interior of Russia. An Assistant Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Dekanozoff, was in charge of these and the following changes made under Russian occupation in Lithuania. In Latvia, the legal position of the new men whom Moscow styled a Government was equally untenable. On 17 May 1940 the Cabinet in Riga had decided “in case it should no longer be possible to communicate with Latvia’s diplomatic and consular missions in Western Europe due to war conditions, to confer extraordinary powers upon Karlis Zarins, Latvian Envoy in London.” If Zarins should be unable to carry on the Government of Latvia, A. Bilmanis, the Minister in Washington, was to fill the gap. This power of attorney had come into effect with Russia’s military occupation of the country. Naturally, Russia brushed aside legal documents of this nature. Instead, she nominated the former Vice-President of the Society for Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia, A.

Kirchensteins, 'Prime Minister'. Vice-President of the Council of Peoples Commissars, Vyshinski, re-organised Latvia while Ulmanis was sent into the interior of Russia.

In Estonia, the story was no different. President Päts was no longer free to act—whatever decrees he may or may not have signed afterwards, seems, therefore, irrelevant. The poet Vares was chosen by Commissar Zhdanoff to form a new 'Government'—it was the same Zhdanoff who had threatened to use the Red Army for the purpose of widening Russia's little window in the Baltic as long ago as 1936. On 6 July these Russian-made Governments 'dissolved' Parliament in all three Republics and fixed new elections for 14 and 15 July, in all three States. Three-and-a-half days were thus left for the nomination of candidates and eight in all for the election campaign. This, almost needless to add, constituted yet another breach of the Constitution. Even if the dissolution had been legal, the Estonian electoral law for instance fixed the interval between dissolution and elections at a minimum of thirty-five days. Moreover, it could not be altered by decree—as, of course, it cannot in any democracy. The decree which pretended to alter the electoral law also did away with the right to appeal against the findings of the Supreme Electoral Committee, the members of which were now to be government-nominated— independent judges or magistrates, formerly serving on it, were dismissed. Ballot papers, it was further decreed, need not be handed in personally by the voter.

In all three countries there was then formed a *Working People's League* with an identical programme, so much so that they read like the translation from the same original into Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian. The 'Governments' formally subscribed to it and put all broadcasting stations at the League's exclusive disposal. A Red militia, the 'People's Self-Defence', was further to assist the electioneering progress of the *League*. On 10 July a new alteration of the Estonian and Latvian electoral laws was decreed. Each candidate was required to hand in his electoral programme, in writing, by 2 p.m. that day. On 11 July the papers printed a 'Government' declaration headed "Enemies of the People unable to stand for election." Seventeen candidates in Estonia, it was said, had withdrawn, out of their own free will, all other non-*League* candidates had been disqualified. Thus only members of the Communist-

inspired, but differently named, *Working People's League* remained as possible candidates. Naturally even men like J. Tonisson, Estonia's Great Old Man, or A. Piip, were excluded. The same disqualification of all non-Communists took place in Latvia where the written electoral programmes were put to the same use and served as a pretext to clear the field for the League's associates. "In the electoral programme liberty of speech is demanded for all citizens, consequently also for enemies of the State and of the people. This runs counter to the rulings of the Electoral Law, according to which the elections may not be exploited for purposes injurious to the Estonian Republic and the Estonian people"—thus ran the disqualification of a candidate in Virumaa. If the reasoning seemed disingenuous, it served its purpose. Strangely enough, in all such States, illegal decrees seem to be interpreted even contrary to their own wording. Latvia and Estonia were thus in line with Lithuania where, from the outset, only candidates of the *League* had been admitted. Dekanozoff's way in Vilnius seemed straighter than the tortuous, but carefully synchronized turns taken by Vyshinski in Riga and Zhdanoff in Tallinn.

If all non-members of the *Working People's League* had been declared enemies of the people, so, it seemed, were possible non-voters: after all, single-list elections without voters would hardly warm the cockles of the heart of the election manager. No imagination was needed to know the fate awaiting enemies of the people. Those who were too young to remember vividly what the Tsarist police state had been capable of doing were reminded of realities in every issue of every paper. At the same time, however, it was stated that "the Government has no intention of introducing a Soviet régime."

The figures finally announced as having been cast in favour of the single list submitted by the *League*—all in the neighbourhood of ninety per cent—were thus rather a comment on the method of holding these elections contrary to all law and Constitutions than an indication of anything else. In fact, when there is no choice between two candidates, or at least two lists—only one being allowed—it seems a contradiction in terms to speak of elections at all. That election day itself was up to the standard of the preparatory work one would expect. Suspicion ("enemy of the people!") fell on anyone trying to use the screened polling booth when marking his paper. Political officers

of the Red Army were present throughout. Identification papers were only necessary in so far as they were stamped to show that the holder had in fact cast his vote.

The three single-list Diets thus got together had to meet on 21 July. They were then faced with a resolution, the same resolution in all three countries, expressing their wish for admission to the Soviet Union. By show of hands this was carried by both the Latvian and Lithuanian Communists. If the Estonian Communists followed only the next day, 22 July, this was because Vares, the poet, had suddenly asked if he could not be given a kind of self-government on the pattern enjoyed by for instance Outer Mongolia. Such status, however, was refused and Estonia followed suit. Naturally it did not matter that such an alteration of the Constitution needed the approval of the second Chamber as well; required the President to put the proposed alterations to the people by holding new elections and by newly forming the second Chamber; that the suggestion became law only if the changes were then accepted a second time by the new Houses of Parliament (art. 146-150 of the Estonian Constitution). Zhdanoff obviously forgot all about the second Chamber and the President was presumably no longer available in Estonia. Vyshinski, in Riga, forgot that a referendum was needed by the Latvian Constitution. All such constitutional safeguards of individual liberties were disregarded, either forgotten or intentionally broken. Perhaps illegality did not matter after all. Was it not Lenin who defined annexation as a procedure under which a small or weak nation is added without a free vote to a large or strong State—a free vote, as he observed, “implying the complete withdrawal of the troops of the incorporating or merely strong nation”? Incorporation in such circumstances, with foreign troops in occupation, Lenin described as “arbitrary appropriation of a foreign country, an act of violence.”

* * *

The annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was proclaimed an accomplished fact by the Supreme Soviet on 3, 4 and 6 August 1944. Well could Molotoff tell the Supreme Soviet that he “presented the demands you know about for changes in the Governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and dispatched additional (sic) Red Army units to these countries. You know the result of this step.” The world too had seen the

result, though it judged differently. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, reminded the House of Lords as early as 5 December 1939 how Britain had sought an alliance with Russia: "but in doing so we had always maintained the position that rights of third parties must remain intact"—on what other grounds could we resist Hitler's aggressions? "The judgment and the instinct of His Majesty's Government in refusing agreement with the Soviet Government on the terms of formulae covering cases of indirect aggression on the Baltic States were right. For it is now plain that these formulae might well have been the cloak of ulterior designs. I have little doubt that the people of this country would prefer to face difficulties and embarrassment rather than feel that we had compromised the honour of this country and of the Commonwealth on such issues." These words ring out to-day as they did in 1939.

The United States judged the events in the same manner and spoke out in the same spirit: "The people of the United States," declared the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Sumner Welles, "are opposed to predatory activities, no matter whether they are carried on by the use of force or by the threat of force. They are likewise opposed to any form of intervention on the part of any State, however powerful, in the domestic concerns of any other sovereign state, however weak. These principles constitute the very foundations upon which the existing relationship between the twenty-one sovereign Republics of the New World rests. The United States will continue to stand by these principles because of the conviction of the American people that, unless the doctrine in which these principles are inherent once again govern the relations between nations, the rule of reason, of justice and of law—in other words, the basis of modern civilization itself—cannot be preserved."

Not one of the United Nations recognised the alterations wrought on the map of Europe after Hitler's pact with Russia—how could they without denying the right by which they lived? And yet, looking at the front page of a London newspaper in September 1940 one read:—

U.S.S.R.

Notice is hereby given that ALL CITIZENS OF LITHUANIA, LATVIA and ESTHONIA who are beyond the confines of the U.S.S.R., and are not deprived of citizenship by the Governments of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Esthon-

ian Soviet Socialist Republics, must register as Soviet citizens, before the 1st November, 1940, personally or in writing to: The Consular Department of the Embassy of the U.S.S.R., 3 Rosary Gardens, London, S.W.7. All applicants must produce their National passport.

EMBASSY OF THE U.S.S.R.

Amongst those deprived of their citizenship was Charles Zarins himself, the man on whom the last legal Government of free Latvia had bestowed the power to carry on the Latvian administration if the country were occupied by foreign troops.

For just over a year the three Baltic States remained in the hands of Russia. The Republican leaders, few of whom had been able to flee the country, were deported into the interior. Non-Communist politicians as well as unpolitical lawyers, doctors, parsons and businessmen were also removed. Among them was the former Bishop of Estonia, Rahamägi (the first Estonian Lutheran Bishop had been consecrated by Dr. Nathan Söderblom on 5 June 1921). Early in the summer of 1941 a mass evacuation from the three countries was ordered by Moscow. In all, about 150,000 people were removed from their home countries. Details, lists of names, even the number of trucks used, have long been published, for instance by Elma Dangerfield. They hardly bear repetition. The amount of human misery that was, and is, involved in these mass transfers cannot be expressed in words—yet the agony thus caused constitutes a fact which cannot be shunned, nay, which must be kept in mind before we can hope to build a new and peaceful world.

Those left in their home country had to submit to sovietization (how many of them remembered Molotoff's words about the foolish prattle concerning the coming sovietization?). While it proved impossible to complete the transfer of all farms into collective combines within the year, all industrial undertakings were run by the State and its Commissars. On 29 November 1940 the Estonian system of Social Insurance came to an end, sickness and other allowances now becoming payable only on the strength of a certificate issued by the factory committee, composed of self-appointed Communists. Medicine and treatment, free in the days of independent Estonia, had to be paid for by the worker himself. A. Horm, a former Secretary of the Estonian Co-operative Society, has estimated that the total budgetary expenditure on social insurance under Soviet occupation

amounted from one seventh to one eighth of the yearly expenditure in this field in Estonia before the Russian invasion.

The co-operative movement too underwent drastic changes. It naturally lost its managers to the crucified army of men, women and children deported into Russia's interior. It also lost its democratic character of elected management. On the other hand, it was asked to run a whole series of nationalised, formerly privately owned, firms. All restaurants and feeding establishments had to be taken over by the co-operatives. The ensuing difficulties, however, were straightened out by the beginning of 1941—by then the *ruble*, replacing the national currencies throughout the Baltic States, had brought about an inflation to such a degree that shops were practically empty. Consumer goods, naturally, had been drained away and flowed into the Soviet Union. The Russians themselves heard a different story. "I asked the waitress how were things in the U.S.S.R.", an English admirer of the Russians recorded about his halt at Minsk in 1941. "Oh, we were getting on quite well, but now we have to give up some food to feed the hungry people of the Baltic States since they asked to join us.' Having just left those States, which I knew were literally flowing with milk and honey, I could only marvel at the power of propaganda." Was it surprising that the Vares-Kirchensteins-Paleckis wrote in *Izvestia* that, under the Soviet régime, "for the first time thousands of Letts, Estonians and Lithuanians enjoyed a cultured existence?"

* * *

Life in the formerly free countries had changed indeed. Even Sunday had disappeared. Its observance was forbidden; workers' days off always fell on other days of the week. All Easter celebrations in 1941 were equally banned. Church property was nationalised, in spite of the fact that the great land reforms of the early days of the three Republics had made sure that no undue amount of land remained in non-peasant or 'dead' hands. Monasteries were dissolved. The names of ministers of religion deported or killed are well known and are on record for those who disbelieve in these ugly trials of human suffering. The League of Anti-Religious Fighters was given a free field to denounce the churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, as defenders of capitalist society built on private property. Ministers of religion still in the country had to pay special rents and unusually high tariffs for electricity and the like, had to

pay increased rates of school fees for their children etc. The one exception was the treatment of the Greek Orthodox Church which was left alone. But then only an almost negligible minority of the Baltic peoples professed this faith of which Pan-Slavism had made use so often. Was the Greek Orthodox Church, the Baltic nations asked themselves, to travel a similar road of active help to be rendered now unto Stalin's State as it had done during the nineteenth century to promote Russification?

The sun of liberty had set. Individual rights, personal liberty and freedom of conscience had disappeared. War was upon the small Baltic nations. An alien ruler stalked the land. What seemed hardest to bear was the denial of nationality. To Russia the newly-won nationals were Soviet citizens, Estonian-speaking, Latvian-speaking, Lithuanian-speaking people, but Soviet citizens all. If they made their peace with the Soviet State and the Communist Party, they were equals of the others, had equal chances in life. But to do this, they had to give up what to them made life worth living—their own nationality, as understood by their fathers and forefathers and preserved throughout centuries of foreign domination. They knew in their hearts that it could not be done, that spiritual values cannot thus die overnight. They asked themselves one thing only: how long can this return to bondage last—when shall we be free again?

The voice of freedom, coming from the West, had appeared muffled ever since Hitler had shut the Western gates to the Baltic in the spring of 1940. Now it seemed all but drowned through the din of Russian tanks and the clatter of the heavy marching boot of the Red soldier. Only when the Estonian farmer, the Latvian peasant, the Lithuanian landsman held his breath to listen anxiously, listen with his inner ear, could he still make out the voice that had once encouraged his ancestors through the long dark centuries of serfdom, had encouraged them to wait and hope and to achieve liberation. Surely, he, having tasted the sweetness of freedom itself, could wait too, certain of the outcome.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THREE TIMES OCCUPIED: GERMANY.

On Sunday, 22 June 1941, at dawn, Hitler's armies attacked the Soviet Union which thus, through the suffering of war, became one of the United Nations fighting him and the evil things he stood for. Latvian riflemen, Estonian and Lithuanian soldiers, who fought Imperial Germany in 1914 and told the Russian peoples through their elected Duma deputies that they were with Russia to the end—where were they now, a generation later, in the hour of even greater peril? Soviet Russia, they felt, had robbed them of their independence, had dissolved their national armies, deported their officers and commanders and leaders, had wounded both their national self-esteem and their individual happiness. Soviet Russia had forfeited their assistance. In 1915 the Germans were stopped in mid-Latvia, never to threaten Leningrad; even Hindenburg had admitted that the Letts in the front-line opposite him were like three bright stars that could not be quenched. This time, in 1941, the Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians rose in revolt to regain their independence. Stalin had thrown away the military help they would have given in defence of their soil. What was left them of fighting power they turned against both Russians and Germans to be free once more.

In Estonia partisan troops fought throughout the country; many thousand casualties were suffered on both sides. In Riga public buildings and the wireless station were quickly occupied by patriots who hoped for liberation. For some days Riga station told the world of timeless Latvia, freed from Russians and from Germans. Yet, on 1 July, Riga was in German hands and silence settled once again on the land, occupied by yet another invader. In Kaunas, bombed by Germany already on 22 June, and in Vilnius, the patriot leader Ambrazevicius formed a Provisional Government which relied

on the rising of over a hundred thousand loyal Lithuanians. K. Skirpa, the former Lithuanian Minister to Germany, also believed that the moment of liberation had come; he was soon disillusioned and was not even allowed by the Germans, the new masters, to return to his home country—just as Voldemaras who had secretly re-entered Lithuania in the days of Russian occupation and had been removed from the country by the then masters of his country. It was all in vain. The Germans, triumphant, were to annex the Baltic States in their turn.

The German army group of Field-Marshal von Leeb overran the Russian positions in the Baltic within a week or two. Col.-Gen. von K uchler, having cut through Lithuania, reached Riga in just over a week and then pushed slowly into Estonia, the Daugava not having caused any hold-up. The *panzer*-corps under Col.-Gen. Hoepfner went straight through to Pskov, bypassing Estonia altogether and beginning the siege of Leningrad long before the last Russians had been overpowered in North Estonia. Hoepfner, it will be remembered, was amongst those hanged on Hitler's orders in July 1944. The Baltic States had actually proved a trap for the Russian troops urgently needed for the defence of Leningrad. The occupied States had been a military liability. Instead of strengthening the Narva and Pskov positions in depth, north and south of the sheltering expanse of Lake Peipus, Soviet Russia had wasted her energies, for many a long month, on futile garrison work in an alien land.

The Germans showed their hand slowly, as is the way of most conquerors, but quickly enough for the Baltic nations to realise that they had simply exchanged one alien yoke for another, that their partisan fighters had been right, and were right, in obstructing the Germans now as they had obstructed the Russians before. The Russian had gone—the German had come, he too to stay as master. On 8 August 1941, Heinrich Lohse, Hitler's District Leader for Slesvig-Holstein, was appointed Commissar of the *Ostland* with headquarters at Riga. His rule was to extend over all three Baltic peoples as well as over an undefined strip of Russian territory. He had to take orders from Alfred Rosenberg. Under him there were sub-commissars like A. von Rentelen for Lithuania, Drechsler for Latvia and Litzmann for Estonia. Such assistants he needed the more since he met with none from the Baltic nations themselves—another proof of the fact, underlying the whole struggle of these nations against

foreign invaders, that the risings of June 1941 had not been in favour of Germany (as some publicists have been trying to make out) but were directed exclusively towards their national aim: national independence.

Germany, for her part, considered the Baltic States a conquered colony. Private property, the Germans argued, did not exist in Soviet-ruled countries; thus nobody could claim his own by right. "By sacrificing the blood of German soldiers, all these countries were liberated. The German Reich, therefore, becomes the legal heir to the Soviet inheritance." Owners of buildings, factories, of all real estate, were asked to pay rent to the German Government. What stocks of raw materials they might have saved, payment was to be made for them to the State. Thus the Soviet system remained unaltered as far as the individual Estonian, Lett or Lithuanian was concerned. The population began to speak of the Brown Bolsheviks and the Red Nazis, hardly knowing now which was which. *Rubles* disappeared, *reichs-kredit-marks* appeared. Names changed, but their own position as conquered nations remained the same—except, of course, for the collaborationists with either side whose hey-day coincided with the depth of misery of their peoples, those Paleckis and Kubiliunas, the Kirchensteins and Dankers, the Vares and Mäe, misguided idealists at best, hard-boiled self-seekers most.

The Germans too made use of the economic backbone of the three States, the co-operative movement. Naturally, to them also, the elective principle of management was repulsive, and executives were nominated from above, according to the funny *führer-prinzip* of the dictators. No elections were allowed. The most profitable undertakings were taken away from the societies and handed over to favoured Nazi firms. Thus the biggest paper mill in Estonia was transferred to *Ostland Faser*. The rest were looked after by the Central Union of Co-operative Societies in the Eastern Areas, or *Ostland*, working at Riga. Ley's notorious 'Labour Front' was introduced into the factories. Social services remained, closely resembling the Soviet system, the worker having to pay for instance half of the fees due for medical treatment.

The religious life of the countries was 'regulated' by Lohse's decree of 19 June 1942, praised by Nazi apologists as a fine expression of tolerance. It must have been that, as understood by

them, since every church dignitary had to be confirmed in his office by a Nazi official who could, of course, dissolve any religious organisation. Ministers of religion could pray for a German victory, in fact had to mention Hitler and his army of 'liberators', but never could they mention Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian independence. The theological faculties at Riga and Tartu, closed by the Russians, remained shut until 1944. Only then, with defeat everywhere dogging its footsteps, did the Nazi Government allow them to reopen.

The Germans tried hard, as they did up and down conquered Europe, to win collaborators and to set up Vichy Governments in the Baltic. Their success was negligible, in spite of their incessant propaganda, to quote their *Wilnaer Zeitung* of 20 March 1942, that "a Cripps, an Eden and their accomplices have given unconditional recognition to the claims of the Soviets to these areas"—these areas being their home countries, the Baltic States. While a Frenchman's choice lay between a restored and liberated France and one under German 'protection', the Baltic nations found themselves without such clear-cut alternatives. They were haunted by the fear that victory of the one might mean enslavement by the victor, mere withdrawal of the defeated Power. For them liberation meant freedom from both Germans and Russians. Yet, in spite of this fearful outlook, there were no Baltic Laval or Pétains. Nobody of equal standing, no former Premier or Commander-in-Chief of the last war, lent his hand to the Germans, just as there had been none to assist the Russians.

Nazi law, that contradiction in terms, was introduced into these States—ghettoes were established and wired off at Riga and Daugavpils (Dvinsk). Registration for labour service was enforced—"labour service is honorary service!" But no volunteers to speak of came forward; nor did they offer themselves when Baltic units for the satellite armies were to be formed. The Black Guards, Himmler's own, had to be called in. Press gangs roamed the countryside. Bribes, too, were offered, consisting for instance in the possibility of re-gaining possession of one's own property, farm or house, which had been nationalised by the Soviets. All that was needed was proof of 'loyalty to Hitler', by service for instance and by signing a printed form containing thanks to the German State for the property thus restored, a promise to help in every manner in the 'reconstruc-

tion' of Europe and in the destruction of Bolshevism, all under Hitler's leadership. Few indeed agreed to hold their own on such terms.

The Baltic States had become, once more, colonial territory. Civilians, travelling from *Ostland* to Germany, had to submit to de-lousing at the frontier stations, whereas, of course, there was no such procedure necessary for anyone entering the Baltic States from the front. Washington Square in Riga was renamed Ludendorff Platz, Hitler, Goering and Rosenberg supplying their names lavishly to other landmarks in the conquered towns. Even *Sieges Strasse*, Victory Road, was represented—though whose victory it commemorated, the Germans left open. The Baltic nations were used to such renaming: had not Estonia's most popular daily, *Päevaleht*, suddenly turned into *Kommunist* in 1940? Conquerors come and go. Rations for Germans were twice, in some cases five times, those fixed for Baltic nationals, Jews being allowed to draw, if in fact they could draw, about half the Baltic rations.

Next came active colonisation of the countries thus slowly 'cleansed' of their original inhabitants. German peasants were imported and by July 1943 some eighteen thousand had been settled in Lithuania alone. They were freed from taxes and all contributions for five years and could rely on special shops, specially stocked for them. Local farmers served with an order to hand over to a new-comer had to stay on and to enable the new master to settle down in his newly acquired farm—otherwise the promised compensation was automatically lost. What this compensation was to be, nobody knew. In practice the displaced became a labourer on his own farm, a servant of the German master, just as he had been threatened by collectivisation before.

Only the defeat suffered by the German armies on all fronts stopped the flow of colonists and even reversed the process. After 1943 the Germans again tried feverishly to draw on the half million men Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania could, in theory, put into the field. Rosenberg promised the eventual re-establishment of National Assemblies—would the Baltic nations, meanwhile, form national armies? His appeal failed. The half a million fighting men lost to the allied cause through the suppression of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian liberty were not to be won by the Germans. They could be relied upon only for their own liberation. Rosenberg had to fall back on the time-honoured

Nazi method, the man hunt: "If it is impossible," village officials were told, "to find the person who has to register, or if he has deserted, then the members of his family should be arrested." Himmler's Black Guards carried out the work. Yet, even as a labour force, in labour battalions—*Bau Bataillone*—they proved a disappointment to the Germans.

By February 1944 the advancing Red Army reached Narva, the Estonian border, and prepared its great offensive to the South of Lake Peipus. With this threat upon them, the Germans were ready to accept the conditions of the Lithuanian General Plechavicius: he was to raise Lithuanian units which were to be officered exclusively by Lithuanians and commanded by him for the single purpose of Lithuania's defence. All other recruitment by the Germans was to stop. Thirteen battalions of 750 men each, one training group of 1,800 and a cadet-school of 1,200 men was to form this Lithuanian army. But soon the Germans took fright; like the sorcerer's apprentice they seemed unable to stifle the national movement once it was thus organised again. They feared the troops so close behind their front and so close to East Prussia. On 28 April they proclaimed the mobilisation of ten classes of Lithuanians. This, naturally, proved merely another failure. It also constituted a breach of their promises to Plechavicius: on 13 May 1944 he was arrested and, together with Colonel Urbonas, his Chief of Staff, deported to Germany. His troops were to be turned into German S.S. units. Instead, they fought the Germans. The seven battalions in Vilnius were finally overpowered and imprisoned, while the rest took to the forests with all their equipment. Those Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian forests have throughout been the refuge for many thousands of patriots—sheltering them in Russian as in German days. *Forest Brothers* they called themselves in Estonia. They all belong to that one great family of underground workers that sprang to life throughout occupied Europe, harassing the invader and his troops and saving itself for the day of liberation. They represent the national spirit which Hitler tried to destroy, which every conqueror tries to destroy and to which we ultimately owe our salvation from Hitler as from all alien conquest. The road may be long, may be darker for the Baltic nations than it was for others who went through the misery of foreign occupation: it must lead to liberation for them as well if there is to be peace.

* * *

This spirit found one of its finest expressions in the Atlantic Charter, written by President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill on 14 August 1941, some seven weeks after Hitler's attack on Russia. These principles bear directly on the fate of the Baltic nations. They bear repetition: "They desire to see," said the spokesmen of the free world, "no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." President Roosevelt himself has explained how this principle is to be applied in practice. On his return he referred an Ambassador "to his recent conversations with Prime Minister Churchill, especially that portion relating to plebiscites at the end of the war as the best means of settling many differences and as the soundest policy of dealing with conditions existing between different races. He cited several instances existing at the end of the World War, which were effectively dealt with by plebiscites."

These principles have been made legally binding on all the United Nations, headed by the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union. At the first meeting of the Inter-allied Conference in London on 24 September 1941 at which Russia was represented, M. Maisky, on behalf of his country, endorsed the Atlantic Charter: "The Soviet Union," he stated, "was and is guided in its foreign policy by the principle of self-determination of nations. Accordingly, the Soviet Union defends the right of every nation to the independence and territorial integrity of its country, and its right to establish such a social order and to choose such a form of government as it deems opportune and necessary for the better promotion of its economic and cultural prosperity." These were proud words, almost identical with the words used by the Peace Treaties with the Baltic States in 1920, wholly in keeping with the ideals the Western world stands for —on this basis common action against Hitler was worked out and successfully completed. Both Great and Small Powers can live in safety in a world ruled by these principles.

On 1 January 1942, accordingly, there was attached Maxim Litvinoff's signature on behalf of the Government of the Soviet Union to the United Nations' declaration: "Having subscribed to a common programme of purposes and principles embodied in the Joint Declaration of the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, dated 14 August 1941, known

as the Atlantic Charter," they pledged one another to waging war together to the end. On the basis of this common ground war-material was freely lent and leased. On the basis of this common purpose for war and peace the United Nations decided to work together. For a third time the same principles were embodied in yet another binding instrument, the Twenty Years' Alliance between Russia and Britain, dated 26 May 1942 and signed by V. M. Molotoff and Anthony Eden. "On the basis of the principles enunciated in the declaration made on 14 August 1941 to which the Government of the U.S.S.R. have adhered . . .", on that basis the treaty was entered into, signed and ratified. Both Powers will, it said, "resist aggression in the post-war period; they will act in accordance with the two principles of not seeking territorial aggrandisement for themselves and of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States."

All this is as clear as human language can at all be made to be. If Czechoslovakia should prefer to adopt the Soviet economic system or the Communist single-party organisation, it will be no concern of Britain's. England will not be entitled to interfere in her internal affairs. If the Baltic Nations, as ancient as the Bohemian and established at the same time at the end of the last war, prefer individual ownership to collectivisation, prefer a democratic and representative system to a one-party State, it will equally be none of Russia's tasks to interfere. Norway is not to be annexed by Britain nor are the Baltic States to be added to Russia—territorial aggrandisement, the Alliance says once more, is ruled out. London can be (and has been) bombed from the Low Countries in Europe's North-Western corner, but that is no reason to excuse annexation. Leningrad, not Moscow though, can be (but has not been) bombed from Baltic territory in Europe's North-Eastern corner, but that does not excuse annexation. They all, all of them, all occupied nations of Europe must be given their liberty and independence unless all our principles and alliances for peace are to be broken.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been under the heel of the German invader from 1941 to 1944—as long as Greece, their counterpart on the crossroads of South-Eastern Europe. The old story repeated itself, all over again. Yet, they remain members of the family of nations and of the League of Nations, even continuing to pay their subscriptions to the League. These nations cannot deny their soul. They wait for the day

of liberation, for complete independence; they are praying for it as much as any other European State did, be it Norway, Greece or the Low Countries. The last chapter of this story has been written by the Soviet Army fighting together with British, American and Allied troops in the great encircling battle that smothered Hitlerism for good—closing in on him from the Russian steppes, the fields of France and the Italian mountains. It is true, the French owe their deliverance to American and British troops while the Baltic Nations owe it to Russian soldiers: but, in truth, these are geographical accidents only. It was the combined effort of all the United Nations, bound together by the same pledge to the principles of self-determination, that brought liberty to them all. Frenchmen owe as deep a debt of gratitude to Russian valour as do nations in Eastern Europe to American and British bravery. It was that unity of effort that won the war. It is the same unity that alone can win the peace. If a single Great Power fell out of line—were for instance to annex the territory occupied by its troops in the course of the war—if Britain were to annex Belgium or the Soviet Union the Baltic, no peace could be established. Only someone utterly ignorant of the working of a democracy like the British could imagine her to be capable of such a thought: do we meet Russia on the same ground? What use would the Baltic conquest be to her if she thus broke the unity of the United Nations? If statesmen, out of expediency—cursed word—were to accept any such territorial aggrandisement contrary to the wishes of the Small Nations, they would have laid the foundation for further wars. The third occupation of the Baltic States, carried out by Russian troops in the process of freeing the world from Hitler and his dreams of conquest, must therefore lead to the restoration of an independent Estonia, a free Latvia, an unfettered Lithuania.

* * *

When the Soviet armies reached Narva, M. Molotoff introduced an amendment to the Russian Constitution to give the Soviet Republics "the right to handle their own relations with foreign nations," and he referred to "quite a number of specific economic and cultural needs" which could thus be served. It did not need a press comment to understand that "the criticisms of those who declare that Russia is solving her security by suppressing national States will be weakened. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia would be described as having most of the attributes of sovereign

States within the Soviet Union." No doubt, they would be thus described. But who could describe such rights, however defined, as independence? What scope is there even for the economic and cultural needs mentioned by Molotoff, the needs of Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians, if they have to conform to the single-party system of the Soviet State, if the basis of all economy is the loss of their own farmstead to a collective unit, the loss of their hard-won individual independence to the dependence upon overseers of nationalised undertakings? Above all, even if such considerations could be discarded in peace time, there remains the fact that national independence is a value transcending all of them. Liberty, as we understand it—and it is understood in the same way by the Baltic nations—cannot be bartered away or man's soul dies.

In the summer of 1944 the German front in White Russia was broken, and the victorious Russian armies swept westward, taking Vilnius, Kaunas and finally Riga, the Latvian capital falling on 13 October. The Narva front was also pierced. All this meant freedom from the German occupier. It brought not, however, freedom pure and simple. Once again the lands of the Baltic nations were turned into the battlefield fought over by their powerful neighbours. Once again the victorious Power seemed intent on staying in their lands. Once again not liberation but occupation by another alien master seemed to be in store for them. This danger was fully understood by the National Committees who had worked underground, in spite of German occupation, in all three countries to direct the national resistance movement. In Estonia for instance, the underground leaders showed themselves openly in this hour of decision to give guidance to their nation. On 18 September 1944, Otto Tief, one of the resistance leaders, proclaimed the formation of an Estonian National Government in Tallinn. Tief, a former Minister of Justice of independent Estonia, led a rising in the rear of the Germans retreating from the Narva front. By 20 September all Government buildings in Tallinn had been wrested from the Germans, and Otto Tief's National Government, clearly speaking for the national aspirations of their countrymen, demanded the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Estonian soil. Russia was asked to respect the sovereignty of the Estonian Republic. Yet, neither side—neither of the two Great Powers—halted to listen to the voice of a Small Nation, the voice of man's just

cause. Having to leave Tallinn to the Russians on 22 September, Otto Tief's Government, supported by a unit of Estonian volunteers, established themselves at Riisipere, there to clash with the Germans once more. Bravery was of no avail, however. The Germans had been driven out; but the Russians had come—come to stay, it appeared. Otto Tief and his resistance workers had to go underground again, there to continue the century-old struggle for national independence.

The lesson stands out. It is that neither the Estonian nor the Lett nor the Lithuanian is prepared to live under the rule of any other Power, be it centralised or federated, be it Germany, Poland or Russia. On the contrary, peace can only be established in Eastern Europe as in Western Europe if the right to self-determination is freely granted—a principle accepted by the allied nations in the last as in the present war, accepted by Soviet Russia as much as by the British Commonwealth and the United States. "To speak in terms of national freedom and self-determination is not enough", it has been said. This is, so to speak, self-evident. National freedom must be tempered by the will to co-operate. Patriotism is not enough. But who would say we could do without it? To speak in terms of annexation and conquest is less than enough, it is fatal to peace. The Baltic States, moreover, having been established on the principle of national freedom and self-determination, set up a model in their endeavour to reach friendly relations of true co-operation with their neighbours. They never kept aloof. They formed a bridge, not a barrier. They continuously worked for a system of collective security: no doubt, it must be established this time. The Small Nations were the first to embrace it, and it will be so again if only the Great Powers remain true to their mission. "Bases are leased to one nation on another's territory"—details like these will be compatible with national independence once that independence is accepted as the basis of real peace. The solution found by Russia and the Baltic Nations in 1920, even the solution of 1939, if re-established, once mutual trust has been restored, can provide a substantial basis for the peaceful and contented development of the national life of all concerned. There, on that basis of the same principles common to us all, shall we meet Russia. On that common ground peace can be established.

APPENDIX

THE VOICE OF THE ESTONIAN PEOPLE

Since the occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1940—when France fell—the patriots in these three Republics had to go underground and to wait for, and work for, the day of liberation, as did all the underground workers of Europe, from the French Forces of the Interior to the Baltic Forest Brothers. Only those who reached the free world could speak for their occupied countries. Amongst them were for instance Dr. A. Smetona (who died in the United States in 1944), the last President of his country, B. K. Balutis and P. Zadeikis, its Minister to London and Washington, speaking for Lithuania; Ch. Zarins and A. Bilmanis, the Ministers to London and Washington, speaking for Latvia; A. Rei, the former Socialist President of his country, and A. Torma, Minister to London, speaking for Estonia. There are, of course, many others. They are in touch with the national resistance movement inside their home countries, and perhaps the following appeal, directed as much to the free world as to their own countrymen, may be taken as representative of the national aspirations of all three Baltic nations:—

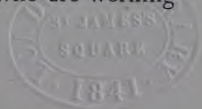
The Republic of Estonia, created during the heroic War of Liberation, continues to exist despite the repeated occupation of its territory and the acts of violence to which it has been subjected contrary to the generally accepted rules of international law. The Estonian people has never renounced its political independence, and the happy future of a free and independent Estonia lies in its own hands. It is still determined and fully entitled to belong, as an equal and independent member, to the family

of free and democratic nations. The Estonian Republic is recognised by the free nations of the entire world, headed by Britain and the United States of America.

For four years Estonia has suffered from occupation, first by an Eastern, and then by a Western totalitarian State. Both invaders have violently and brutally trampled on the lawful rights of the Estonian nation, robbing the people of its freedom and mercilessly devastating its country. The recent unlawful mass arrests of Estonians show clearly that the present forces of occupation are endeavouring to break the backbone of the Estonian nation with the same violent measures as their predecessors did. Nevertheless neither repression nor terror have been able to subdue the will to live nor to suppress the nation's vitality. In spite of the difficult situation the people have ceaselessly continued their struggle against the forces of occupation.

The Estonian people does not recognise, nor has ever recognised, as its representative, either the so-called Soviet-Estonian Government imposed on it by the forces of foreign arms and by terror, or the so-called Estonian Self-Government which consists of servile accomplices of the present forces of occupation and partly even of citizens of a foreign State. The Estonian nation is firmly determined that the lawful organs of the independent democratic Republic of Estonia shall resume their activity. It is prepared to fight most resolutely to the attainment of this aim.

While the country is being savagely ravaged by foreign occupation, an enemy is on the point of invading it from the East whose massacres and mass deportations in 1941 clearly showed his determination to annihilate the Estonian State and people. At the same time, the forces of occupation are destroying the material resources and man-power of the nation and preventing the effective organisation of the country's self-defence. This grave situation demands that all resources of the people be pooled and employed for the protection and exercise of its rights. For this purpose the National Committee of the Republic of Estonia has been created by the unanimous will of the people. The National Committee assumes the exercise of power until the constitutional organs begin to function in Estonia. It consists of Delegates of all political and social organisations at home and abroad which uphold the cause of national independence. It is in touch with the Estonian Diplomatic Representatives abroad who are working in close collaboration with it.



The National Committee of the Republic of Estonia holds that all those organs of the Republic whose activities have been interrupted by foreign occupation shall resume these activities as soon as possible on the basis of the valid Constitution which shall be put into effect in a spirit of genuine democracy and shall, at the first opportunity, be formally democratised and adapted to the new conditions.

The Republic of Estonia shall enter into friendly political and economic collaboration with all States and share together with the other independent States the work for the establishment of the system of security which will ensure peace for both the large and small nations. The Estonian struggle for independence must be carried on in close co-operation with those other nations which are fighting for their freedom and independence, and in contact with all those democracies that recognise the principles of the freedom of the peoples.

Estonian people, even the heaviest blows of fate have been unable to shake the resolution and confidence or to break the will to live of our people during the centuries in the course of which our ancestors have fought for their country and their liberty. We are now fighting with the same invincible tenacity. No power on earth can suppress the firm confidence of the Estonian people or its unshakeable determination to continue its independent political and national existence won for it through its own exertions and based on justice, law and freedom.

Many nations are fighting and suffering along with us for their rights and their freedom. Never shall the forces of violence succeed in keeping these many millions fettered or in quelling their urge for liberty. Your country calls upon you. Unite in an unconquerable front. Fight for a free, independent and happy Estonia.

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA.
Tallinn, Victory Day, 23 June 1944.

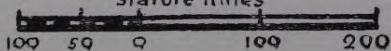
(On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the German defeat at Cesis).



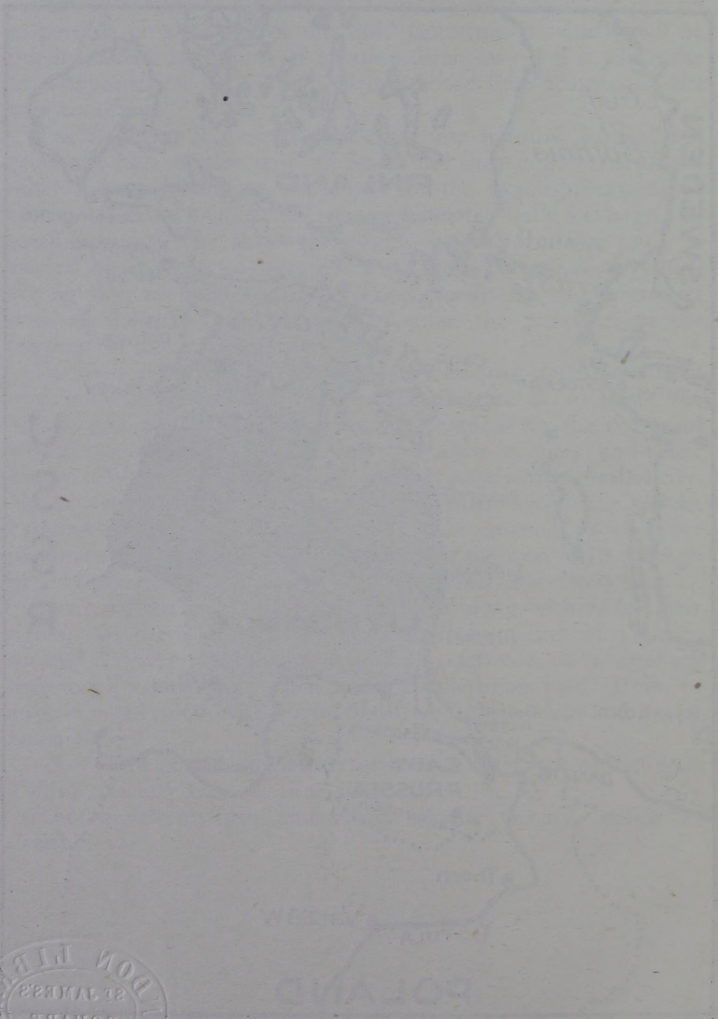
THE BALTIC STATES ESTONIA LATVIA & LITHUANIA



Scale 1:10,000,000 (160 miles = 1 inch)
Statute Miles



ESTONIA LATVIA LITHUANIA THE BALTIC STATES



POLAND

Scale 1:100,000
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81. Constitution of Eire: following a similar change in Estonia, Eire too introduced the office of President of State in 1937-8.
83. The Conference of Ambassadors, Paris 1920-31. By G. P. Pink. Geneva 1942.
83. Dellingshausen: see *Pistohlkors*, *op. cit.*
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87. For the strength of the parties see Chatham House survey, *op. cit.*; for the constitutional changes see also *Weltgeschichte der Gegenwart in Dokumenten*. Essen 1936 ff.

93. Uluots: he died in January 1945 in Stockholm, a refugee from his own country.
94. British business man: H. Foster Anderson, *Borderline Russia*. London 1942. He lived in Riga in 1922-29 and was in Lithuania in 1939-40. To Sir Bernard Pares, on the other hand, these men are mere "petty dictators . . . little bosses . . . in these lesser units . . . of these small pieces of indefensible territory."—*Russia and the Peace*. London and New York, 1944; p.92-3.

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95. The best books on the subject have been written by Dr. V. Raud: *The Baltic States as a British Market; The Smaller Nations in World's Economic Life*. London 1944. This chapter is heavily indebted to Dr. Raud. See also A. Pullerits, *Estonia*. Tallinn 1937; L. Ekis, *Latvia, Economic Resources and Capacities*. Washington 1943; A. Bilmanis, *The Baltic States in Post-war Europe*. Washington 1944.
98. Figures for industrial workers: inclusive of workers in commerce and transport.
99. German economist: Dr. Karl Pechartschek, *Wehrwirtschaftsfragen Estlands*. *Der deutsche Volkswirt*. Berlin, 19 and 26 August 1938.
99. Social legislation: see E. Aruja, *Labour Legislation and Social Insurance in Estonia, 1920-44*. *The Nineteenth Century*. London, November 1944.
99. Unemployment: "There is practically no unemployment", the Delegation of the British Chambers of Commerce reported in August 1936; "there are no extremes of poverty and wealth, and the Delegation got the impression, throughout the Baltic countries, of progressive and contented peoples."—The Delegation was headed by Sir Alexander Gibb.
101. Ekis: *op. cit.*
103. Total trade of 4.5 million: this was the average of the years 1936-38.
103. Effect of currency regulations: in case the figures appear arbitrarily chosen, those for 1928-30 compared with those for 1936-38 show a similar trend; 9.9 to 17.5% for U.K.; 29.3 to 29.6% for German imports.
104. W. Elliott: House of Commons, 25 May 1944.
105. K. Stewart: one of the sixteen members of the Delegation sent by the British Chambers of Commerce; his report in the *Manchester Guardian*, 2 and 3 September 1936.

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107. American recognition: *Foreign Relations, 1922 (II)*, 873. There is thus no foundation for Walter Lippmann's assumption—made in 1943—that recognition was granted “reluctantly and with the belief that it was provisional.” Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York and London.
107. Eastern and Western aspect of American foreign policy: see the author's *American Diplomacy, 1931-41*. *The Contemporary Review*. London, May 1944.
107. League: verbatim record also reprinted in *Latvian-Russian Relations*, p.106-10.
108. Customs Union: G. Albat, *Recueil des principaux traités conclus par la Lettonie avec les pays étrangers, 1918-28*. Riga 1928.
108. Memel: see, also for further bibliography, I. F. D. Morrow, *The (1919) Peace Settlement in the Polish-German Borderlands*. London 1936.—Texts Cmd. 2235 and 2541.
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111. Anonymous Russian: see K. R. Pusta, *The Soviet Union and the Baltic States*. New York 1942; in answer to the anonymous *The Soviet Union, Finland and the Baltic States (Soviet Information Bureau)*. London 1941. Pusta represented Estonia at the 1925 Conference.
112. Estonian-Latvian alliance: text also in *Latvian-Russian Relations*, p.246-7.
112. Latvian-Russian trade agreement: text in *Latvian-Russian Relations*, p.148-59. A further trade agreement was signed in 1933.
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115. A. Hitler: *Mein Kampf*. München (1925 and 1927), 2 vols. in 1; p.742.
115. J. Stalin: translated by D. J. Dallin, *Russia and Postwar Europe*. New Haven 1943; p.105.
117. Voldemaras-Pilsudski: *Stresemann, Vermächtnis*, III, 239-43.
118. Baltic Pact: *League of Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 154; p.93 ff.
119. A. Zhdanoff: report of *Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 1936. Andrey Zhdanoff was at one time chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Supreme Soviet.

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120. See also Keesing's Contemporary Archives. Bristol, since 1931.
121. W. Churchill: article in the Daily Telegraph, 8 June 1939.
122. N. Chamberlain: House of Commons, 7 June 1939.
122. A. T. Cholerton: Daily Telegraph, 23 June 1939.
122. B. Pares: *op. cit.*; p.93.
123. Latvian Foreign Secretary: Latvia in 1939-42, *op. cit.*, p.95-102.
123. J. Ribbentrop: E. J. Harrison, Lithuania's Fight for Freedom. London 1944; p.20-1.
124. Polish refugees: see H. Foster Anderson, *op. cit.*; he worked on their behalf in Lithuania.
125. Soviet treaties: Latvia 1939-42, *op. cit.*, p.103.
127. V. Molotov: reprinted in The Baltic States, The Tablet. London, 26 February 1944.

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129. Finland: Statement concerning Finland and Russian Relations. London 1939.
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131. British observer: Anderson, *op. cit.*
131. Power of Attorney: text, Latvia in 1939-42, *op. cit.*, p.105-6.
132. Elections without choice: A. Rei, Have the Baltic Countries voluntarily renounced their freedom? New York 1944. Rei, the last Estonian Minister to Moscow, is the leader of the Socialists and a former President of Estonia.—The official edition of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia contains an introduction by J. Uluots. Tallinn 1937.
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135. Halifax: reprinted in his Speeches on Foreign Policy, War and Peace Aims. London 1940; p.48.
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136. Deportations: for lists of names, including details about trains used etc., as supplied by the International Red Cross in Geneva, see Latvia 1939-42, p.120-21. Additional information in Latvian-Russian Relations, p.227 ff.
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137. Englishman at Minsk: F. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p.207.
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137. Church: A. Torma, *The Church in Estonia*; H. Perlitz, *The Fate of Religion and Church under Soviet Rule in Estonia, 1940-41*. New York 1944.—For a later account see the Bishop of Gloucester's report to the Church Assembly in London, 9 February 1945, and the endorsement expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. A short summary of this e.g. in *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 February 1945.

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144. Plechavicius: see Harrison, p.44-6.
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146. Anglo-Russian Alliance: art. 5 "would seem to be at variance with annexation of territory in the Polish and Baltic regions", commented Dr. J. T. MacCurdy, *Germany, Russia and the Future; A psychological Essay*. Cambridge 1944; p.95-6. MacCurdy thinks that the alliance has never been properly ratified since Communists from the three Baltic States voted on it—an untenable argument.
147. The third occupation must lead to independence: Pares, op. cit., p. 95 and 118, argues differently. "If Britain asked Russia to restore an independent Estonia, she might reply by asking us whether the British have yet gone out of India." What Russia might reply to the Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians, he does not even consider. "Full satisfaction of Indian wishes" he thinks will greatly improve Anglo-Russian relations. On his own showing he ought therefore also to visualise improved relations through full satisfaction of the rightful demands made by the Baltic nations—the more so since explicit international treaties are at stake in the Baltic question. As it is, Sir Bernard Pares desires Britain to withdraw and Russia to advance. I do not think that peace lies that way.
148. Liberty: all three major parties in Great Britain are agreed on this point. "As territories are cleared of the enemy their administration shall be left to the democratic control of their own inhabitants with no attempts at interference or dictation by outside forces, political or military." This resolution of the Labour Party Conference of 14 December 1944 tallies with similar declarations of the Liberal Party Conference of February 1945 as well as with Mr. Eden's

signature under the international instruments mentioned in the text.—Press comment: Diplomatic Correspondent, Manchester Guardian, 3 February 1944.

148. O. Tief: further details have been confirmed by Russia. "When fleeing from Estonia, the Hitlerites intended to demolish all the power stations. However, they failed to do so. At the approach of the Red Army the workers of some power stations arose, arms in hand, to defend public property. Four times German demolition squads came to the Tallinn power station, but retired on encountering the armed guard. Armed workers also saved the Tallinn waterworks and gasworks."—Finding of the Soviet State Commission on German-Fascist Crimes. Reprinted by Soviet War News. London 28 and 29 November 1944.
149. National freedom—bases are leased: quoted from the London Times leaders 'Taking the Lead' of 14 June 1944 and 'Great and Small Nations' of 23 March 1943.

* * *

Most of the publications mentioned above are available at the "London Library" which has gallantly carried on throughout the War. An early draft of this book appeared, in the form of a short article, in the "Journal of Central European Affairs" (University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo., U.S.A.), January 1944, under the title 'The Three Baltic Nations'. I am indebted to its Editor, Professor S. Harrison Thomson, for allowing me to use the material in book-form.

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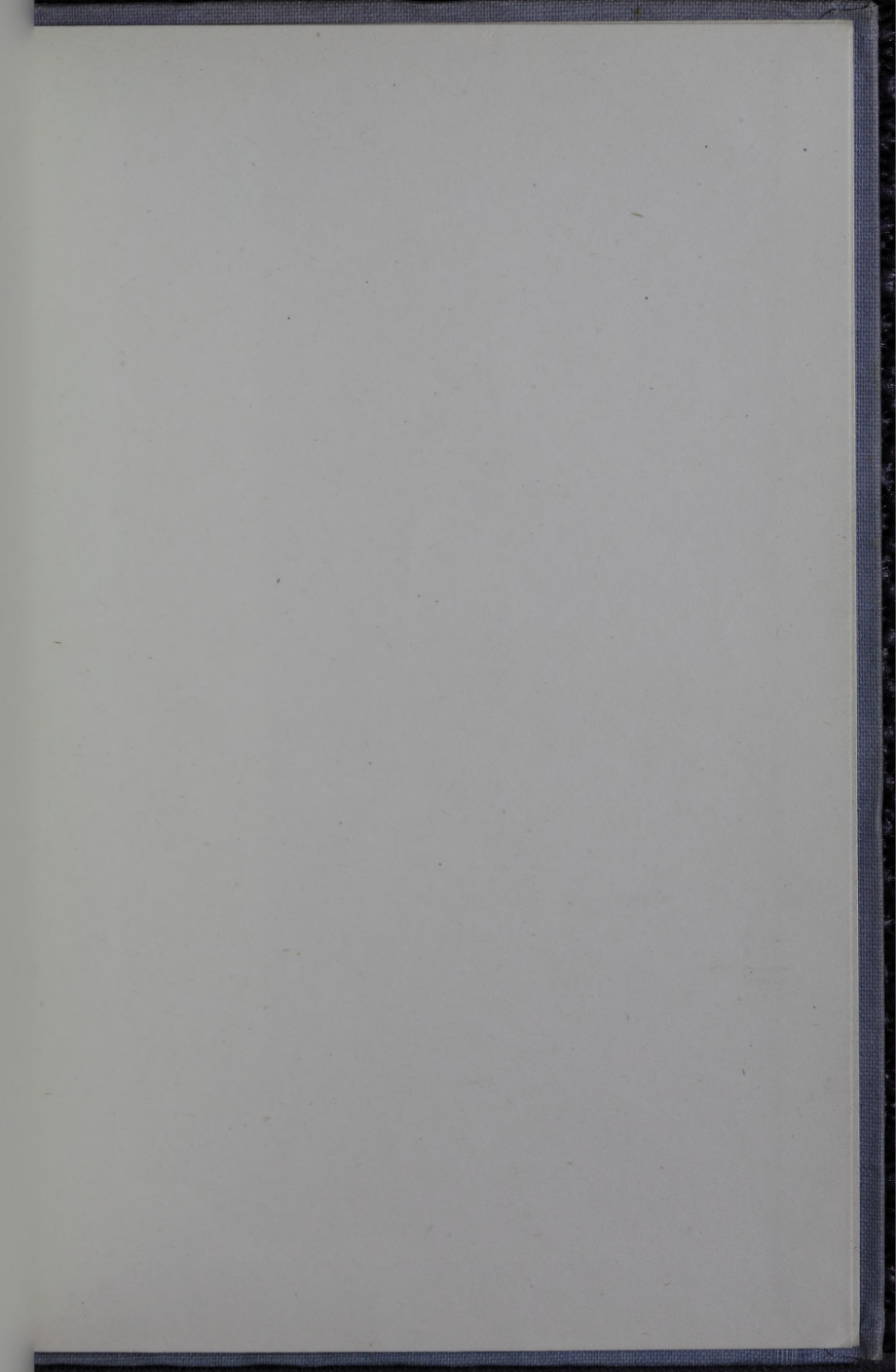
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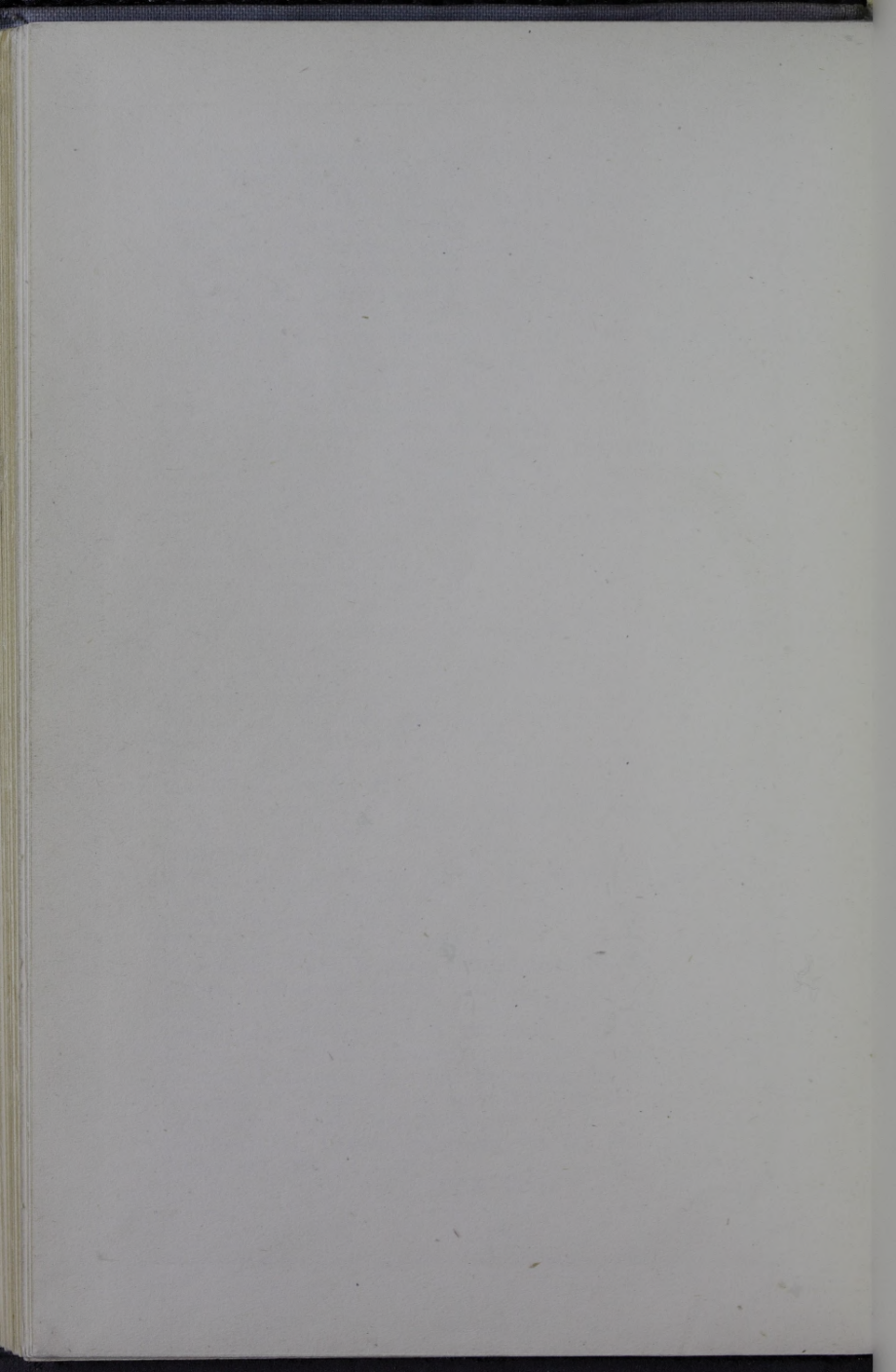
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