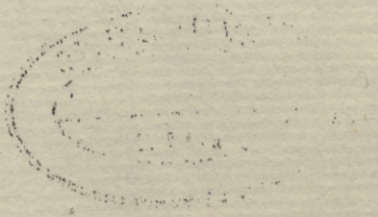


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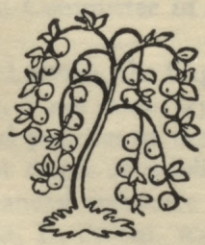
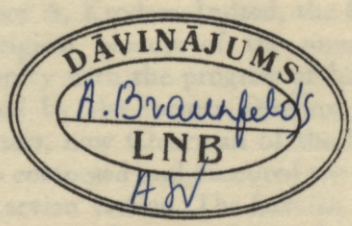
AN OUTLINE

by

ARNOLDS SPEKKE

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Dean of Faculty of Arts, Vice-President of
University of Latvia, Latvian Minister to Italy.



PUBLISHED BY M. GOPPERS

(Zelta Ābele — The Golden Appletree)

STOCKHOLM 1957

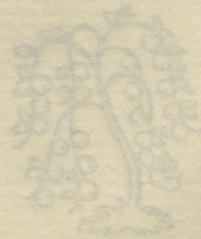
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PREFACE

The greater portion of this book — *babent sua fata libelli* — was written in Rome during the years 1940-43. The work was begun in the autumn of 1940 when the author lost his fatherland and became an emigrant, and was interrupted in the autumn of 1943 when Rome went through bad times. The first manuscript was written in Italian with the object of publication in Italy. No less than three times an attempt was made to achieve this object, but each time some *force majeure*, either political changes and collapses, or economic difficulties, prevented its fulfilment.

And so the manuscript remained unpublished until 1946 when the Latvian publisher M. Goppers, Stockholm, took the matter in hand. Two years later, after overcoming great financial difficulties, he edited and published the book. Its publication was financed exclusively through subscriptions received from Latvian refugees in the Western countries. The manuscript was translated into Latvian by the poetess Veronika Strēlerte and Professor Dr. K. Straubergs, my fellow-student, later to become Minister of Education and a well-known expert on Latvian folklore. He also made valuable extensive additions in the final chapters of the book. Contributions were also made by F. Cielēns, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister to Paris, and editor A. Kroders. Indeed, the Latvian text must be considered a second original because of the number of changes and additions made in conformity with the progress of historical knowledge. Illustrations were furnished by the former Director of the State Museum of History, Dr. V. Ģinters, now Chairman of the Latvian National Fund in Scandinavia. He also composed and executed the historical outline maps incorporated in the Latvian version. The Latvian version was anonymous; a foreword to it was written by a good friend of mine, the Chairman of the Baltic Committee in Sweden, Professor Dr. Birger Nerman.

As was the case with the Latvian, the English edition has been prepared in Stockholm under equally, if not more, trying economic conditions, considering the pitiful financial position of the Baltic refugees.

However, during the last stages of publication, these difficulties were overcome owing to the financial assistance which, at the instance of the Latvian Minister in London, K. Zariņš, was rendered by Mr. Alfred C. Bossom, M.P., Chairman of the Anglo-Baltic Society in London, and a true friend of Latvia.

The manuscript was examined and prepared for translation by Professor K. Straubergs, who also checked the translation against the original and,

in conjunction with the author, made a great many changes and additions in a constant effort to keep up with the general trends of development in historiography. Particularly extensive additions by Prof. Straubergs were made in Chapter III dealing with Latvian folklore, and to Chapter XVIII. As regards the fate of the Latvian soldiers during World War II, use has been made of action descriptions by Colonel A. Silgailis and of editor A. Strautmanis's relation of the fighting in the so-called "Fortress of Kurzeme". Associate Professor of the University of Latvia, geologist J. Rutkis, has made specific additions to Chapters I and XVII and provided the corresponding outline maps.

The first 12 chapters, prior to their translation and revision were perused by the historian and law scholar Professor Dr. A. Švābe.

The selection of Illustrations was affected by the difficulties in procuring the necessary material while in exile. Most of the pictures relate to social history. This was done with the purpose of acquainting the reader with the specifically Latvian traits of social habits and culture in the various periods of time.

The attached outline maps will help the reader to form a mental picture of the geopolitical data of the Baltic area. They were composed for the English version also by Dr. V. Ģinters, but they were drawn by architect A. Lapukins.

Translations from Latvian into English were made by H. Kundziņš, Mrs. Bērziņa-Felsberga, A. Lasmanis, H. Liepiņš, K. Celms, V. Kreicbergs and O. Jansons, while P. A. Lockwood, M. A., assisted by stud. phil. L. Siliņš, revised and harmonized the style of the translations. The indices were prepared by stud. phil. J. Straubergs. Stud. phil. M. Neretnieks had charge of the technical preparation of the manuscript for print.

To all these my sincere thanks!

In conclusion the author wishes to express his heartfelt thanks to his countrymen and foreigners alike who in one way or other contributed towards the publication of this book. In accordance with the custom prevailing in the English-speaking world, the author also wishes to extend his sincere thanks to the scholars quoted in the book for the valuable advice and ideas they have given him and for the possibility of using these in an effort to illustrate as completely as possible the history of the Latvian people.

Rome, August 1950.

A. SPEKKE

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
I. The Geographical Setting	13
Ice Period — 13. The Baltic Shield — 15. Geological Formations and the Baltic Sea — 16. Peoples around the Baltic — 17. Geographical Background — 19. Development of Rivers and Mountains — 21. History of Balts and Other Races — 23. Nature of the Latvian Country — 24. Latvian Peasant — 27.	
II. The First Millennium A. D.	29
Historical Sources — 29. Language Group and Original Home — 30. Balts and Slavs — 31. Greek and Latin Documents — 34. Coast of Amber — 36. Balts in the Early Middle Age Sources — 38. Byzantine Texts and Arabs — 43. Scandinavian Invasion — 47. River Routes and Trade — 48.	
III. The Indo-European Tradition	52
Archaeological Data — 52. Latvian Language — 56. Mythology — 57. <i>Dainas</i> and Poetry — 59. National Tales and Legends — 66. Folklore — 68. Customs — 69. Festivals — 70. Art — 71. National Costumes — 71. Villages — 73. Castle Hills — 74.	
IV. The Vikings and the Latvians	76
Germanic Expansion — 76. Scandinavian Incursions on the Baltic Littoral — 79. Northmen in Kurzeme — 80. Saxo Grammaticus — 84. Sagas — 85. Activity of the Balts — 87. Material about the Kurs and Semigallians — 89. Idrisi and His Maps — 93. Different Periods of Viking Expansion — 96.	
V. The Slav Expansion	100
First Slav Movements — 100. Place of Origin of the Slavs — 102. Historical Sources — 103. Expansion of the Slavs — 105. Importance of the Two Large Waterways — 106. Slav Imperialism — 106. Slavs and Balts — 107. Linguistic and Archaeological Data — 108. Ancient Russian Chronicles and Balts — 109. Baltic German Historians and Their Conclusions — 114. The Views of Latvian Historians — 116.	
VI. The Knights in Livonia	120
The German Movement — 120. <i>Drang nach Osten</i> — 122. The New Settlements — 123. Three Social Elements — 123. Christianization and Its Consequences — 125. Crusades — 132. The Teutonic Order — 133. Subjugation of Old Prussia — 133. The German Attacks on Livonia — 134. Letgallians — 136. Kurish Revolt — 137. Semigallian Struggles — 138. The Rhymed Chronicle — 143. Livonia after the Conquest — 144. Kurish Kings — 148.	
VII. The Livonian Confederation	151
Political Situation — 151. Lithuanian Expansion — 153. Hanseatic League — 156. Western Information about Livonia — 157. Baltic Cartography — 159. Political Life of the Order — 161. Battle of Tannenberg — 163. Livonia and Neighbours — 164. War with Muscovy — 165. Internal Relations — 167. Social Conditions and Jurisdiction — 170.	

VIII. East and West	177
Collapse of the Order — 177. Reformation — 178. The Political Powers round Livonia — 180. Muscovites — 181. Livonian War — 184. Poles — 185. Russian Aggression — 187. Foreign Observers — 192. Origin of Serfdom — 194. Privilege of Sigismund Augustus — 195. King Stephen — 197. Polish Documents — 198.	
IX. Catholic Counter-Reformation	200
Polish-Lithuanian Administration — 200. Jesuits — 201. Livonian Peasant and His Position — 204. Polish-Swedish Conflict and Consequences — 207. Livonian Cartography — 211. Humanistic Literature — 213. Development of Latvian Literature — 215.	
X. The Swedes in Livonia	221
European Conflagration — 221. Political Survey — 223. Swedish Rule — 227. Agrarian Legislation — 229. Economic Interest and Farming — 231. Charles XI and His Reforms — 233. Education — 236. Translation of Holy Scriptures — 238.	
XI. The Duchy of Kurland	242
Duchy's Survival — 242. International Situation — 243. Internal Efforts — 244. Nobles and Their Privileges — 245. Duke Jacob and His Policy — 248. Development of Trade and Industry — 249. Relations with Peasants — 250. External Influence — 251. Latvian Literature in Kurland — 257. G. Mancelius — 257. P. Einhorn — 260.	
XII. The Russians and the Baltic	264
Tsar Peter I — 264. Political Situation — 265. Narva and Riga — 266. Russian Invasion — 267. Concessions to the Baltic Nobility — 268. Projects on the Rights of Land — 272. Declaration of Rosen — 273. The Peasants — 274. Description of Vidzeme by a Foreigner — 278. The Effects of the Northern War — 279. Religious Movements — 280.	
XIII. The Influence of the French Revolution	282
Alexander I and Napoleon — 282. March on Moscow — 284. The New Ideas — 286. G. Merkel and His Struggle — 287. Landtag and Peasants — 288. Political Conflicts — 289. Agricultural Crisis and Effects — 291. The Germans on Latvian Nationality — 295. Education — 297. Latvian Literature — 298.	
XIV. The National Movement	300
National Movements in Europe — 300. Insurrections and Rebellions in Eastern Europe — 301. National Revival in Latvia — 305. K. Valdemārs — 305. Literary Developments — 307. Russification — 309. Scientists and Writers — 310. Social Changes — 310. Industrial Workers — 311. Political Parties — 311. The Revolution of 1905 — 312. Russian Policy — 314. Cultural Achievements — 315. Song Festivals — 317. Religion — 318.	
XV. The First World War	319
The Cause and the Beginning of the War — 319. Destruction in Latvia — 322. German Colonization Plans — 323. The Latvians Mobilized — 325. Latvian Rifle Regiments — 327. Christmas Battles of 1916 — 333. The Russian Revolution — 334. Demobilization — 334. "The Red Rifles" — 335. Return of the Troops to Latvia — 336.	

List of Plates

IX

XVI. Latvian Independence	337
Russian Revolution of 1917 — 337. Resolutions on Freedom — 341. Treaty of Brest-Litovsk — 343. Partition of Latvian Territory — 343. The Latvian National Council — 344. The State of Latvia Proclaimed — 345. Bolshevik Attack — 346. Temporary Occupation — 347. Baltic Cause in Paris — 348. German Policy — 349. <i>Landeswehr Putsch</i> — 350. Bermont Attack — 353. Anti-Bolshevik Front — 355. Armistice with Russia and Peace — 355. Events in Estonia, Finland and Lithuania — 356. The Fate of Poland — 357.	
XVII. The Free State	360
Initial Difficulties — 360. Effects of the War — 361. Agrarian Reform — 362. Land Bill — 363. Economic Progress — 365. Farming — 366. Standard of Living — 367. Trade — 368. Industry — 369. Education — 370. Institutions — 371. Laws — 373. Constituent Assembly — 373. Latvian Constitution — 374. Foreign Policy — 377.	
XVIII. Ten Years of Foreign Occupation	379
The Second World War — 379. Compulsory Pacts with Soviet Russia — 380. German Repatriation — 383. Soviet Ultimatum and Occupation of the Baltic States — 384. Puppet Governments — 385. Elections and the "Parliament" — 386. German-Soviet Pact — 387. Incorporation into Soviet Russia — 389. Nationalization — 390. Kolkhozes (Collective Farms) — 390. Industry — 391. Political Dictatorship and Propaganda — 391. Oppression, Reprisals and Persecutions — 392. Liquidation of the Latvian Army — 393. Soviet Tribunals — 393. Deportations — 395. Labour and Concentration Camps — 396. German-Soviet War — 397. German Occupation. Colonization Plans — 398. Administration — 399. The <i>Herrenvolk</i> — 400. Terror and Deportations — 402.	
Conclusion	405
The Latvian Partisans — 405. The Latvian Legion — 407.	
References	415
Index	423
Bibliography	429

LIST OF PLATES

with bibliographic notes

I. Pre-Baltic pottery	<i>facing page</i> 32
Kurzeme, Zāļite (Jg), Rūtenieki. Photograph from LVVM. Approx. ½ of actual size. E. Šturms, <i>Die erste schmurkeramische Siedlung in Lettland. Contributions of Baltic University</i> 17. Hamburg 1946; <i>Südostbaltikum Ä. Steinzeit (Estland, Lettland, Litauen)</i> ; <i>Latvijas akmens laikmeta materiāli I, Latvijas aizvēstures materiāli II</i> , Rīga 1936. M. Ebert, <i>Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte</i> , XIII.	
Finnish-Ugrian pottery of the late Neolithic Age.	
Latgale, Dviete (II). Photograph from LVVM. Approx. ⅛ of	

- actual size. R. Indreko, *Origin and Area of Settlement of the Fenno-Ugrian Peoples*, Heidelberg 1948. E. Šturms, *Dvietes un Lubānas kaula senlietas, Senatne un māksla I*, Rīga 1938.
- II. Stone battle axes of the primitive Balts 33
 Photograph from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{1}{3}$ of actual size. E. Šturms, *Akmens laikmets Latvijā I. Dzīves vietas II. Savrūpatradumi un kultūras raksturojums*, Rīga 1927.
- Ancient Baltic bronze war-axes.
 Photograph from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{1}{2}$ of actual size. E. Šturms, *Die ältere Bronzezeit im Ostbaltikum*, Berlin 1936; *Die bronzezeitlichen Funde in Lettland*, Congressus secundus archaeol. Balticorum, Rīga 1931.
- III. Silver cross-bow brooch with ends shaped like animal heads . . . 48
 Kurzeme, Grobina (Lp). Photograph from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ of actual size. N. Åberg, *Ostpreussen in der Völkerwanderungszeit*, Uppsala 1919.
- Semigallian drinking-horn of the 8th century.
 Vidzeme, Aizkraukle (R), Lejas Bitēni. Photograph of reconstruction from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{1}{2}$ of actual size.
- IV. Ornamental head-dress of a Letgallian woman of the 7th—8th centuries 49
 Latgale, Nautrēni (L), Smiltaine. Original in LVVM. Illustration from F. Balodis, *Det äldsta Lettland*, Stockholm 1940. Approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ of actual size.
- V. Ancient Latvian bronze with stylized animal heads 64
 Photograph from LVVM. Approx. twice the actual size.
- Bronze horse figurines of the 11th century.
 Vidzeme, Daugmale castle-hill (R). Photograph from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{4}{3}$ of actual size. V. Ģinters, *Daugmales pilskalna 1936.g. izrakumi, Senatne un māksla IV*, Rīga 1936.
- VI. Ornamented sword parts of the Kurs of the 10th—11th centuries 65
 Kurzeme: Raņķi (K), Kapenieki; Kandava (T); Kazdanga (A); Ivande (K), Lielivande. Illustration from F. Balodis, *op. cit.* Actual size.
- Bronze horseshoe-brooches of the 11th—12th centuries.
 Photograph from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ of actual size.
- VII. Weapons and tools of the Kurs of the 11th—12th centuries 80
 Kurzeme: 1 — Asīte (Lp). Misiņkalns; 5 — Kazdanga (A), Soģi; 6 — Gramzda (Lp), Dārznieki; 7 — Bunka (Lp); 8. 11, 14 Virbi (Tl), Vaģi graveyard; 4, 12 — Ivande (K), Lielivande; 2, 16 — Zlēka (Vp), Priednieki; 3, 9, 15 — Raņķi (K), Kapenieki; 10, 17 — Talsi (T), castle-hill; 13 — Talsi (T), Lake Vilcumuiža. Original in LVVM. Illustration from F. Balodis, *op. cit.* Approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ of actual size.
- VIII. Semigallian weapons of the 11th century 81
 Zemgale: 1, 3, 11 — Bauska (B), Čunkāni; 6, 7, 14 — Vecsaule (B); 2, 12 — Jaunsvirlauka (Jg), Ciernalde; 8 — Dobeles (Jg), Šķēstiņi; 13 — Lielauce (B), Dobskalns. Vidzeme: 4, 5, 9, 10 — Daugmale castle-hill (R). Original in LVVM. Illustration from F. Balodis, *op. cit.* Approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ of actual size.
- IX. Letgallian weapons of the 10th—11th centuries 84
 Vidzeme: 1 — Vecpiebalga (C); 3 — Aizkraukle (R); 4, 5, 6 — Koknese (R); 9 — Priekuļi (C), Pilas. Latgale: 2 — Kapīni (Dg), Kristapēni; 7 — Kaunati (Rz), Rikopole; 8 — Preiļi (Dg). Originals in LVVM. Illustration from F. Balodis, *op. cit.* Approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ of actual size.
- X. Fragment of ornamented limestone disk with runic characters . . . 85

List of Plates

XI

- Vidzeme, Daugmale castle-hill (R). Photograph from LVVM. Actual size.
- The Nedervalla runic stone, Sweden.
Photographic archives of the State Historical Museum, Stockholm.
- XI. The Dobe castle-hill 92
Zemgale, Lielaucē (B), Incēni. E. Brašņš, *Latvijas pilskalni Zemgalē un Augšzemē*, Rīga 1926.
Excavations on the Mežotne castle-hill.
Zemgale, Mežotne castle-hill (B). Photograph from LVVM. excavations of 1940, conducted by Dr. V. Ģinters.
- XII. Text of a treaty between Balduinus Alnensis and the Kurish King Lamekins 93
Reg. Vat.
- XIII. "Warriors'" bracelets of the 10th and 11th centuries 116
Latgale. Photograph from LVVM. Approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ of actual size.
Centre part of the warriors' bracelet.
Photograph from LVVM. Enlarged to twice the actual size.
- XIV. Replica of an ancient Latvian woman's woollen shawl of the 11th—12th centuries 117
Vidzeme, Stāmeriene (M). LVVM. Illustration from F. Balodis, *op. cit.* Approx. $\frac{1}{6}$ of actual size.
- XV. Ornaments and costume worn by a Latvian girl of the 12th century Vidzeme, Kārļi (C). Reconstruction by LVVM of costume and ornaments according to the finds of a female grave. 124
- XVI. Old Prussian warriors meeting the Bishop of Prague, St. Adalbert. 125
The martyr's death of St. Adalbert.
Door panel of Gniezno Cathedral. A. Goldschmidt, *Die Bronsetüren von Novgorod und Gnezen*, Marburg a.L. 1932.
- XVII. The figures of the Virgin Mary and Walter von Plettenberg over the North Gate of Riga Castle 144
P. Ārends, *Rīgas pils*, Rīga 1938.
- XVIII. A Letgallian woman's costume of the 15th century 145
Latgale, Makašani (Rz). Reconstruction of LVVM.
- XIX. Map of Livonia of 1582 160
A. Spekke, *Latvieši un Livonija 16.g.s.*, Rīga 1935. The Vatican archives, Nunciatura di Germania, fol. 93.
- XX. View of Riga harbour in 1612 161
Detail from J. C. Brotze's drawings after a drawing by N. Mollin (1612).
- XXI. Riga in 1612 228
Detail from J. C. Brotze's drawing after a drawing by N. Mollin (1612).
- XXII. Swedish money coined in Riga: Charles XI's silver mark 229
Queen Christina's golden five ducat piece.
Photographs of the Royal Numismatic Collection, Stockholm. Actual size.
- XXIII. Stepinš Krauklis, a Latvian peasant 236
N. Viksnis, *Apgaismotāji un agrārais jautājums I*, Rīga 1937.
Text of oath taken by Latvian artillerymen in Swedish army.
Gustavs Adolfs un zviedru laikmets Latvijā. Catalogue of an exhibition, Rīga 1932.
- XXIV. Window paintings in the Lipaiķi Church 237
J. Juškevičs, *Hercoga Jēkaba laikmets Kurzemē*, Rīga 1932.
Beginning of the text of the martial penal law of 1696, printed in Latvian.
Zviedru laikmets Latvijā, Rīga 1934.

- XXV. The crossing of the Daugava on 9 July 1701 at Rīga 244
 Pen-and-ink drawing by Major General K. M. Stuart from his report on the war in Kurzeme in 1701—1702. From the original in the Royal Library in Stockholm.
 The Pamuša Manor in 1702.
 Detail from K. M. Stuart's drawing *The Encounter at Pamuša* From the original in the Royal Library in Stockholm.
- XXVI. Liepāja around 1702 245
 Jelgava around 1702.
 From drawings by Major General K. M. Stuart in the Royal Library in Stockholm.
- XXVII. Commercial and shipping treaty, concluded in 1657 between Oliver Cromwell and Duke Jacob 252
 The original was in the Latvian State Archives, Rīga. The reproduction is taken from H. Mattiesen's *Herzog Jacobs Vertrag mit Oliver Cromwell und seine englische Politik. Sitz. Ber. d. Kurl. Ges. f. Lit. u. Kunst*, 1934; Jelgava 1935.
- XXVIII. An old farm house in Kurzeme 253
 An ancient wooden ladle preserved in the Peniķis family.
 Photographs in private collection.
- XXIX. A well-to-do Latvian peasant 272
 Latvian peasants from Madliena commune.
 Peasants from the commune of Biriņi.
 Drawings by J. C. Brotze. N. Viksniņš, *op. cit.*
- XXX. The celebration of *Jāņu vakars* 273
 A Latvian milkwoman from the outskirts of Rīga.
 The Cimpulji farm at the far end of the Rīga town pastures.
 Drawings by J. C. Brotze. N. Viksniņš, *op. cit.*
- XXXI. The burning of Rīga in 1812 288
 The Rīga Castle square in 1824.
Senā Rīga, ed. by F. Balodis and R. Šnore, Rīga 1937.
- XXXII. *Kokles* of the 17th—18th centuries 289
 A brass belt buckle of the 18th century.
Exhibition of the Art of Latvia. Catalogue, Rīga 1939.
 Latgallian pottery.
 Photograph from LVVM.
- XXXIII. Atis Kronvalds and Krišjānis Barons 308
 A. Goba, *Latviešu rakstnieki*, Rīga 1934.
 Procession of the choirs, participating in the First Song Festival, at the House of the Latvian Society in Rīga in 1873.
Senā Rīga, ed. by F. Balodis and R. Šnore, Rīga 1937.
- XXXIV. Latvian revolutionary forces at Rūjiena in 1905 309
 A. Bilmanis and V. Pengerots, *La Lettonie pittoresque et sa vie actuelle*, Rīga 1927.
 A representative of the revolutionaries hands a written declaration to General A. A. Orlov.
 The Russian soldiers take possession of the Ringmundshof Manor.
Hvar 8 dag, Illustrerad magasin, Göteborg 1906.
- XXXV. A Latvian farmer sentenced to death 316
 The arrest of two revolutionaries.
Hvar 8 dag, Illustrerad magasin, Göteborg 1906.
- XXXVI. Captured revolutionary farmers of Rembate being taken to Rīga for execution 317
 J. Krastiņš's farm in Rembate is being destroyed as a reprisal.
Hvar 8 dag, Illustrerad magasin, Göteborg 1906.
 Rīga, the Daugava embankment, in 1906.
 A. Bilmanis and V. Pengerots, *op. cit.*

- XXXVII. The farewell given to the first volunteers of the Latvian Rifle Regiment on the Daugava embankment, Rīga, in 1915 320
 Founders of the Latvian Rifle Regiments.
Latviešu Strēlnieki, Rīga 1929.
- XXXVIII. The Latvian Rifle Regiment in the front lines 321
Latviešu Strēlnieki, Rīga 1929.
 Machine-Gun Hill in 1917.
Piemiņas vaiņags, Rīga.
- XXXIX. The Latvian Central Refugee Committee in Petrograd in 1917 336
Jānis Čakste. Illustrēts piemiņas rakstu krājums, ed. by A. Kurmis, Rīga 1928.
 Latvian Riflemen in the Brethren Cemetery, Rīga, at the beginning of the revolution of 1917.
Piemiņas vaiņags, Rīga.
- XL. The proclamation of Independent Latvia in the National Theatre, Rīga, on 18 November 1918 337
 Plenary meeting of the Latvian National Council.
Jānis Čakste. Illustrēts piemiņas rakstu krājums, ed. by A. Kurmis, Rīga 1928.
- XLI. The Latvian Provisional Government on board S/S "Saratov", at Liepāja in 1919 340
Latvijas atbrīvošanas kara vēsture I, Rīga 1938.
 A group of members of the Students' Company in January 1919.
 Photograph in the collection of J. Teffers.
- XLII. Volunteers of the Northern Latvian Army in the spring of 1919. 341
 The entry of the Northern Latvian Army into Rīga on 6 July 1919.
Piemiņas vaiņags, Rīga.
- XLIII. Cadets of the Officers' School at the Daugava bridges during the Bermont attack 348
 The first Latvian military units at Pārdaugava, Rīga, on 11 November 1919.
Piemiņas vaiņags, Rīga.
- XLIV. The poet J. Rainis leaving the Government House in 1920 349
 Photograph in the collection of J. Teffers.
 The solemn opening of the Constituent Assembly on 1 May in Rīga.
Latvijas republikas desmit pastāvēšanas gadi, Rīga 1928.
- XLV. The Prime Minister K. Ulmanis reports to the President J. Čakste at the first graduation ceremony of the Latvian Officers' School. 356
 The first Latvian delegation to the League of Nations in 1920.
 Photographs in the collection of J. Teffers.
- XLVI. Chairman of the Constituent Assembly J. Čakste, poet J. Rainis and the Prime Minister K. Ulmanis on the *Lāčplēšis Day* in 1921. 357
Atpūta, Nr. 125, Rīga 1927.
- XLVII. A farm built on former manor land 364
 A. Bīlmanis, *Lettlands Werdegang, Leipzig 1934.*
 A farm built on cleared forest land.
 A farm on reclaimed marsh land.
5 gadi, 1934. — 15.V — 1939., ed. R. Bērziņš-Valdēss, S. Vidbergs, Rīga 1939.
- XLVIII. A typical example of old farms 365
 A farm in Latgale.
 F. Balodis and P. Ārends, *Lettland, Landschaft, Volksleben, Baukunst und Museen, Rīga 1938.*
- XLIX. A section of the harbour of Rīga 368
Latvia, Country and People, Washington 1948.
 The harbour of Liepāja.
 The port of Ventspils.

- L. The first sugar refinery built in free Latvia 369
The Kegums hydro-electric power station on the Daugava river.
Photographs in the collection of F. Balodis.
- LI. President G. Zemgals accompanies King Gustav V of Sweden to the
Brethren Cemetery in Rīga 384
President A. Kviesis at a military parade in Rīga in 1933.
Photographs in private collection.
- LII. A general view of the National Song Festival in Rīga 385
Photograph in the collection of F. Balodis.
Choir-singers of Rucava commune.
Latvijas zeme, daba un tauta, Rīga.
- LIII. The central building of the University of Latvia, in Rīga 388
Photograph in the collection of F. Balodis.
The Academy of Agriculture in Jelgava.
5 gadi. 1934. — 15.V — 1939., ed. R. Bērziņš-Valdēss, S. Vid-
bergs, Rīga 1939.
- LIV. President K. Ulmanis distributing prizes at a graduation ceremony
in a public school 389
5 gadi. 1934. — 15.V — 1939., ed. R. Bērziņš-Valdēss, S. Vid-
bergs, Rīga 1939.
Latvia's last President K. Ulmanis at a military parade in Rīga.
S. Kristianson, Världskriget i bild, I, Uddevalla.
- LV. The Year of Terror: the House of the Latvian Society, Rīga, in 1940. 396
Victims of the Russians in the courtyard of the Central Prison,
Rīga, in 1941.
From the collection of documents *Baigais gads*, Rīga 1942.
- LVI. 1st Special Battle Battalion leaving for the Eastern Front on 18
September 1941 397
Latvian legionaries on a narrow-gauge railway in the Volkhov section.
Colonel A. Silgailis at his command post by the Velikaya river.
Photographs in private collection.
- LVII. A poster prepared and spread by the German occupation authorities. 404
From the collection of L. Siliņš.
- LVIII. Latvian refugees from Vidzeme moving across a Daugava bridge in
Rīga 405
Latvian refugees on board a fishing boat crossing the Baltic to
Sweden.
Photographs in the collection of L. Siliņš.
- LIX. Latvian youth responds to the appeal of Colonel Lobe on 20
August 1944 412
Photograph in private collection.
- LX. The Chain-Breakers. Detail from the Monument of Liberty, Rīga. 413
F. Balodis and P. Arends, *op. cit.*

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

with bibliographic notes

(*=Headpiece or Tailpiece)

- *Ornament of a dagger-sheath of the 11th century A.D. 1
Vidzeme, Turaida (R). Drawing of a detail after the original in LVVM.
Actual size.
- *"Owl"-brooch of the 8th century A.D. 11
Vidzeme, Ličgals (Md), Lubāna. Drawing from the original in LVVM.
Approx. ½ of actual size. Birger Nerman, *Die Völkerwanderungszeit Got-
lands*, Stockholm 1935. W. Gaerte, *Urgeschichte Ostpreussens*, Königs-
berg 1929.

- *Detail of ornament of a dagger-sheath of the 11th century A.D. 13
Vidzeme, Kārļi (C), Ainava. Drawing from the original in LVVM. Actual size.
- *Kurish bracelet ornament of the 12th century 28
Latvijas Saule, No. 63—64, Rīga 1928. Approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ of actual size.
- *Bronze pendant of the 11th century A.D. 51
Vidzeme, Daugmale castle-hill (R). Drawing from the original in LVVM. Actual size. F. Balodis, *Latviešu mākslas pieminekļi 9.—12. g. s. apmetnēs un kapos, Senatne un māksla IV*, Rīga 1936.
- *Ornament of a shawl-selvaġe of the 11th or 12th century A.D. 52
Vidzeme, Stāmeriene (C). Drawing of detail after the original in LVVM. Actual size. K. Ozols, *Senie latviešu audumi, Senatne un māksla II*, Rīga 1939.
- A. Kārņups, *Likuloks latviešu audumos, Senatne un māksla I*, Rīga 1937.
- Replica of a Latvian shawl of the 11th century A.D. 67
Latgale, Višķi (D). Drawing reconstructed from the original in LVVM. Approx. $\frac{1}{10}$ of actual size. K. Ozols, *op. cit.* V. Ģinters, *Latviešu tautas tērpa aizvēsture*, Rīga 1936.
- *A 13th century ornament from Kurzeme 75
Kurzeme, Dundaga (Vp). E. Šņore, *Dundagas kājauti, Senatne un māksla II*, Rīga 1938. Approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ of actual size.
- Entrance gate and fortifications of Mežotne Castle 90
Zemgale, Mežotne Castle-hill (B). V. Ģinters, *Senā Mežotne, Senatne un māksla IV*, Rīga 1939.
- Fortifications of Mežotne Castle 91
V. Ģinters, *op. cit.*
- Ornament of Kurish halter of the 12th century 97
Kurzeme, Talsi (T), Lake Vilkumuiža. Drawing from the original in LVVM. Actual size.
- *A 12th century decorative ornament from Kurzeme 99
Kurzeme, Talsi (T). Drawing of a bronze mounting of a leather strap found at Lake Vilkumuiža near Talsi. Original in LVVM. Actual size.
- *Disk-brooch of the 13th century A.D. 119
Zemgale, Mežotne Castle-hill (B). Reconstructive drawing from the original in LVVM. Actual size.
- *Ornamental pin-head of the 13th century A.D. 119
Zemgale, Mežotne Castle-hill (B). Drawing from the original in LVVM. Actual size.
- *Fighting scene between the Old Prussians and the knights of the Teutonic Order. 120
Drawing of unrolled relief from Chr. Krollman, *Der Deutsche Orden in Preussen, Deutsche Staatenbildung und Kultur im Preussenlande*, Königsberg 1931.
- Seals of (a) the Order of the Brethren of the Sword, (b) Bishop Nikolaus of Rīga, (c) the Town of Rīga, and (d) the Rīga Cathedral Chapter 127
Dr. J. Sachsendahl, *Siegel und Münzen weltlicher und geistlicher Gebiete über Liv-, Est-, und Curland bis zum Jahre 1561. Est-, und Livländische Brieflade IV*, Reval 1887. Actual sizes.
- Reproduction of a passage from Henricus's Chronicle 129
Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum tom. XXIII. Scr. rer. Germ. in usum scholarum V.
- Reproduction of the text of the oldest Latvian rhymed chronicle 131
Livländische Reimchronik, Ed. A. Meyer, Paderborn 1876.
- Plan of the Semigallian castle-hill at Dobele 139
Zemgale, Dobele (Jg). E. Brastiņš, *Latvijas pilskaļni. Zemgale un Augš-kurzeme. Pieminekļu valdes materiālu krājumi*, Rīga 1926.
- Rīga Castle in the days of Master Eberhard Manheim 142
A. Tuulse, *Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland. Verhandlungen der gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft XXXVI*, Tartu 1942.

*Seal of the Cathedral Chapter of Semigallia	150
Dr. J. Sachsendahl, <i>op. cit.</i> Actual size.	
*Vaulting in the Master's Hall, Cēsis Castle	151
A. Tuulse, <i>op. cit.</i>	
Part of Olaus Magnus's map of Northern Europe	160
D. Brenner, <i>Forhandlingar i Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania</i> 1800, N 15, Christiania 1887.	
A thaler of Walter von Plettenberg	162
Dr. J. Sachsendahl, <i>op. cit.</i> Actual size.	
A Riga thaler, coined in 1557	163
<i>Ibid.</i> Actual size.	
Riga Castle, remodelled by Walter von Plettenberg	166
W. Neumann, <i>Riga und Reval. Berühmte Kunststätten</i> , Bd. 42, Leipzig 1908.	
*Seal of Bishop Rotgert Brigenius of Kurland	176
Dr. J. Sachsendahl, <i>op. cit.</i> Actual size.	
*Ornament of a dagger-sheath. 14th to 15th century A. D.	177
Kurzeme. Detail drawing from the original in LVVM. Actual size.	
Seal of the town of Straupe	180
Dr. J. Sachsendahl, <i>op. cit.</i> Actual size.	
Atrocities committed by the Muscovites	183
From the <i>Zeyttung</i> , published in Nürnberg in 1561. A. Spekke, <i>Latvieši un Līvonijs 16. g.s.</i> , Riga 1935.	
*Signet seal of a Latvian freeman	199
A. Svābe, <i>Kuršu ķoninu un novadnieku tiesiskais stāvoklis. Rīgas Latviešu Biedrības rakstu krājums. Travaux du comité letton des lettres et des sciences</i> 21, Riga 1933. Approx. twice the actual size.	
*Riga in 1548	200
C. Mettig, <i>Geschichte der Stadt Riga</i> , Riga 1897.	
Gold ten ducat piece of Riga	203
E. Hutten-Czapski, <i>Catalogue de la collection des médailles et monnaies polonaises</i> I, N 771, Paris 1881. Actual size.	
The oldest known drawing of Cēsis	209
<i>Svenska folkets historia</i> II, Lund 1922.	
The oldest known view of Valmiera	213
A. Spekke, <i>op. cit.</i>	
Title page of the oldest Latvian book known	216
A. Prande, <i>Latvju rakstniecība portrejās</i> , Riga 1926.	
A page of Martin Luther's Catechism	217
A. Prande, <i>op. cit.</i>	
*Seal of the town of Valmiera	220
Dr. J. Sachsendahl, <i>op. cit.</i> Actual size.	
View of Riga	225
Enlarged detail from an engraving by Pufendorf <i>De rebus a Carolo Gustavo gestis</i>, Nürnberg 1696. In the possession of N. Strunke.	
Part of a page from the Catholic hymn-book of George Elger	235
A. Prande, <i>op. cit.</i>	
*The coat-of-arms of Livonia of the Swedish period	241
Enlarged detail of a drawing by Eric Dahlberg (1625—1703), Governor-General of Livonia, made for Jean le Pautre's engraving <i>The funeral procession of Charles X Gustavus on 4 November 1660</i> . From an engraving in the possession of N. Strunke.	
*Title cartouche of a map of the Duchy of Kurland	242
From a map drawn by Barnikel, the architect of the Duke of Kurland, Nürnberg 1747.	
The castle and part of the town of Jelgava in 1703	246
J. C. Brotze (IX, 68), after a drawing by Pastor Körber. A. Tuulse, <i>op. cit.</i>	
Kuldīga Castle in 1729	247

List of Illustrations

XVII

Drawing by Weygandt. From K. v. Löwis of Menar, <i>Zur Baugeschichte der Komtureien des Deutschen Ordens in Kurland. Sitzungsberichte</i> , Mitau 1895.	250
Duke Jacob of Kurland	250
J. Juškevičs, <i>Hercoga Jēkaba laikmets Kurzemē</i> , Rīga 1932. Actual size.	
Ships in the Baltic	251
From a 17th century map of Livonia. In the possession of J. Tepfers.	
Letter of safe-conduct granted by Oliver Cromwell to Duke Jacob	252
J. Juškevičs, <i>op. cit.</i>	
Duke Jacob's fort in Gambia	255
<i>Ibid.</i>	
Title page of G. Mancelius's book of sermons	259
A. Prande, <i>op. cit.</i>	
Peasants from Kurzeme about 1740	261
Detail from a map drawn by Barnikel, the architect of the Duke of Kurland, Nürnberg 1747.	
*Wrought-iron trellis from a window of Jelgava Castle	263
A. Raphael, <i>Die Herzogsgruft im Schloss zu Mitau. Sitz. Ber. d. Kurl. Ges. f. Lit. u. Kunst</i> 1915—1933, Jelgava 1934.	
*Silver brooch with pendants and red glass beads	281
A. Dzērvītis, <i>Latviešu tautas uzvalki I</i> , Rīga 1931.	
*The "great-brooch" from Nica	282
A. Dzērvītis, <i>op. cit.</i>	
An announcement issued by General von Grawert	285
<i>LKV.</i>	
*Property mark	299
Kurzeme, Nica (Lp). <i>Latvijas Saule</i> , Rīga 1924.	
*The town of Piltene around 1825	300
<i>Sitz. Ber. d. Kurl. Ges. f. Lit. u. Kunst</i> , Mitau 1889.	
Krišjānis Valdemārs	306
Aronu Matīss, <i>Krišjānis Valdemārs</i> , Jelgava 1892.	
*The poet Rainis against the background of Rīga	318
A postage stamp. From the collection of A. Platbārzdīs.	
*The flag of the 3rd Kurzeme Rifle Battalion	319
Design by A. Cirulis.	
Field-Marshal von Hindenburg's order in the "native language"	326
<i>LKV.</i>	
An announcement issued by General von Eisenhart	328
<i>Ibid.</i>	
General K. Goppers	333
Drawing by E. Dzenis.	
*Badge of the Latvian Riflemen	336
<i>Latviešu Strēlnieki I</i> , Rīga 1929.	
* <i>Lāčplēsis</i> — the ancient legendary Latvian hero	337
A postage stamp, issued in 1937. From the collection of A. Platbārzdīs.	
Wood-engraving by J. Plēpis.	
Colonel Kalpaks	351
Wood-engraving by J. Plēpis.	
*The Latvian sun-emblem	359
Detail from the back of a five-rouble note, issued in 1919, designed by B. Dzenis. From the collection of A. Platbārzdīs.	
*View of Rīga with the modified coat-of-arms of the city	360
Enlargement from a postage stamp, issued in 1938 in connection with the 20th anniversary of Latvian Independence. From the collection of A. Platbārzdīs.	
*The grand coat-of-arms of Latvia	378
Reproduction from a currency note (Ls. 5) of the Bank of Latvia. From the collection of A. Platbārzdīs.	

*The Message of Titmouse	379
Kara dainas, Rīga 1943. Actual size 7 to 5 centimetres.	
Passage from written instructions to members of the NKVD	394
D. J. Dallin and B. J. Nicolaevsky, <i>Forced Labor in Soviet Russia</i> , New Haven 1947.	
*The frontispiece of E. Virza's <i>Straumēni</i>	404
Wood-engraving by J. Plēpis. Actual size 9.7 to 6 centimetres.	
*The Latvian Legion	405
Enlargement of the design by R. Kasparsons. From the collection of A. Platbārdis.	
*A design of the coat-of-arms of Latvia	414
Design by A. Cīrulis.	

LIST OF MAPS

whith bibliographic notes

1. The geographical regions of Latvia	15
A sketch map by J. Rutkis after a map by G. Ramanis, Rīga 1935.	
2. The distribution of forests in Latvia	26
Works of the Institute of Latvian Geography under the direction of G. Ramanis and J. Rutkis.	
3. The distribution of arable land in Latvia	27
<i>Geografiski raksti</i> , Rīga 1935.	
4. The present and widest former extension of the Baltic languages	29
V. Kiparsky, <i>Baltische Sprachen und Völker, Baltische Lande</i> , Bd. I, <i>Ostbaltische Frühzeit</i> , Leipzig 1939.	
5. The distribution of the Balts during the Third Bronze Age period	35
K. Jazdzewski, <i>Atlas to the Prehistory of the Slavs</i> , Lodz 1949. E. Šturms, <i>Die ältere Bronzezeit im Ostbaltikum, Vorgeschichtl. Forschungen</i> , 10, Berlin 1936. C. Engel und W. La Baume, <i>Kulturen und Völker der Frühzeit im Preussenlande</i> , Königsberg 1937.	
6. The Balts during the late La Tène period	40
K. Jazdzewski, <i>op. cit.</i>	
7. The distribution of the Balts in the early Roman period	45
K. Jazdzewski, <i>op. cit.</i>	
8. The territory of the Balts during the second half of the Middle Iron Age	47
K. Jazdzewski, <i>op. cit.</i> L. Niederle, <i>Slovanske starožitnosti</i> , Prague 1928.	
9. The Baltic tribes in the late Roman period	54
H. Moora, <i>Die Vorzeit Estlands</i> , Tartu 1932.	
10. The Viking traffic routes to the east	76
N. Fettich, <i>Die Metallkunst der landnehmenden Ungarn, Archaeologia Hungarica</i> XXI, Budapest 1937.	
11. The Baltic tribes in the 9th—12th centuries	83
According to a map of the State Museum of Latvian History.	
12. The topography of the Latvian castle-hills	95
F. Balodis, <i>Die lettischen Burgberge, Fornvännen</i> , Stockholm 1929.	
13. The Slav tribes c. 1000 A.D.	110
T. D. Kendrick, <i>A History of the Vikings</i> , London 1930.	
14. The Latvian territories in the 12th century	136
F. Balodis, <i>Latviešu senvēsture</i> , Rīga 1938.	
15. The castles and fortified monasteries of the Livonian German Order, Bishop and vassals of the 13th—16th centuries	146
A. Tuulse, <i>Die Burgen in Estland und Lettland</i> , Tartu 1942.	

16. Lithuania in the 15th century 153
From a map by M. Liubavski, published by J. Bračs, Riga.
17. Livonia up to the middle of the 16th century 155
Enciclopedia Italiana, Livonia.
18. The most important routes of the early Middle Ages in the eastern Baltic countries and neighbouring regions 169
H. Moora, *Die Eisenzeit in Lettland bis etwa 500 n.Chr. II*, Tartu 1938.
19. The Partition of Livonia in 1562 190
A. Spekke, *Latvieši un Livonija 16. g.s.*, Riga 1935.
20. The Partition of Livonia in 1583 191
A. Spekke, *op. cit.*
21. The State of Sweden in 1660 221
E. Hornberg, *Sveriges Historia*, Stockholm 1940.
22. The Duchy of Kurland, its colonies, and the sea routes of the Duke's ships. 253
J. Juškevičs, *Hercoga Jēkaba laikmets Kurzemē*, Riga 1932.
23. Russian expansion towards the west 264
The Cambridge Modern History Atlas, Cambridge 1912.
24. The positions of the eastern front in the First World War 322
After maps published in the periodicals of that time.

LIST

of the original and the German names of certain places and rivers
in the Baltic area

Original	German	Original	German
Aizpute	Hasenpot	Kurzeme	Kurland
Alūksne	Marienburg	Latgale	Lettgallen
Cēsis	Wenden	Lielupe	Kurländische Aa
Daugava	Düna	Liepāja	Libau
Daugavgrīva	Dünamünde	Ludza	Ludsen
Daugavpils	Dünaburg	Madona	Modon
Dobeļe	Doblen	Mežotne	Mesoten
Džūkste	Siuxt	Nemunas	Memel (river)
Gauja	Livländische Aa	Rēzekne	Rositten
Ikšķile	Uexküll	Salaspils	Kirchholm
Ilūkste	Illuxt	Tallinn	Reval
Jēkabpils	Jakobstadt	Tartu	Dorpat
Jelgava	Mitau	Valmiera	Wolmar
Kaunas	Kowno (Kauen)	Venta	Windau (river)
Ķekava	Keckau	Ventspils	Windau (city)
Klaipēda	Memel (city)	Vidzeme	Livland
Koknese	Kokenhusen	Zemgale	Semgallen
Kuldīga	Goldingen		

ABBREVIATIONS

Henr. Chr. <i>for</i> Henricus de Lettis, Chronicon Livoniae.	LVVM <i>for</i> Latvijas Valsts Vēsturiskais Muzejs (Latvian State Historical Museum).
AUL <i>for</i> Acta Universitatis Latviensis.	Scr.r.Germ. <i>for</i> Scriptorum rerum Germanicarum.
LKV <i>for</i> Latviešu Konversācijas Vārdnīca (Latvian Encyclopaedia).	Scr.r.Liv. <i>for</i> Scriptorum rerum Livonicarum.
LUR <i>for</i> Latvijas Universitātes Raksti = AUL.	Scr.r.Pr. <i>for</i> Scriptorum rerum Prussicarum.

Abbreviations used for the districts of Latvia:

in Vidzeme —		in Kurzeme —	
R	for Rīga district,	V	for Ventspils district,
C	for Cēsis district,	T	for Talsi district,
Vlm	for Valmiera district,	K	for Kuldīga district,
Vlk	for Valka district,	A	for Aizpute district,
M	for Madona district;	Lp	for Liepāja district;
in Zemgale —		in Latgale —	
Tk	for Tukums district,	Dg	for Daugavpils district,
Jg	for Jelgava district,	Rz	for Rēzekne district,
B	for Bauska district,	L	for Ludza district,
J	for Jēkabpils district,	Abr	for Abrene district.
Il	for Ilūkste district;		

ERRATA

Page 7, line 14 from top:	Delete comma after <i>dividing</i>
» 9, » 16 » bottom:	For <i>archaeology</i> read <i>archaeology</i>
» 37, » 7 » top:	» <i>Archeology</i> read <i>Archaeology</i>
» 48, » 20 » »	» <i>arbcaeology</i> read <i>archaeology</i>
» 58, » 19 » »	» <i>housewivs</i> read <i>housewives</i>
» 78, » 4 » bottom:	» <i>Saxon's</i> read <i>Saxons'</i>
» 102, » 4 » »	» <i>ommunication</i> read <i>communication</i>
» 117, » 16 » »	Close quotation marks after <i>principalities</i>
» 165, » 20 » top:	For <i>testifide</i> read <i>testified</i>
» 177, » 7 » »	» <i>ist</i> read <i>its</i>
» 178, » 14 » »	» <i>decadse</i> read <i>decades</i>
» 199, » 1 » bottom:	» <i>sceptrel</i> read <i>sceptre</i>
» 203, » 9 » »	» <i>firts</i> read <i>first</i>
» 210, » 2 » »	» <i>sa</i> read <i>as</i>
» 217, » 5 » top:	» <i>Rerformation</i> read <i>Reformation</i>
» 223, » 17 » bottom:	» <i>koming</i> read <i>coming</i>
» 233, » 12 » top:	» <i>ordre</i> read <i>order</i>
» 243, » 8 » »	» <i>Russion</i> read <i>Russian</i>
» 244, » 21 » »	» <i>concerning</i> read <i>concerning</i>
» 250, » 2 » »	» <i>Hauge</i> read <i>Hague</i>
» 294, » 3 » bottom:	» <i>ha</i> read <i>he</i>
» 302, » 15 » »	» <i>followed</i> read <i>followed</i>
» 305, » 11 » top:	» <i>delevolpments</i> read <i>developments</i>
» 306, » 3 » »	» <i>vivedly</i> read <i>vividly</i>
» 309, » 3 » bottom:	» <i>and</i> read <i>under</i>
» 312, » 2 » »	» <i>intependent</i> read <i>independent</i>
» 319, » 2 » »	» <i>splended</i> read <i>splendid</i>
» 361, » 9 » »	» <i>bade</i> read <i>bad</i>
» 361, » 1 » »	» <i>baken</i> read <i>taken</i>
» 362, » 20 » top:	» <i>ibloged</i> read <i>obliged</i>
» 365, » 15 » bottom:	» <i>hectars</i> read <i>hectar</i>
» 371, » 9 » »	» <i>museum</i> read <i>museums</i>
» 372, » 15 » top:	» <i>vertable</i> read <i>veritable</i>
» 373, » 1 » bottom:	» <i>simply</i> read <i>simple</i>
» 374, » 1 » top:	» <i>repaled</i> read <i>repealed</i>
» 390, » 17 » bottom:	» <i>willll</i> read <i>will</i>
» 402, » 1 » »	» <i>protest</i> read <i>protests</i>

Plate XLVIII, lower picture, line 2: » *expection* read *exception*



INTRODUCTION

Latvian historiography, which had its origin in the 19th century during the period of national revival, could freely develop and grow undisturbed only in the invigorating atmosphere of political freedom, which the Latvian nation enjoyed during the time of its independence. This period was, indeed, brief, but the conditions were so favourable that, in spite of antagonistic yet understandable criticism, Latvian historiography did achieve great results. These results have been such as to compel the historians of other and greater, nearer and remoter, nations and countries not only to recognize, with due reluctance and regret, *de facto*, certain achievements of Latvian historiography, but in some cases even to modify their established and accepted opinions. Some aspects of the development of the relations between the work of this new Latvian generation of historians and the similar, though older, traditions of the so-called Baltic German historiography, will also be shown in this book, though the author has tried to avoid controversy as far as possible.

According to the standards of the taste and spirit of the respective century, a more or less scholarly interest in the nebulous and mystic past

* Ornament of a dagger-sheath of the 11th century A.D. The ornament is made of small square pieces of bronze plate inlaid in the leather of the sheath. The design is a geometrical derivation of the oriental heart-shaped motif with top scrolls twisted outside, widely known throughout eastern Europe at that time. The contact which developed, particularly along the Daugava riverway, between the Eastern Slavs, Khazars and Volga Bolgars brought these post-Sassanian scroll motifs to Latvia. There these acanthus scroll and palmette ornaments were absorbed into the local traditions of geometrical design and developed characteristic variations of double-scroll ornaments after the 11th century such as are to be met with in the leather work and bronze mountings.

of the Latvian people, which, incidentally has very often been called a people "without history", appeared during the epoch of the great discoveries. This era was not only one of geographical discoveries but also of ethnographical investigations. In the chapters dealing with the 16th and the following centuries not a few quotations will be found which enable us to form an idea of the primitive Latvian beliefs, customs, and general conceptions characteristic of folk life as seen through the prism of German intellectuals. Still more significant are the attempts towards an understanding of these phenomena in the 18th century, particularly in its second half (Herder and others). Under the irresistible influence of the most suggestive events in France attempts are made for the first time to elucidate the fates and the history of our country from a non-German point of view. There appears G. Merkel's *Die Vorzeit Livlands*, a highly controversial and romantic picture of mediaeval life, which was violently attacked by the indignant German historians who used all available methods of polemics in denouncing it. In some of its parts ample use is made of the material from chronicles, and in a quite interesting manner, too, though it has been worked up according to the scientific methods of history of the later centuries. In 1796 Merkel had published another controversial work *Die Letten*, which is commented upon in chapter XIII. However, besides these books by Merkel nothing beyond some ethnographic descriptions was produced. From a Latvian point of view no interest was shown in interpreting or even in trying to understand the many social and other problems which sprang up during "the alien masters' rule". This is usually the case when the observer is neither psychologically nor nationally related to what and to whom he observes. Such an approach remains a characteristic feature up to the 19th century when there appear true and genuine historical works written by authors of Baltic German origin who up to the First World War stick to an attitude of mind which is, nationally and socially, characteristic only of the ruling classes of our country at that time, *viz.* of the landed gentry and patricians. These are proudly looked upon in these historical works as the only people of importance and value in the development of our country and thus they would like to give the impression that "the rest" were of no significance. Their policy is a truly colonial one, and it is from this point of view that the whole of Baltic German historiography is to be judged.

Latvian folk poetry, on the other hand, as well as Latvian folklore, prehistory, etc. were frequently treated in a very benevolent spirit, notably by the Latvian Literary Association, founded at Jelgava in 1816. This Association, however, remained exclusively in the hands of the Baltic German intellectuals, especially of the clergy. However gratifying and,

at times, even touching, all these pursuits were, there was still a long way to go until a history, conceived in a Latvian spirit and interpreted from a Latvian standpoint, could be written. Indeed, if, as late as after 1918, a foreign scientist might have wished to approach the problems of the eastern Baltic, and, especially, to study the past of the politically independent nations which had so "suddenly emerged", he would have been unable, on consulting the bibliography in question, to find—some rare cases excepted—anything beyond works of Baltic German historians. Of course these works were permeated with the intellectual, moral, and political peculiarities already mentioned. So he was bound to put up with that material and information about the Latvians and the other peoples in the Baltic countries, which was neither impartial nor complete.

Volume I of *Latviešu vēsture* (Latvian History) (ed. by Prof. F. Balodis and Prof. A. Tentelis, Rīga, 1938)—fatal circumstances prevented the printing of subsequent volumes—gives information about the development and the course of the investigation of the ancient history of Latvia in the 19th and 20th centuries. The present book is an attempt to complete, in a small way, a very general outline of Latvian history; yet it is impossible in this volume to give a complete account of the work of Latvian historians, as it was conceived and written in exile. The necessity of such a book is obvious at this time when nations, small and great alike, are passing through one of the most crucial stages of their existence.

A synopsis of the historical works written on Livonia, *i.e.* the territories of present-day Latvia and Estonia, ought, apart from the books by G. Merkel already mentioned, to begin with two large works by F. Kruse, in which extensive and rich material from local and foreign chronicles, as well as from excavations, is used. They are: (1) *Ur-Geschichte des Esthnischen Volkstammes und der Kaiserlich-Russischen Ostseeprovinzen Liv-, Esth- und Curland überhaupt bis zur Einführung der christlichen Religion*, Leipzig 1840; (2) *Necrolivonica* etc., Dorpat 1842. The designation "esthnisch" is here understood in the sense of Tacitus' "aestii". Tacitus applies this name to the ancient Balts, while later authors call Aestii the Old Prussians. In more recent times this designation has by some inexplicable whim of history passed on to the Estonians, a people of Finnish-Ugrian origin. In a similar way the name of the Old Prussians, who were of the same stock as the Balts, was adopted by their colonizers, the most German of all German peoples. The next is A. von Richter's book *Geschichte der dem russischen Kaiserthum einverleibten deutschen Ostseeprovinzen bis zur Zeit ihrer Vereinigung mit demselben* (I—II, 1857—1858), one of the best of its kind in this particular field, on account of the valuable analysis of the rich historical sources about Livonia, especially in judicial matters.

It contains an apology for the unrestricted privileges of the Baltic nobility by an appraisal of the political events solely from their point of view. In a more liberal spirit is written G. von Ruthenberg's *Geschichte der Ostseeprovinzen Liv-, Est- und Curland von der ältesten Zeit bis zum Untergange ihrer Selbständigkeit* (I—II, Riga 1855—1860). Next to be mentioned is a history of Livonia, written by T. Schiemann and entitled *Geschichte Livoniens bis z. Tode v. Walther von Plettenberg*, which appeared in Oncken's great encyclopaedic series. At the end of the 19th century were published E. Seraphim's *Livländische Geschichte von der Aufseglung des Landes bis zur Einverleibung in das russische Reich* (I—III, 1897—1904, the author of the last volume being A. Seraphim) and L. Arbusow senior's *Grundriss der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* (first edition published in 1890, and the last edition in 1918). The author of the latter professes to give, not a survey of the historical vicissitudes of the country, but rather a reliable selection of historical facts. The book written by the Seraphims has repeatedly been criticized even by Baltic German historians for its journalistic qualities, while the second (that by Arbusow senior) was for a long time considered to be the "last word" in Baltic German historiography and is, in a way, a reliable synopsis of the results of all earlier investigations in that field of research. Just because this book reflects the views shared by all German intellectuals in the Baltic, we are entitled to ask in what way it has contributed to the understanding and appreciation of the Latvian people. The author mentions real Latvian people only in a few cursory lines. The last edition, be it noted, was published in 1918, *i.e.* after the commotion of 1905 and after the period of revival of the Latvian national conscience. If anything, it reveals a most significant and characteristic method of representing the fates of a country almost without touching on the vital problems of the majority of its population.

A collection of articles, entitled *Baltische Lande* (published by A. Brackmann und C. Engel, I, *Baltische Frühzeit*, Leipzig 1939), was published during Latvia's independence. Of this whole series, conceived to comprise a survey of the entire history of the eastern Baltic, only the first book and one part of the fourth volume, treating the events towards the end of the First World War (1914—1918), appeared in print. This book was compiled with the wide collaboration of Finnish scientists, especially in the field of linguistics. It is vivid and clear, and the reader, even without being acquainted with previous works of Latvian historians, may easily see that the general interpretation of Baltic problems has undergone considerable change. It illustrates so well the lapse of time since the last edition of L. Arbusow's book was published in 1918. In a brief enumeration

like this, we need not mention German publications. Mention must, however, be made of Baron H. von Bruiningk, an eloquent champion of the German mission in the Baltic. He possessed a greater perception and is more easily understood than C. von Schirren, his predecessor and antagonist of Y. Samarin, the Russian apologist.

The patriotic impulses at the time of the Latvian national revival (see chapter XIII) stirred up an ardent love of the native country and a keen interest in its past. The interest of the patriotic Latvians was directed first of all towards Latvian folklore as the most unspoiled source of national culture, and in the late 19th century Latvian folk songs were collected and systematized. The first attempts to tackle Latvian history, however, were slow to make their appearance. But towards the end of the 19th century we note the first systematic steps taken by J. Krodzeniēks. The material gathered by him appeared in a collection of his writings, entitled *Iz Baltijas vēstures* (Fragments of Baltic History) (I-II, Rīga 1912). Of this collection, his article *What Is Latvian History?* is the most significant.

This does not imply that there had not been earlier articles published, purporting to throw some light on the Latvian point of view of the history of the country. These are for instance those by K. Valdemars, A. Kronvalds and others.

However, it was J. Krodzeniēks who, while living in Moscow, first made an historical study of the problems of the Latvian peasant. That is to say as far as a Latvian student in those times was able to study those questions. But he applied himself particularly to the social problems which since the conquest of Livonia were closely connected with the German seizure of power in that country. He writes as follows: "The very position of our ancient class, *i.e.* our peasantry, among the other classes clearly evinces that our history must be a description of what the life of the rural population throughout the time of the domination of it by the German nobility was like. These two classes, the German nobility and our native peasantry, are inseparable, they belong to each other like the right and the wrong side of cloth," but, "for all that, the Latvians had some, if passive, weight in determining to a certain degree the trend of their country's destiny. To know and to find out this passive rôle of the Latvians in the history of the Baltic is our task and our duty." In such a way people were thinking fifty years ago.

After 1905, when the Latvians, "driven into one social group"—as G. Merkel wrote in the previous century—had given effect to their revolutionary force (see chapter XIV), our historiography also revives and begins to show signs of marked activity. Very solid and profound for those

times were the books *The Latvian Peasant* by F. Roziņš, the historically controversial *Origin of the Privileges of the Baltic Barons* by J. Asars, the revolutionary-dogmatic work *The Baltic Revolution* by J. Jansons-Brauns, and the essays on Latvian agrarian history by F. Garais (pseudonym "Zemcevs"). All this testifies that new ways were being trodden and that "water never flows uphill", as the saying goes. In 1908—1909 K. Landers published his *Latvijas vēsture* (Latvian History) in 3 volumes, the first comprehensive history of Latvia. Though now surpassed by other works and in spite of the fact that it still relied too much upon the authority of the German historians, this work, nevertheless, marks a definite step forward in the task of outlining and clarifying the history of our country. At the very beginning of Latvia's independence all this preparatory work was summed up, as it were, in a general compendium. Although primarily intended for use in secondary schools, it shows a certain clarity and scientific quality. At a later time it was improved according to the subsequent findings of historians. This book, *Latvijas vēsture vidusskolām* (8th edition, Rīga 1937) was written by F. Zālītis. The latest revised edition of this book was published in exile in Germany in 1947.

The task of Latvian historiography in a country, which for so long had been under foreign domination and the influence of German historiography, has at times been exceedingly toilsome and difficult. The German historiography, being but of "local" character, enjoyed great advantages and privileges in elucidating the "big problems", and always wanted to busy itself with the "right side of the cloth", completely forgetting, or neglecting, the "wrong side" of it (according to J. Krodzenieks) and never noticing when the whole "cloth" was blown up, which occurred fairly frequently in the history of our country. Therefore, with Latvian historiography striking deeper roots, we may hope we shall be free from the foreigners' tendency to ignore, to misunderstand, to hush up, and to disdain our history, and a correctly spelled and intrinsically understood history will teach us that the thousands of years, faithfully lived and endured on the shores of the Baltic Sea, have, after all, increased our strength.

F. Zālītis expresses in simple words: "The new historical material and investigations show with increasing clarity that earlier non-Latvian historians have written Latvian history only from the angle of their own nationality. Hence much that is important for us Latvians has in these works been either completely ignored or misinterpreted."

But what were the practical results in terms of Latvian historiography of all these good intentions and ideals? What are the changes which a foreign observer would perceive when comparing the material on Baltic his-

tory at the beginning of both the First and Second World War? A brief answer will suffice: it may be found in the latest and most recent bibliography, as well as in works written in foreign languages, as, for example, in *Die Letten. Aufsätze über Geschichte, Sprache und Kultur der alten Letten* (Rīga 1930), J. Meuvret, *Histoire des Pays Baltiques* (Paris 1934), *Il Mondo d'oggi. Lettonia* (Roma 1939), and others.

The first and foremost merit of Latvian historians (as distinguished from the Baltic German historians) is that—parallel to the work of the Latvian archaeologists who obtained a wealth of data through excavations [this data having been compiled and published by F. Balodis in his book *Det äldsta Lettland* (Origins of Latvia) and his article *Die Burgberge Lettlands, Studi Baltici*, VII (Rome 1942)] have brought to light valuable new historical material relating to the 16th and later centuries. It is appropriate to set the 16th century as a chronological dividing line because material relating to earlier centuries (as far as it was accessible in the secret archives of the Vatican and elsewhere) and the information furnished by mediaeval chronicles, notably those written in Livonia, had been made known by the German historians of the 19th century. Latvian historians have, however, also worked on that material, supplementing and revising it, and providing a new approach and an interpretation of their own which occasionally caused a lively controversy with the Baltic German scholars. The new material on the periods following the 16th century, which have been provided by Polish, Swedish and in part also Jesuit archives, throws light, *inter alia*, also on the process of development of cartographic, iconographic and humanistic literature (cf. A. Spekke, *Relazioni e contatti tra l'Italia e la Livonia nel Cinquecento, Bollettino di legislazione comparata*, Febr. 1943). Much valuable information has been obtained from Swedish archives concerning the economic conditions of the Latvian peasant during the 17th century. There is relatively little material left unpublished concerning the 18th century, what has been published has given rise to lively scientific debates. Here a mention must be made of the Latvian State Archives. Their publications deal with several problems arising out of the Russian rule during the 19th century.

In summing up, we may say that the Latvian historians have been able to enrich the records of our country with the help of archaeologists who have produced a remarkable yield of new important material. Between the years 1914 and 1940 a young maturing school of Latvian historians was formed whose members have tackled with vigour the problems of interpreting the history of their country. Their task was difficult and complicated. In his analysis the Latvian historian has been compelled to investigate "the wrong side of the cloth", to turn, as it were, the whole

history of Livonia inside out. One of the first attempts to throw a new light on the history of the economic and political rights of the Latvian peasant, during the long centuries of dependence on the German nobility was made by A. Švābe, primarily in his books: *Pagasta vēsture* (History of the Rural Commune) (Rīga 1926) and *Grundriss der Agrargeschichte Lettlands* (Rīga, 1928) from which extracts have been made and translated into French and English. In this particular field, A. Švābe has several notable predecessors among the so-called Baltic German and German historians. To name a few: A. von Transehe, Aghte, and von Tobien. Švābe, of course, disagrees with their conclusions; to him they completely misinterpret the relations which existed between the ruling classes and those whom they ruled. What the valuation of all these problems by a German scholar was—a German scholar who did not live in the Baltic States—can be seen from the review by H. Knapp, an expert in European agrarian-historical problems, in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, (Germ. Abt. Bd. 51, 1931). How a Frenchman looks upon these matters may be gathered from the book by J. Meuvret, already mentioned.

Particularly after the Institute of Latvian History was founded in 1936, the Latvian historians, in the first place A. Švābe and his collaborators, F. Balodis, the archaeologist, and his school of followers, under the lead of A. Tentelis, turned their attention to the problems of Latvian civilization at the time of the arrival of the German conquerors and to the invasion itself. They revised the views of previous German historians on this matter, who had worked and established their opinions in the 19th century. The Latvian scholars published their monographs, basing their investigations and conclusions on the surprisingly rich archaeological finds which were brought to light during the time of Latvia's independence. Their activity raised a storm of violent, aggressive, and occasionally even scandalous protest from the Germans. Such a reaction merely served to prove that one of the fundamental doctrines of the Baltic German historical tradition had been hit at the very core. Should the reader wish to get an insight into the matter, it would be sufficient for him to read the papers of Latvian historians and then to peruse the journal *Jomsburg* (1937 *et seq.*) and the publication *Baltische Lande*, which was apparently intended to give an answer *en bloc* to the work of the Latvian historians of the nineteen thirties. The reader's curiosity might then be appeased, though he might be surprised—to say the least—at the intolerance and violence, common to the methods of criticism by little known German scientists. Another "field of battle" was in preparation in connection with the growing interest shown by Latvian scholars in the fate of the Latvian, and, in general, of the European peasant (including the eastern

European peasant) during the 18th century (see chapter XIII). The historian mainly attacked by Baltic German criticism was R. Vipper, who during his prolonged stay in Rīga succeeded in gathering the young Latvian generation around him. Needless to say, the topic of the serfdom of the Latvian peasants, so fatally linked up with and weighed down by the national problem, was a thankless branch of research. He knew that such work would serve, more than anything else, merely to arouse the most violent controversy. R. Vipper's first article was published in the collection *Die Letten*; it has been reviewed by L. Arbusow jun. in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung*.

The rest of Vipper's works has been enumerated in the commemorative collection of writings dedicated to him on the occasion of his 80th birthday (Rīga 1939). Comparatively less turbulent were the problems of the 16th century which are treated in my book *Latvieši un Livonija 16.g.s.* (The Latvians and Livonia in the 16th Century) (Rīga 1935). Of the Baltic German reviews of my works, those written by O. Bauer (*Baltische Monatschrift*) and L. Arbusow jun. deserve to be mentioned.

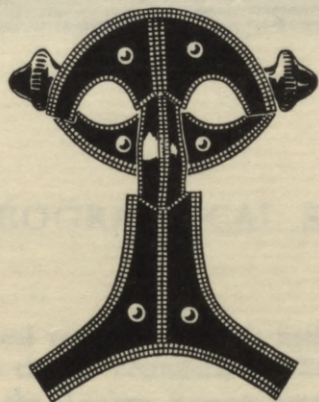
These examples will do. Anyone interested in and wishing to get more closely acquainted with these questions will have formed an idea of the short, but multiform and tense, period of development of Latvian historiography, which has taken shape under the "fire" of uninterrupted criticism. While it has been feasible to prepare large publications of the works of Latvian research scientists on Latvian folklore, folksongs, and language (*Latvju dainas*, fairy-tales, sagas, grammars, dictionaries), and partly on archaeology, a younger branch of science, history was less fortunate, for the work of the Latvian historians was seriously interrupted by the war. *Les faits sont plus forts que les principes*—said a well-known pre-war politician.

In order to achieve the aims and tasks set by this book, nearly each chapter has been divided into two main parts: the first giving a survey of the most notable events in eastern Europe, merely to form a background for the second part which is a survey of the local occurrences bearing on the life and fate of the Latvian people. Each period or century is viewed separately, and a point is made of emphasizing the particular circumstances and features which distinguish it from the previous and subsequent period. Such an arrangement of the abundant historical material may be accounted for by the peculiar conditions prevailing in our country, which has been a veritable cross-road of the big invasions and expansions both from the sea and from the continent. As Count Shuvalov, Governor General of the Baltic Provinces, said in 1870 to the representat-

ives of the German nobility: "These provinces are famous for having always been the battlefield on which big political problems have been fought out." However, our country, on the other hand, always remained on the periphery of these foreign expansions which failed to penetrate to the heart of Latvia and to assimilate the Latvian people. Changing its foreign rulers many times, the internal conditions of this country and its population have remained unknown to the world at large as information has neither been complete nor definite. The desire to raise the curtain, which has through centuries concealed the existence of an entire people, and to investigate the conditions of their life during these centuries compels us to study the great general problems connected with it; or, we might even say, makes us wish to feel or conceive that metaphysical "super historical" element, which in the course of a people's growth, decline, or resistance is as momentous a factor as its geo-political situation, and its rivalry and struggle with the surrounding nations.

Such an attitude and approach presents to the author of this book innumerable difficulties particularly as the work has grown and taken shape in exile. It goes without saying that however competent he may imagine himself to be, in mastering a material of such an extent and diversity, it is impossible for one single author to view with equal and uniform knowledge so many different aspects and periods of the history of Latvia. Some chapters have been edited from material provided by different authors which accounts for the dissimilarity in the treatment and elaboration of them. This applies particularly to the last chapters which bear upon events most near to the present time, and for which information has been drawn from sources very frequently marked by an individual approach and sometimes an almost autobiographical note. Original historical documents are few and scanty as far as the Middle Ages are concerned, every single hint and indication, however small, is of the greatest importance and value. From the 16th century onward, the road widens and becomes easier, though it tends to branch off in various directions towards other countries, merging into the historical documentation of such peoples with which Livonia never had any contact in the Middle Ages. It is essential to understand thoroughly that the historiography of the eastern Baltic is extremely complicated and frequently most confused, as may be seen from Winkelmann's well-known bibliography. Yet it is not only the fragmentary state of the historical deeds and documents which makes Baltic bibliography so intricate, but another cause of our difficulties is the dispersion of these documents over so many archives and libraries abroad, even outside those countries which once dominated Livonia. Despite the difficulties of writing this book at such a time, the

author believes that it may prove of some use to the reader after this second terrible ordeal of mankind in the 20th century. Should this be the case, he will be more than gratified and content with having done his duty toward his native land and his fellow-countrymen. Right or wrong, this volume will be judged by its deserts. To the author himself it has been a faithful friend and companion through years spent in exile.



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* "Owl"-brooch of the 8th century A.D. A characteristic variant of the Kursa cross-bow brooch, in which the head-shield and the wire spiral create a resemblance to an owl's head. The brooch is of cast bronze, but the level surface parts are covered with soldered bits of ornamented plate—a manner of decoration much used between the 6th and 11th centuries, especially on Kurish and Semigallian ornaments. The form of the owl-brooch developed in the Klaipėda region in the Middle Iron Age, apparently under the influence of the cross-bow brooch of Gotland.



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I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

According to geological research, there is little doubt that not many thousands of years ago the ice boundaries of Europe lay approximately along the frontiers of the Ancient Roman Empire at the height of its power. This side of the "frontier" was the kingdom of ice. Beyond these "frontiers" human beings were relatively late in making their appearance.

The geological arena of the Glacial Period, which comprised the vast continental area formed by Scandinavia, Finland, the peninsulas of Kola and Kanin, the Ural Mountains, the Caucasus, the Sea of Azov and Podolia is known as "the Baltic Shield (scutum)" and the Russian Platform. This Platform is a formation from the Archaean Era, with primary crystalline rock cropping out on its periphery and with formations from a later period filling its central part. The north-western portion of the Baltic Shield went through a glacial period in the most recent geological past, *i.e.* at the beginning of the Quaternary, both phases of which extended over present-day Latvia. This makes the Baltic Shield in its north-western extension participate in the cosmic drama of the Ice Age. This Age was one of the greatest biological events in the history of the human race, and provided the greatest stimulant in the formation of races.¹

* Detail of ornament of a dagger-sheath of the 11th century. A. D. A. variant of that reproduced on p. 1. This dagger-sheath was found as an additional item in the grave of well-to-do Letgallian women. Reconstructed ornaments from the same grave are to be seen in Plate XV.

To begin with, we must say that to look upon the Baltic Sea as a barrier which separates the vast mass of European-Asia (Eurasia) from the Scandinavian peninsula would be merely to quote a political opinion which came into being during the expansion of the great powers, when Europe was divided amongst them at the Congress of Vienna. This opinion must be corrected as it is contrary to historical facts; the Baltic countries have always had a common independent culture centring round the Baltic Sea. According to geological evidence, the Scandinavian peninsula and the Russian plains are two of the most stable elements of geology. The middle section, that is the Baltic basin, which geologists look upon as new or even the newest sector, is very changeable. It is sufficient if we look carefully at the results of the double geological development: the halting and slow retreat of the ice, and the results of the lifting and sinking of the sea shores. Of course these things moulded the geological profile of the Baltic Sea, and possibly give the necessary preface to the study of that race which during long centuries tried to establish itself on these shores. Let us first look at these geological periods: from the arctic climate (about 7000 B.C.) through milder climates (the age of the Ancylus Lake, up to 5000 B.C.), then a slightly warmer and damper climate (the era of the Littorina Sea, up to 2000 B.C.) to the falling of temperature to its present normal, from about 900 B.C. Thinking of the subsequent historical fate of the people that settled there, on the eastern shore of this sea, the idea occurs to us that it would be useful to dwell on the information of the Gulf of Finland, which had such an important effect on the historical development of this area. Further we must not forget the remaining masses of water (Lake Peipus, River Narva) which, if they had cut off Estonia from the continent, would have increased the number of Estonian islands with important geographical and political consequences. If the Daugava at the Plaviņas rapids had changed direction and flowed east, historical development would have been different for the people who lived on one and afterwards on both banks of this "people's highway", and also for others, who arrived later with political or commercial motives.

The geographical background,² including the whole complex of its natural elements, played its part in the development of historical events. Among the basic factors of the natural components may be mentioned the units of the inorganic world, such a climate, waters, and the integrity of the mineralogical basis which, generally speaking, constitutes what is understood by surface. In a more detailed way this notion may be divided into primary rock, quaternary and geo-morphological units.

The primary rocks are the most ancient formation on the surface of the earth and nowhere in Latvia do they appear, nor have they been found there after extensive boring (the deepest boring, of 566 m, was carried

out near Daugavpils in 1935). True, they appear on the surface around the edges of the Baltic Shield, but those found in Scandinavia are nearest to Latvia. In the south-eastern Baltic they are covered with more recent formations: the Silurian in Estonia and the Devonian in Latvia. Underlying these formations are all kinds of ore deposits which are generally to be met with in the palaeozoic rocks. Such deposits have been brought to light in Scandinavia, particularly in Sweden. From the region of exposed crystalline rocks in the north-west, the archaean granites gradually slant down, and in Latvia they are estimated to lie at a depth of some 700 m. Here they are covered with sedimentary basic rocks which do not contain valuable ores. The most valuable geological product in the Baltic area is the Estonian combustible slate (found mainly between Jõhva and Rakvere) which resembles lignite and contains from 30 % to 50 % bitumen. Of the useful minerals to be found in the Latvian sedimentary rocks, gypsum, limestone, and dolomites rank first; in addition there are small deposits of lignite. These conditions made it impossible for the population,



Map 1. The geographical regions of Latvia. (1) The Coastal Plain, (2) the Western Uplands of Kursa, (3) the Sandy Terrace of Usma and the Venta River Valley, (4) the Eastern Uplands of Kursa with the Northern Heights, (5) the Brown-earth Plain of Zemgale, (6) the Sandstone Platform of Northern Vidzeme, (7) the Sandy Basins of the Middle Gauja, (8) the Central Uplands of Vidzeme, (9) the Eastern Uplands of Vidzeme, (10) the Slope of Central Latvia, (11) the Heights of Augšzeme, (12) the Plain of Maliena, (13) the Platform of Latgale.

which settled in the area, to build up their life on those branches of natural economy which depend on the exploitation of mineral resources. The massive of the Baltic Shield is characterized by its resistance to later concussions caused by the formation of mountains. It may then be regarded as a homogeneous and unbroken mass which has been spared volcanic repercussions. Its surface is comparatively level, and most perceptible traces have been left on it by the Glacial Drift. The diluvial activity left its marks on the pre-quaternary relief, abrasing and grinding the middle-devonian sandstone and, in a minor degree, the upper-devonian dolomite as well, and mixing the diluvial products into its moraines. The repeated changes of the glacial masses caused chaotic agglomerations of these moraines, particularly on the elevations of the pre-quaternary relief. When the glaciers retreated they left the sub-quaternary surface of the basic rocks covered with moraines, in which the water currents of the melting ice left their vestiges. The quaternary surface formations, such as terminal and ground moraines, moraine hills of different shapes, ancient dales, etc., are a result of the ice activity of the Glacial and Post-Glacial Era. The waters of the melting ice which collected in an inland lake south of the present-day Gulf of Rīga precipitated claylike mud, the layers of which to-day still tell of the annual tides which shaped them, and the fluctuation of the coast line of the Baltic Sea provided western Latvia with an extensive sandy zone. The thickness of the quaternary stratum in Latvia varies from a few metres to several tens of metres, but in the sub-quaternary pits, shaped in the basic rock by erosion and filled with moraine, a layer of 195.8 m has been measured. In general, it may be stated that in places of rising basic rock the moraine deposits are higher and thus the relief of the pre-quaternary elevations has been enhanced and uplands shaped which on account of their superficial outline and geological origin are now called terminal moraine hill-lands. All Latvian uplands are of such geomorphological formation and their distribution is indicated on the map showing the relief of Latvia. Of the six Latvian uplands, two are in western Latvia: the Western and Eastern Uplands of Kursa; and four are in eastern Latvia: the Central and Eastern Uplands of Vidzeme, the Heights of Augšzeme, and the Platform of Latgale. The Vidzeme Uplands shows the most elevated point in Latvia—the Gaiziņkalns (310 m). Investigations of the surface of Latvia show that 75 % of the whole area of the country is lower than 120 m above sea level, the mean elevation being 88.88 m.

While the uplands show a more or less marked kinship which is due to their common origin, similarity of relief, hydrological conditions and other qualities, the intermediate regions are of a greater variety and fall

into two characteristic groups: plains (regions 1, 3, 5, and 12) and transition regions (regions 6, 7, and 10). According to these peculiarities of relief, Latvia is divided into thirteen natural territorial units which correspond to the respective geographical regions. The distribution of these regions is shown on a schematic map.

Because of the scant natural resources, the people on the Baltic shores had to work hard to exist. As J. Meuvret³ expresses it in these simple and persuasive words: "These countries (that is those in the East Baltic region) which are suitable for farming and cattle breeding, could populate a farming people." However, as these were sea communities, and an inland sea at that, so the general view of the fortunes of these farming people becomes peculiarly complicated. After the Ice-Age we may attempt an explanation of the origin of the ancient people living on both these sea-shores. Without taking the specific problems of each individual nation, or closely related nations, we can say that the origins of the Germanic people, who in 2000 B.C. established themselves on the Scandinavian peninsula, are comparatively clear. Research has revealed that the coming of the Baltic and Finnish tribes and their spreading along opposite shores, came a little later than was at first thought. "History mentions many more peoples who established themselves on sea-shores, who came by sea, used the sea as a highway and went from island to island, than peoples of the interior, who came by foot to the sea-shore, expanded, became used to the sea and in the end went over to neighbouring islands or to lands that lay overseas . . . The historic movement of peoples that reached sea-shores from the sea itself was quite different in its character and development to that of those who came to the shores from inside the continent. The one shows an outward movement of expansion, the other an inward movement — or retraction."⁴ During the last thousand years the eastern Baltic littoral illustrates both these processes in an interesting and informative manner. Historical events there show peculiar characteristics. If we take, on the one hand the expansion period of the Goths, Vikings and Saxons, then the usual geo-political formula governing the formation of states remains true. On the other hand the two Finnish-Ugrian tribes, the Estonians and the Finns, if compared with the fate of their brothers of the same tribes, who remained in the interior of the Russian plains, show clearly the remarkable effect of the sea on these peoples.

We must mention again that the Baltic Sea is a closed inland sea lacking transcontinental contacts, and so unable to take a decisive part in world history; the Mediterranean washes three continents, while the Baltic Sea, in a broad way, may be likened to a bay of the Atlantic Ocean or an enormous river. Peoples and tribes, by following large waterways, came

here as settlers from the east or south, but they were interrupted throughout the centuries by an ever increasing flow of peoples from the neighbouring continental powers, which seriously hampered their development; we often come across a complex mixture of languages, religions and cultures in the mixed frontier regions. The ethnical elements who managed to fall back behind natural fortifications (mountains, forests, islands and corner positions) remained behind these defensive lines and retained their ancient civilization. This makes clear the expansion problem of more than one nation of Europe. Living alongside the three large races, the Romanic, Germanic and Slavonic races, we find on the edge of the continent the remains of very old civilizations: Celtic, Grecian, Baltic, Albanian, and the Basque.

Modern anthropology (particularly the Anglo-Saxon anthropologists) illustrates within the limits of scientific possibilities the claims made by F. Ratzel. As A. C. Haddon remarks, "We may consider them (Latvians and Lithuanians) as transformed types of steppe peoples, the spearhead of the expansion to the north; it is possible that they represent a type linking together pre-northern with the northern types."⁵ And again, "... let us assume that the oldest dolichocephalic types from East Asia and the South Russian steppes spread westward under certain periods at different stages of civilization... These we may consider an equestrian people who are fighters and nomads. These nomads came through the aforementioned channels, in several waves and by different routes; some along the Volga, others along the Dnieper, Vistula, Oder, others again through the Transylvanian steppes and along the Danube.⁶ Here, where iron was a rarity, various types of axes—stone axes of the type from northern Latgale, have been found. Most were found in the north as the Iron Age came here later. The late development of this age in this region was due to the fact that the necessary materials were not readily available. It is better to name these peoples of the steppes the pre-Northerners and so leave the term "Northerners" to their North European successors. These pre-Northerners were, of course, fair-haired with blue or grey eyes. However, there is no proof that they were as fair as their North Baltic successors. Roundabout 2300 B.C. large movements of peoples were observed in the steppes; it is believed that long periods of drought caused this emigration. They tilled the ground in a primitive way and were in constant friendly contact with their neighbours."⁷

Regarding the Latvians, and Balts in general, the area in which they settled had a twofold significance. We may repeat here the words: A country which is far from large centres, directs its own life; a life which is full of ancient Indo-European memories. However, such a country is often to be found across the path of nations with great politi-

cal ambitions. At one time the territory of the Baltic peoples was considerably greater than now. The well-known French linguist A. Meillet writes: "After one group—including the Hungarian speaking peoples—had separated from the common Finnish-Ugrian group, the Finns took over many Indo-European words from the Baltic group, and the Finnish group is the only one where Baltic influence may be noticed; the influence of this language may even be noticed in the dialects of the Finnish inhabitants of the Volga regions . . . Before the appearance of the German influence from one side and the Slav from the other, the Baltic speaking peoples played an historic rôle and theirs was Europe's oldest civilization, older even than those of Greece and Rome."⁸

Some years ago I made these remarks while addressing a meeting in an attempt to examine the arrival of the Balts on the sea-shore: these Balts were always wedged in between the Finns and the Slavs with one shoulder against the Baltic Sea and the other against the central Russian river basin. It is the duty of archaeologists and linguists to determine the chronology and the cultural influence of the surrounding peoples. But for me it is enough to remind you of the two factors which played so important a part in determining the fate of these people: their maritime position and the threats from invaders from the interior. The struggles against newcomers, civilizers and invading Slavs were incessant, but their position along the coast brought them a certain freedom.

No nation is small which lives by the sea-shore. We may assert that it was this unrestricted contact with the sea which gave them the only hope of existence during the great ethnical and political changes which took place in the innumerable plains of Eastern Europe. Further, we may say in the words of F. Ratzel: "Everything that helps to facilitate communication, prepares the way for political influence, therefore every system of waterways is at the same time a political organization with political aims, and every sea a political base for expansion." This basin, the home of the Baltic peoples, became first a region of Scandinavian expansion and a little later a base from which they moved further east and south; then came the German invasion headed by the Teutonic Order, which was followed by short-lived Polish attempts at domination; the next to come were the Swedes, and under their rule the English and Dutch developed a profitable market; with the decline of Swedish power the Russians came to fill the vacuum fulfilling their policy of obtaining outlets to the sea—this attempt, like that of the Poles, proved a failure; then came the Germans again establishing trade supremacy; and in 1945 the "Iron Curtain" fell, cutting off these Baltic lands from any contact with Western Europe. Throughout history the great powers, one after the other, have attempted to establish their hegemony over this sea. The area

of the Baltic is in fact an area which can never be completely dominated by one of the great powers for none of them has been able to establish its power for any length of time there. The Baltic Sea tends to remain independent of any one dominating influence. As Scandinavia is the strongest culturally and politically, the southern shore—not taking into account the areas of the Vistula and the Memel which have been the concern of political expansionists for centuries even to the present day—became the region of German colonization. But the eastern shore had to hold the strong and sometimes terrible Eastern pressure as well. However, even after the formation of the Russian Empire, invasions from the east had no lasting effect, and the foreign influence did not sink deeply into the cultural and economic life of those whose lands were occupied.

The history of the eastern shore of the Baltic, beginning at the Gulf of Finland and stretching round to the bays of East Prussia, is often complicated and tragic. It reminds us that no change took place in the eastern political balance of power which did not affect Livonia. And again Livonia is "the corner of the world where all winds meet". Others have spoken of Livonia as the land which is pulled in all directions, and as the land which is between fire and water. A certain French diplomat spoke about Livonia as a country with its back pressed against the great plains of the East keeping its eyes fixed on the West. When referring to our land J. Ancel produced a happier phrase, saying that history knew how to fight geography . . . to destroy its greatest natural obstacles.

The path of destruction of the human soul has been illustrated by authors for many hundreds of years.

Here, however, to close the general review, let us remember two Italian authors: Mario Puccini and Curzio Malaparte. The former travelled in Latvia in 1937 and, while looking at the castle of the Duke of Kurzeme, built by Rastrelli, he used these words: "This castle stands on the left bank of the river Lielupe, one of the most beautiful rivers of Latvia, with its clear, glittering waters, the colour of turquoise. We are now talking about him, Rastrelli, about this proud Italian Master, who brought to these plains the latest barocco forms of Italy, adapting them to these virile, adventurous mystical people of the North."⁹

Curzio Malaparte saw this country after the terrible disaster of 1940—41. When he saw Rīga, this "dreadful scene of ruins", he said,¹⁰ "the spirit of the Latvian people throughout the world is not shaken, but it is as yet untouched." He continued, "The positive element of Latvia is the power of its people to reject all characteristics of fate in the catastrophe which afflicts it." And, "the strength and moral uplift of the Latvian

people lies in the knowledge that nothing has happened if it has not happened in the human soul."

The central part of the east coast is the thousand year old property of the Latvian people, which has, itself, given them such poor material help in the struggle for existence. In spite of this, the strong, resisting, quiet and at the same time sensitive character of this people, whose greatest numbers were tillers of the soil, could not be destroyed. We may sum up the nature of the Latvian country as follows: the sea coast, a few wide rivers, many lakes and swamps, and, finally, fairly fertile arable land, especially rich in the plain of Zemgale. Yet it is, on the whole, a land too moist and flooded, as most geologists have remarked. It is a land difficult to farm. It calls for a people bound by a close spiritual unity; for lovers of seclusion, fully conscious that the only way to get a reward is by hard work, knowing that nothing falls from the sky and nothing comes out unexpectedly from Nature's bosom.

The Baltic Sea, starting at the Straits of Denmark and the north German coast, cuts deeply into the continent with its three gulfs; both the two southern ones helped the many western infiltrations, such as those of the Swedes, Danes, and Saxons, into eastern Europe. Into these gulfs flow rivers—the rivers Neva and Daugava which connect the sea (as modern geographers say, "let the sea enter the land") with the great network of rivers in the eastern plains. Naturally those living on the coast turned their activities towards the sea; the shore-dwellers, especially the west Latvians and Estonians, were in a position to exercise a certain activity at sea, this activity having at times an economic, at times a defensive, and at times an offensive character. History shows that some Latvian tribes slowly reached the coast, then pushed outward and assimilated certain Finnish tribes. The arrival of the Latvians on the coast is well illustrated by the above mentioned statement by F. Ratzel, which shows us why it took them so long to realize the possibilities and advantages to be derived from the sea. To a certain extent this is also illustrated by Latvian folksongs.

Many large rivers which flow through the coastal regions of the Baltic, flow from districts outside the ethnical and cultural sphere of this region. With this grows—especially in the case of the Daugava and the Memel—the pressure of the continent on the seashore. On the other hand, these rivers, *e.g.* the Vistula, influenced the peoples settled in their middle course by promoting their formation of organized communities. To be quite clear about the part played by these large East-Baltic rivers, we must take into account the development further east. The enormous Russian plains with their distant and geo-politically unfavourable seashores (closed

and arctic seas) would have been unimportant if their network of rivers had not been so essential to their lives. The history of these plains which developed in these river basins made Russia a river state (potamocracy). The Valday mountains are most important as they divide the rivers south of the extensive system of lakes in the Ladoga district. Here the Volga, "the dear Mother" to the Russians, and the Daugava which flows to the west have their source and at that point by way of several tributaries and primitive means of boat haulage, it was possible to reach the Dnieper. It is in such regions that the whole origin of Russian history is to be found: "very often the ancient history of a people is implied through its connection with some river." The Dnieper is the creator of Kievan Russia, the region of the lakes is the creator of Novgorod, and the Volga the creator of the Empire.

The Daugava flows towards the western seas seeking other fortunes. Some of the river basins in the districts populated by Latvian people, who developed and organized their political units, are as follows: the Venta in Kursa, the Lielupe in Zemgale, the Gauja in Tālava, and, lastly, the Jersika Kingdom in the central region of the Daugava. The first three are purely Latvian rivers, but the Daugava is not, and its influence on the fortunes of the Latvian people is important yet complicated. It is true to say that the central part of the Gauja, even in ancient times, played a great part as a trade route, and the fortified castle on the banks of the Lielupe is clear evidence not only of the political centralization, but also of the constant fighting which must have taken place against the Lithuanians. King Lamekins' treaties with the Church and the Order is clear proof that his kingdom included the communities on the banks of the Venta. However, all this has only a local character if compared with the part played by the Daugava. This international highway, *via gentium*, whose banks have seen so many nations, as its many names bear witness to (Latvian Daugava, German Düna, Polish Dzwina, and Russian Dvina), makes us feel that it must have played an important part in the history of this region. As will be explained in later chapters, we know little of the Baltic tragedy, even through dusty legends, nor of the reasons why these peoples had to fall back from the continent to the west and north-west; but even from the incomplete documents of these centuries we may deduce that this river became not only one of the political links of the Latvian people, but also the boundary which divides the country into two parts. Even from the earliest times, so archaeologists tell us, it appears that this river played a large rôle (see chapter II). Throughout Latvian history this "severance", the division of the country by the Daugava, has played its part; during the period of the Order, at the time when the Dukedom of Kurzeme was being created, during the Swedish invasions,

and lastly it was for three years the frontline in the 1914—18 war. In fact we may say that the Daugava has been a geographically dangerous inheritance, and even though Latvian songs refer to it with love, historians may be tempted to baptize it rather as a "step-mother".

It is a well-known fact that in prehistoric times the Latvian territory of to-day as well as that of its neighbours contained more lakes and rivers. The hydrographical inheritance still shows the contours of many lakes between moraine hills, especially in the direction of the eastern frontier; water basins were swampy plains; many streams, not to speak of the large rivers, watered the country. In these very early periods the river systems carried more water, the swamps were impenetrable, and the forests more extensive. The task of clearing an area for habitation must have been a heavy one, but little by little man was able to win small areas from the forest and descend from the hills where, as a Latvian poet has remarked, "the soil is saved". With better methods of cultivation it became possible slowly to conquer the fruitful plains.

A description of the swamps was written in the 13th century, but fuller descriptions are to be found in texts of the 16th century.¹¹ If we want to go further back we shall only find references to East Prussia and the dwelling places of the Slavs, the neighbours of the Balts. Thus Adam of Bremen, speaking of the Old Prussians, writes, "they live in inaccessible swamps and do not want to accept any king." The retreat of the Old Prussians into isolated districts is, of course, one act of the Baltic drama, which we will deal with in later chapters. Other evidence refers to the dwelling places of the Slavs. Here we shall only remind our readers of the interesting disputes which stimulated Peisker's works¹² dealing with the psychological influence of the swampy districts on the Slavs: the Slavs are in the moulding of their character and outlook on life "a product of the swamps". This reminds us of the descriptive phrase, "the dwellers in the northern ocean of mud", which goes on to describe the Russian hell as an everlasting expansion, a terrible vacuum.¹³ So we see we are quite a long way from Herder's idyllic little picture¹⁴ which left a notable impression on the 19th century historians. Of the authors writing before 1000 A.D., we shall mention only two. Jordanes, naturally writes only of the districts about the Dnieper and the Don basins, stating that they were forest areas with swamps (*terra vastissima, silvis consita, paludibus dubia*); and an anonymous Persian of the 10th century gives the following description of the land of the Slavs and a description of their life: "This (*i.e.* Saqlab — the Slav country) is a vast country with extremely numerous trees growing close together. The people live among the trees and sow nothing except millet. They have no grapes but possess plenty of honey from which they prepare wine and the like... They possess

herds of swine which are just like herds of sheep. They burn the dead. When a man dies, his wife, if she loves him, kills herself. They all wear skirts and shoes over the ankles. All of them are fire-worshippers. They possess stringed instruments, unknown in the Islamic countries, on which they play. They are armed with shields, javelins and lances. The food of their king is milk. They spend the winter in huts and underground dwellings. They possess numerous castles and fortresses. They dress mostly in linen stuffs. They think it their religious duty to serve the king. They possess two towns . . ."¹⁵ This informative description not only gives a picture of the life of the Slavs, but I believe it also illustrates to perfection the difference in the manner of life between them and the Balts, that is as far as we can judge of the life of the Balts from evidence supplied to us by archaeologists.

Even now, after so much drainage and melioration, swamps cover a considerable area of Latvia. In Latvian folklore we come face to face with evil spirits and visions of the devil (cf. the writings of the 16th and 17th century authors). The Latvian peasants fought with those evil spirits for the willpower to overcome "the passive part of the globe", the melancholy and the sadness. In the same way modern poets with their sensibility are able to throw light upon this long and dangerous battle. The Latvian poet, E. Virza, in his *Straumēni* writes: "There were tales as old as the roots of oaks overgrown with new sprouts, and sometimes a tale was spread out before all eyes, a tale as old as the blue oak which had long lain in the depths of the swamp and carried no message from the forest in which it had hissed in the storm. These tales came from cemeteries and churches sunken in the depths of the swamps, from mud lakes, whose bottom could not be reached even with the longest lines to which stones were attached, from masters' kilns infested with devils, from places where even birds dared not alight but where snakes rolled like live wheels with their tails fixed in their mouths. And all this was surrounded by the hissing desert of the pine and birch forests through whose paths magicians and witches crept and where kings' sons, turned into stags, hurried through, breaking branches on their way. These tales told of hills, the only places where the soil survived the floods, around which the forest snored drowned in the swamps, a forest which had sunk into the souls of the people with its devils and superstitions. And, as a luxuriant flower growing in a swamp tells us nothing about the swamp, so the songs which are born in the souls of the people give no perception of their bottomlessness; and he who will have the chance of looking into it will at once grow grey, and he who will want to measure it will not hear the noise of the falling stone which he has thrown . . . On the swamp a Cross was erected,

to drive away evil spirits, but white moss grew over it, and it looked as if it had grown white from fear; it rotted and fell in one summer."

Even now the greater part of Latvia is enclosed by a blue green line which marks the boundaries of the forest forming a neat border to the laughing fields of the well-kept farms. Another Latvian poet, Kārlis Skalbe, having felt the tremor of the soul of his people, its longing for the unknown and miraculous, writes: —

Blue woods, green woods,
Golden marten in the oak,
How I went to look for you,
How I long for you!

In Latvia 27 % of the country was covered by forests in 1935, with 48 % in Finland, 49 % in Sweden, 24 % in Norway, and 21 % in Estonia. The whole area of Latvia, subordinate to its exploitation, is divided as follows: —

Fields	32.1 % (12.1 % in 1913)
Meadows	13.8 %
Pastures	11.4 %
Forests	26.6 %
Uncultivated land and water	16.1 %

Before the beginning of the 19th century, however, the land had quite a different character. But that was before the quick and progressive growth of the population, which occurred simultaneously throughout the whole of Europe (in 1750 the population of the territory of Latvia was 498,000; in 1800 it was 725,000; in 1900—2,008,000; in 1914—2,552,000).

In territories where there were no natural highways, such as rivers, to help to organize the forested areas into politically united states, attempts had to be made to break through these forests with axes in order to build roads. It was the only possible way to enforce political obedience in such areas. The history of Sweden characterizes this battle with the forest; this may be applied to all histories of lands with large forest areas. As someone has remarked, "Forests slow down the rhythm of historical progress."

The eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, because of the position of its shores and the mouths of many rivers leading to their fertile basins, which have been populated for many centuries, is naturally not the classical type of "forest country", or even "river country", as is, for example,



Map 2. The distribution of forests in Latvia. (Each dot represents a hundred hectares of forest).

Russia. Even the Baltic mythology does not show so many elements of fear and terror as the Russian mythology; it arose through the feeling of abandonment in a boundless forest.

According to old chronicles, we see that after several ice ages a wide belt of forest spreads over the whole middle, northwest and east of Europe. Even in Roman times we have evidence of this; Poseidonios, for example, in his biography of Marius tells us something of it,—Plutarch quotes the passage,—and Pliny the Elder, Caesar, and Tacitus tell us more. “The earth,” says Tacitus,¹⁶ “although parts of it have a different appearance is, however, full of dark forests and unpleasant swamps (*in universum tamen aut silvis horrida aut paludibus foeda*).” In the same way many parts of Henricus’ Chronicle mention and make us aware of the hard-working people who wanted to exploit these territories and who, in times of war, sought refuge in forests (XXIII, 10), blocking roads with trees they had cut down in order to hinder the advance of the enemy, as the people of Zemgale often did. Also, while describing their castles, he writes, for example, of the beautiful Sidrabene castle (11429 *et seq.*): “The castle which is situated in the Zemgale country is called Sidrabene. Proud heroes lived there. To reach it one had to ride on horseback or walk through very extensive forests.” Or in another he describes how (11694 *et seq.*), “They first sent scouts, following them step by step through



Map 3. The distribution of arable land in Latvia. (Each dot represents a hundred hectares of arable land).

impenetrable forest areas — such is this country (Zemgale); they found only a few bad paths, because no bridges or crossings had ever been built.”

Lastly, the Flemish knight, Guillebert de Lannoy, who had a mind “to set out to Prussia against the evil-doers” in 1413 and 1414 crossed nearly the whole of Lithuania and Livonia on his way to Novgorod. He left some good and very important information, for he saw in the coastal regions a castle of a Teutonic knight and “Corres”, that is Kurish villages, and on the road the appearance of a strange frost in the forest. At last, on his way back, when crossing the Livonian frontier into Lithuania, he wrote “I came to the great wide forest in the Kingdom of Lithuania and travelled two days and nights, crossing seven or eight lakes which were frozen, without seeing a single inhabitant.” In another part he says: “Lithuania, on the whole, is an empty country full of lakes and great forests.” These gigantic forest belts marked the frontier and the line of defence, and they were for many hundreds of years important strategic factors. Their importance may be judged from several characteristic descriptions, as seen in R. Henning’s quotations,¹⁷ about the year 1121, and the description of the Polish attack on Polotsk in 1579.¹⁸

The tough Latvian peasant by individual courage overcame the obstacles placed by nature. Through this may be partly explained the spreading out of the people to many separate small places of habitation

and isolated homes. The Latvian peasant left the protective life of the village to suffer the dangers and loneliness of the wooded areas which he cleared to make a home for himself. These and other traits shown by the whole race—the customs, character and psychology—cleave them from their eastern neighbours, the Russian peasants, and the people of the southern frontiers, the Poles. All social changes, as well as many agrarian reforms, have always developed in this individualistic way. It is not surprising, then, to find that ancient German chronicles write about the interesting individualistic character of these people:—

Die sint letten genant:
Die heidenschaft hat spehe site.
Sie wonet note ein ander mite,
Sie buwen besunder in manchen walt.

To the Latvian peasant his land is "his corner and bit of earth", as a 19th century author remarked, and this feeling is expressed to the full in many Latvian works of art, particularly in the folksongs. It is a tragedy that this passionate love for agriculture and a household should have been denied to the peasant so many times.



*

* The design on a Kurish bracelet of the 12th century.



*

II

THE FIRST MILLENNIUM A. D.

The historical documentation about the movements of the races, peoples, and tribes in the territories of eastern Europe in the early dawn of history or, more precisely, in the first millennium after Christ, is rather scarce and obscure. During the last few decades a certain, if somewhat diffuse, light has been thrown on this matter by the auxiliary sciences of history: philology, ethnography, and archaeology. All the material, however, has been approached by such a variety of methods which have resulted in just

* Map 4. The present (cross-hatched area) and widest former extension (obliquely hatched area) of the Baltic languages. The territory inhabited by the Balts has in modern times been greatly reduced; in prehistoric and early historic times it extended much farther to the west, but even more so to the east. The map shows the possible widest diffusion of the Baltic languages, according to the results of Baltic toponymic research.

as many interpretations, that it has not always been possible to gain a sufficiently clear and chronologically unequivocal idea of the state of affairs prior to the beginnings of local historiography. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that throughout the past centuries, during which were formed the great schools of history, this whole area—the ancient home of the Balts—has been the object of political and cultural aspirations of the neighbouring powers. It is no wonder, then, that the pages of history have been written in a more or less abstract and partial way; the reflection of a psychological imperialism shifted and modified the effect of light and shadow in certain branches of documentation, and tended to divert, consciously or unconsciously, the attention of the reader in the desired direction. During the time of their political independence great work was done among the different European nations between the White and the Black Sea by initiating independent original historical research and investigation. One has only to recall the two large conventions in Riga (the Congress of Archaeologists in 1931 and the Congress of Baltic Historians in 1937), in order to realize the amount of painstaking work done in this matter during recent years in the Baltic States, in Poland, and also in Finland and Roumania. These efforts have helped considerably to clarify the situation, but they have also—it would be unfair to deny it in the presence of the wise and calm eye of historical justice—resulted in a wave of a young and vigorous political nationalism. However, all, *orbi et urbi*, will agree that a future synthesis—for such is sure to be arrived at some day—would be unthinkable without this constant corrective, this necessary *audiatur et altera pars*, which alone will enable us to reach a full understanding of the complex problems of our area where historical processes and events have intersected, mixed and clashed with each other, shaping a colourful pattern like that of an ancient carpet. In this connection, the reader will be able to find some degree of scientific guidance in the article *Ostsee* by O. Kunkel.¹

It may not be out of place here to point out one characteristic of the Baltic group of peoples, viz. that their branch, according to specialists, has been linguistically an individual and independent one through several thousand years. By the phonetic structure of their languages this group appears to be the most archaic in Europe and particularly rich in reminiscences of the times of a common primitive Indo-European language.

Three peoples of this group are known to us: the Old Prussians, the Lithuanians, and the Latvians. Just south of the Old Prussians lived the Galinds who were exterminated by the Poles, while the Old Prussians were exterminated by the Order of the Sword and Teutonic colonization between the 13th and 17th centuries. The coastland from the Kurish Haff and Memel (Klaipēda) and northward to Kurland was inhabited by the

Kurs, and farther in Latvian territory lived the Semigallians, the Sels, and the Letgallians as separate branches of the Latvian people.

To return to the early history of these regions and to our task of tracing the first authentic movements of the Balts, it will be necessary to make use not only of the sciences auxiliary to history but also of the process of elimination. Let us, then, first try to obtain a summary survey of the data available on the historical vicissitudes of the Baltic peoples which for so many centuries have been hidden by the shadow of the history of other nations. Let us begin with an attempt to describe their place of origin.

The problem of the original home of a people in prehistoric times is one of the most difficult and most thankless subjects for historians, philologists and archaeologists to tackle. As it is impossible for me to be competent in all these branches of science, I shall refer to the opinions of the most noted specialists. If we want to form an idea, if only an approximate one, of the possible location of the Balts at the dawn of history, we may say that in the north there is no difficulty in establishing, with sufficient precision, the ethnical boundary between the Balts, and the ancient Finnish tribes which lived in scattered and rather incoherent groups in the vast expanses of woodland and marsh, and moved, in the course of centuries towards the northwest, ceding their place to the Latvians in central and southern Vidzeme (Livonia) and in northern and western Kurzeme (Kurland). Nor does the southwestern border towards the Polish-populated regions seem to have undergone any considerable changes either; at any rate, during the later centuries the Polish territory remained more or less what it had been in earlier times. The only unsolved problem is that of the struggle of the Yatvegians for their existence and the struggle of the rest of the Baltic tribes on the southern borders. Niederle is very positive about it: "We may assume that without doubt the Poles from time immemorial have populated this space where history has found them and that they have never abandoned their original home between the Vistula and the northern part of the Bug." The most recent opinions, establishing more precisely two political state nuclei around Gniezno and Cracow, show a similar trend.² This certainly does not provide an answer to the question regarding the settling of the Old Prussians near the sea and their ethnical expansion; nor does it explain the problem of the Polish-Lithuanian ethnical frontier. It does, however, suggest, somewhat vaguely, the location of certain limits of the possible expansion of the Balts in prehistoric times. The north-west boundary being the sea, there was left for the Balts, from a racial point of view, only a narrow strip of land between the Finns and the Slavs in which to move during the centuries. Even that was subjected to a temporary Germanic infiltration (Goths, Northmen). It was, indeed,

as E. Réclus so imaginatively puts it, "a corridor with narrow sides". Quite recently V. Kiparsky³ has tried to convey a cartographic vision "of the greatest possible extension of the Baltic languages". Taking the investigations by Sobolevski, Buga, Vasmer, and others, as a basis, he has succeeded in outlining an impressive rectangle, its four sides being situated as follows: the western line is formed by the sea-coast from the mouth of the Vistula to the present-day Latvian-Estonian frontier; the straight southern line is that of the western boundary-line of East Prussia which, passing through the Masurian lake and swamp district, turns eastward along the Pripet and extends as far as Chernigov; the eastern side of the rectangle is formed by a line starting from Chernigov, along the river Desna, then winding onward as far as Tula and the western regions of Moscow and continuing as far as Tver; finally, the northern side runs from Tver along the Volga and straight on towards and following the Latvian-Estonian boundary, with Pskov remaining outside it.

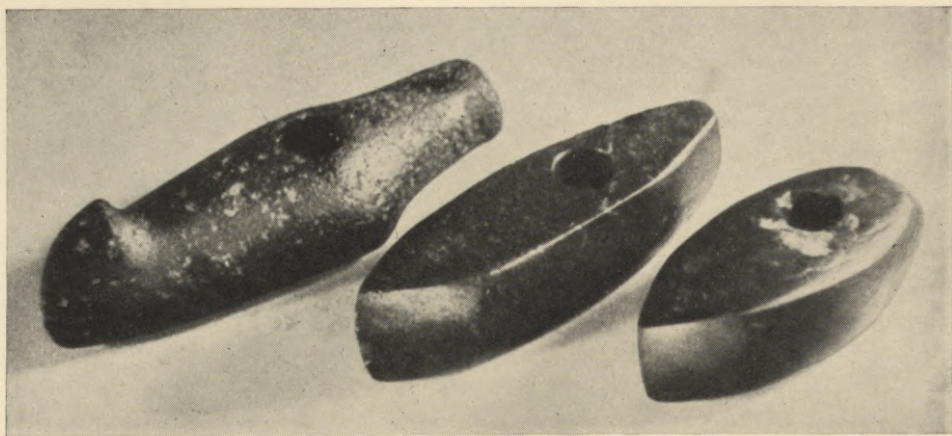
This "corridor" has, in terms of the vast expanses of eastern Europe, an open and little defined base towards the east and the south-east. It is in this area, especially in connection with the vast diffusion of the Slavs towards the east and the north-east, that the complex problem of the historic origin of the Balts is to be sought; and it is in this direction that the investigations by the Baltic, Slav, and other archaeologists, linguists, and folklorists have been and continue to be made, in order to define, within the scope of possibility, the boundaries of the separate tribes and populations. Basing himself on the investigations by K. Buga, the Latvian linguist J. Plāķis has traced a general outline by assuming that the Old Prussians, advancing towards the north-west from their original home, were the first to arrive, in the first centuries after Christ, at the shores of the Baltic Sea, between the mouths of the Vistula and the Memel. Some of their tribes have been mentioned by Ptolemy and the linguistic material testifies to the existence of two dialect groups. J. Plāķis further assumes that at the time of the invasion by the Teutonic Order the Old Prussian tribes in the Kulm and Lubovia regions had already been subdued by the Poles, while ten other centres remained independent. This fact is also testified by the survival of proper names. The Lithuanians, following the Old Prussians, arrived in the region of the basins of the rivers Vilia and Nevesa in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., not reaching, however, until the 13th century, the sea-coast then occupied, from Klaipėda to the mouth of the river Venta, by the Kurs. No separate tribes are known to have existed among the Lithuanians, whence they must be assumed to have formed an ethnically compact body, as is attested by a letter of Vytautas the Great written in 1420 (*unum idioma et uni homines*). If such is the case then the differentiation into the present-day dialects must



Pre-Baltic pottery (cord-ceramics), c. 2,000 B.C. The original Finnish-Ugrian culture layers of comb ceramics towards the end of the Neolithic Age were superposed in Latvia south of the Daugava by the Indo-European culture of "cord ceramics" or of "battle axes." In its further development, a peculiar yet primitive Baltic culture region began to form, towards the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age, in the area bounded in the north by the Daugava, in the south by the Vistula, and in the west by the Baltic Sea.



Finnish-Ugrian pottery (cord-ceramics) of the late Neolithic Age. Comb-ceramics were characteristic of the Finnish-Ugrian hunters and fishermen culture, which, before the deposition of the Baltic string-ceramic layer, c. 3000—2500 B.C., they carried with them when they later spread over the entire Baltic areas as far as the Vistula.



Stone battle axes of the primitive Balts, the so-called "boat" axes, 2,000 to 1,600 B.C. This form of battle axe is characteristic of the primitive Baltic culture of the newcomers and was unknown during the Finnish-Ugrian culture period of the so-called comb-ceramics. On the illustration, the first from the left is a boat-axe of the Fatjanova type and found in Latgale, the remaining two are of the common boat-axe type.



Ancient Baltic bronze war-axes of the Bronze Age (c. 1500 to 500 B.C.) from Latvia. In the space between the rivers Vistula and Daugava, occupied by the Balts as early as the Neolithic Age, there developed in the Bronze Age new peculiar forms of ornament, tools and weapons, characteristic of this particular region. The war-axes shown in this illustration are typical examples (from left to right): 1) Eastern Baltic axe from Jurķi, Užava, 2) Eastern Baltic groove-axe, of the so-called Nortiken type, from Kalēji, Priekule, 3) top-hole axe of the late Bronze Age.

have occurred more recently and could not have served as a basis for political schism, as is amply proved by Lithuanian history since the time of her first dukes. Towards the end of the 12th century the Latvians had divided into three tribes: the Kurs (kurši), the Semigallians (zemgaļi), and the Letgallians (letgaļi); all these ethnical groups, except the small body of the Sels (sēļi), had formed into certain regional political units. The names *latvji* and *latvieši* (Latvians) had not yet come into general use and denoted at that time only one of the groups. The literary Latvian language originated from Semigallia (Zemgale). The old hypothesis of the Kurs having been a tribe of Finnish origin has been dismissed as untenable. A general conclusion regarding the Balts would be that of all the Baltic peoples only the Lithuanians had formed into a compact community, while the Old Prussians and the Latvians remained segregated. Such a conclusion throws much light on their ensuing fates to which was added the fatality of their geographical position.

O. Kunkel¹ has recently published his view on all these problems. On the one hand, his inferences regarding the centuries after Christ conform to those of the national-local schools of historical research. [He, too, speaks of a "miraculous development of the Balts and of the Estonians," and also of their being of all European peoples "the most deeply rooted (*bodenständig*) in their native soil"; likewise, he points out the difference between the cultural level, a few centuries later, of the Balts and that of the Finns and the Slavs.] On the other hand, however, he believes that it can all be explained by the notable influence "of the civilizing power of the Germanic, especially of the Gothic, peoples". Still more complicated are the problems and discussions which refer to the centuries before Christ.

Viewed from the angle of historical documentation, the whole complex of these problems seems *a priori* extremely vague and obscure on account of the general geographical situation. While the Old Prussians were in contact with the Western Slavs and, at an earlier time, with the Goths, the Latvians and the Lithuanians were, during these dark ages, chiefly concerned with the Eastern Slavs, not to mention the Finns. Since all the documentation available, up to the time of the Arab geographers and travellers and some of the Byzantine historians, derives from the west, the matter in question necessarily assumes a rather hopeless aspect. We are bound to state that there existed two high and wide ethnical walls—that of the Slavs and Teutons in the west and that of the Eastern Slavs in the east and the south—behind which for many centuries the existence of the Balts lay hidden. From the gloom of those remote centuries it is only the Old Prussians and the Western Latvians (Kurs) who, being in contact with the roaming Gothic and Viking tribes, are at all distinguish-

able enabling us to form some idea of the ways they defended themselves against incessant incursions, and of their ethnical qualities. At first glance it appears that we may get some information on our problem from the Vikings, during the period from the 9th century to the time of Idrisi (1154). Unfortunately, a closer inspection of this source proves our hopes to be unfounded. True, all news usually came through Scandinavian channels, but since the Balts, except the population of the littoral, were not in touch with the sea-shore and their relations with the Vikings were but fortuitous, all information becomes vague and confused, as is the case with the Arab sources especially with Idrisi.

Thus, to repeat it once again, the whole question of the fortunes of the Baltic peoples throughout the first millennium after Christ is very obscure. Hence a great amount of special interest and, one might say, of patriotic patience (it would be exceptional to find it among students not themselves belonging to these races) is required, in order to be able to form a general view, possibly with documentary evidence, of this millennium.

We must begin far back. In Book IV Herodotus⁴ speaks of the Neurs as being a frontier people north of the nomad and Scythian tribes which had already changed their nomadic ways for a more settled life (*i.e.* the agricultural Scythians so often mentioned). North of these Neurs, he says, extends nothing but tracts of uninhabited desert land. Continuing his tale, Herodotus relates that next to these Neurs lived the Budins, a Finnish tribe; the Neurs were much addicted to all sorts of witchcraft, especially to the practice of turning into werewolves which is often mentioned when reference is made to the Balts in later centuries. Opinions on the racial relationship of the Neurs are divided; the Scythians, the Slavs, the Balts—all are mentioned in this connection. P. Šmits, the Latvian sinologue and also the first to systematize Baltic folklore, upholds the Baltic theory mainly with the help of linguistic arguments which are not at variance with the generally accepted idea as to the original home of the Balts. In recent years V. Kiparsky⁵ has also advanced his opinion on the problem of the Neurs.

It would not be amiss at this point to recall to mind the most recent linguistic investigations on the kinship and the relations of the Balts with the Thracians and their closest kin, the Illyrians and the Albanians. N. Jokl,⁵ one of the most notable students in this field of research, whose conclusions are partly founded on the investigations by G. Meyer, states: "Thus the Thracian language has been proved to be an eastern European language of Indo-European origin . . . Some connecting links point to Greek; a considerable number of separate cases, however, place the Thra-



Map 5. The distribution of the Balts during the Third Bronze Age period, 1300—1100 B.C. The region between the Vistula and the lower course of the Daugava as early as at the end of the Neolithic Age was conspicuous for the peculiarity of some of the forms of tools characteristic of those parts, which marked it as an independent cultural region. In the early Bronze Age the characteristic concomitant forms of this region were the so-called groove-axe and the East-Baltic battle-axe (Plate II, 2).

cians and the Illyrians, in the linguistic sense, with the northern peoples of Europe, specially with the Balts." In other words, long before the Germanic and Slav expansion there may have existed, between the Thracians and the Balts, geographically very wide neighbourly relations which it is impossible to delineate with precision. Jokl thinks that he has succeeded in locating the place of contact between the Germanic peoples, the

Slavs, and the Balts, *i.e.* the original home of the Thracians, in the Carpathian mountains (which designation, in his opinion, has also originated in this connection). In a similar manner an attempt has been made to explain the root *balt-* with the help of some Albanian words. The connection with the Finns, however, might be sought in an eastern direction, in the basin of the lower Don. Another though vague indication can also be obtained from the ancient maps on which the Agathyrsians, a Thracian tribe, are shown populating regions rather far to the north.

For many centuries after Herodotus, the sources which provided information, via the south-east, about the Balts and their immediate neighbours, become silent. The thread of news, which had at times attained quite considerable proportions, was cut by the almost uninterrupted stream of Asiatic nomads, to be resumed again by the Arab writers. These sources are of great importance concerning the Eastern Slavs; when referring to the Baltic area beyond the "Slav wall", however, the information enables us only to "see through a glass, darkly".

The pressure on the part of the Mediterranean merchants towards the north and the north-east, towards the "Coast of Amber", is occasionally hinted at in some literary narrations. Apart from the information on Germany, available through Marius' wars with the Cimbri and Caesar's literary works, the first writer to describe with sufficient clarity the horizons of those times is Strabo:⁶ "What is left beyond the Elbe, towards the ocean, is entirely unknown to us, because we have not found any one who has navigated near these coasts in the eastern direction towards the opening of the Caspian Sea; not even the Romans penetrated into the regions situated beyond the Elbe; finally, no one has ever tried to explore these territories by land." A powerful visual impression is also conveyed by his words⁷ describing the wooded and marshy scenery along the courses of the rivers known to him (Rhine, Elbe). This information supplied by Strabo who, as we have seen, cherished the illusion that the way from the Baltic to the Caspian Sea could be made by sea (*via maris*), was soon added to. In his very clever analysis of the development of the trade relations and their literary reflections from Pliny onward to Tacitus and Ptolemy, Eduard Norden⁸ demonstrates how the Baltic horizons gradually enter into the sphere of cognizance of the ancient world and how, after the collapse of the Roman Empire, this knowledge becomes obscured again by legends and "cosmographic" mists. Pliny the Elder, once highly credited for his knowledge of certain northern (north-western) regions of Germany, has, together with others, left us the well-known description of the *equus romanus* who set out in person for the "Coast of Amber" in order to acquire large quantities of that tender *metallum sudaticum*, so delicate in colour and so luminous. The partiality of the ancients for amber

had turned into a fashionable craze and therefore this commercial venture proved very profitable, though equally dangerous, considering the novelty of communication (*nuper cognitum*) and the rarity of the article. Be that as it may, the "amber route" was discovered, or re-discovered, and much used towards the beginning of the Christian era, and thus a part of the Baltic littoral, hitherto unknown, was included in the periphery of the geographical horizons of the *orbis romanus*. Archeology has had the privilege of discovering more about this. Its findings indicate that some probably indirect relations may have existed between the Mediterranean and the south-eastern coast of the Baltic Sea as early as in the times of the Greeks and the Etruscans. Before leaving this question, let us trace more precisely the course of the amber route: it began on the shores of Old Prussia, ran southward towards the Vistula, then continued through the Moravian Gate as far as Carnuntum (near Vienna) and from there crossed the Semmering Pass to the Adriatic coast where it terminated at Aquileia, the place of trans-shipment as it were.

Tacitus' famous treatise *De Germania*, which has been analysed and commented upon by German scholars innumerable times, raises the problem of the Aists (*aestii*). This rather terse account of the Aist-people, or of the conglomeration of their tribes, turns out to be quite a complete and honest description, e.g. with regard to the state of agriculture, the collection of amber, and the level of civilization of the neighbouring races, i.e. the Finns. On the whole it is historically true. We see that the chroniclers, the lack of whom Strabo so greatly deplored but a century earlier, had in the mean time collected excellent data, considering the opportunities of those times. Thus, knowledge in this field was making good progress and the great Alexandrine school which for many centuries had been Ptolemy personified was already able to include, in their cartographic visions, still schematic and erroneous, some portions of the Baltic. They give also the names of a few tribes, rivers, seas, and mountains (non-existent in reality, not "abolished", however, by Mediterranean geographers until a thousand years later), as well as estimates of distances. From Tacitus to Ptolemy, there is other progress to be noted for, according to the views held by many competent linguists, the Aists may be identified with the Old Prussians, though according to others they may not. The evidence is incomplete. However, from the point of view of the continuity of history and in the light of some linguistic indications, it would seem judicious to accept the first view as correct, as is generally done. As to the names of tribes (Sudins, Galinds, and others) mentioned by Ptolemy, such doubts no longer exist, and the appearance of these tribal denominations is evident proof of the increase of information in his century.

It would at this point be unjust not to mention Mela whose *De chorographia*—the most ancient geographical compendium in Latin which has survived to the present day—might serve, as a notable geographer L. Hughes⁹ puts it, “as a model for geographical manuals intended for elementary instruction”. This compendium contains some very significant details concerning the northern parts of Europe. Thus, for instance, the Gulf of Danzig (*Codanus Sinus*) is mentioned here for the first time and so is Scandinavia though still an “island” among numerous others in the “ocean”. Mela is also the first to introduce the legendary element from northern Europe, which developed so richly in the subsequent centuries.

The great crisis of the Roman Empire, and many reasons connected with it, stopped and interrupted the magnificent progress of the geographical science of the ancients, exposing it to a curious process of intellectual sclerosis to such an extent that the work and name of Ptolemy was raised into the rarified air of abstraction and sterility. The increasing void between the theoretical conception of spacial boundaries and reality became invaded by geographical legends — a sign of the vitality and immaturity of scholarly thought in the early Middle Ages. Of the few geographical treatises of those early centuries bearing, if anything, pompous names and abundantly interspersed with legends about the peoples on the shores of the “Unknown Ocean” we may mention those by Solinus, probably written about the 3rd or 5th century, and those by Orosius (4th—5th century), although, as H. F. Tozer¹⁰ points out, they are noted not so much for what they contributed to the knowledge of geography as for the influence they exercised in mediaeval times. Solinus, the author of the book *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*¹¹—the manual of many mediaeval authorities—owed his fame in no small way to his renown as a clever narrator. T. Mommsen who edited his works qualifies his value as a scientist in the following words: “The new information, provided by Solinus, is generally of no value and we may be grateful to him that there is so little of it.” The name of Orosius is linked with the mediaeval Baltic geographical traditions by way of the great Anglo-Saxon King Alfred (848—899), *i.e.* through the medium of translations and interpolations (Wulfstan). It is generally believed that it was Orosius who, according to Kimble, initiated the series of cosmographic encyclopaedias continued in the following centuries by Isidore of Seville, Baeda Venerabilis, Rabanus Maurus, and others. They all wrote “historical geographies” as Kimble calls them; in other words, they copied and modified the observations of their predecessors, “without adding much or anything at all of the knowledge of their time”, *i.e.* of that particular epoch in which their encyclopaedias were compiled. As Kimble remarks, “the geography written in the 4th century is essentially the same as that of the 13th century, and

differs very little indeed from that of the 15th century, for even Columbus . . . adopted many of his geographical notions from Pierre d'Ailly who compiled them largely from Roger Bacon who, in his turn, had drawn a great deal of his knowledge from the ideas of the Holy Fathers of the Middle Ages". Those who require more proofs should note how little space has been granted by this same d'Ailly and by his immediate predecessors to the great travellers of the period (John de Carpini, W. de Rubruquis, Polo and others). Of all mediaeval geographers it is only Aethicus Ister (7th century) who has, relatively speaking, much to say about the north, although still in the same "classic" manner; of some interest are his allusions to the customs of certain of the coastal tribes. Some proper names are given by Anonymus Ravennas (also 7th century).

Parallel with this evidence of an abstract and theoretical nature, more substantial contemporary information, provided in part by eye-witnesses, begins from the 6th century onward to infiltrate into the historiography of the period. In the centuries between the Goth and Northmen's expansions mention is made three times of the Aists, and in the last case, at least, no doubt is left as to their identity with the Old Prussians. This information coincides with three important phases of the Germanic expansion on the European continent.

The first information about the Aists dates back to the arrival, in the 5th century, of the Goths in Italy under the command of Theodoric the Great. The Aists had already been in contact with the Goths when the latter moved from Scandinavia towards the mouth of the Vistula and during the brief reign of Ermanaric (4th century) in the endless plains of southern Russia¹² (cf. also the glorification of this king in the epic legends of the later centuries, comparable to the epic fame of Theodoric referred to by Bruce Dickins¹³). Between 523 and 526 they sent their envoys to Ravenna with a gift of amber for the king of the Goths. It seems that this embassy, mentioned by Cassiodorus,¹⁴ was the result of a displacement of various Slav tribes caused by the return of the Herulians from Central Europe to their homeland, viz. Scandinavia. Very interesting are Cassiodorus' comments on the origin of amber which are to a large extent influenced by a certain passage in Tacitus' *De Germania*.

In the second instance it is Einhard who mentions the Aists quite briefly in his biography of Charlemagne. This was also a crucial moment in the history of Central Europe, if one considers the far-reaching designs of the Frankish king, afterwards Emperor of the new Roman Empire, with regard to the eastern boundaries of his state (the conquest of the Avar kingdom, ruthless struggle with the Saxon heathen, etc.). Thus the interest in the geography and the ethnic possibilities beyond the immediate enemy becomes comprehensible. And also let us not forget that Ein-



Map 6. The Balts in the late La Tène period, 150 B. C. to the Birth of Christ. The Baltic culture area no longer extends as far as the lower course of the Vistula (cf. map 5) where different culture groups, considered to have been either of Germanic or of Slav origin, are now to be noted. Baltic cultural phenomena, instead, are now conspicuous in regions extending rather far into the east, along the upper course of the Dnieper. Owing to the lack of investigation regarding these particular parts, the limits of the distribution of the Balts in the east cannot be fixed with sufficient accuracy.

hard's *Vita* became one of the main sources or, we may say, a point of departure, for the most notable mediaeval chronicler of eastern Baltic affairs, viz. Adam of Bremen (Adamus Bremensis).

King Alfred, the Anglo-Saxon, is the third of the great rulers who sprang up as a result of the new political power of the Teutonic tribes.

He mentions the Balts, *i.e.* the Old Prussians, on a third occasion when writing on observations made by two emissaries he had sent out to those regions where information could be gathered on the Normans, who were so dangerous and who had inflicted, during his reign, such sufferings on his island. The voyages of Othere and Wulfstan must be compared with the observations made by the learned king about Germany — then we shall understand not only his scholarly interest, but also perhaps his sensible desire to familiarise himself with the forces in a world anything but stable and peaceful. Wulfstan's report appeared as an appendix to Orosius' chronicle which was translated from Latin into Anglo-Saxon, and it was quite comprehensive according to the notions of the time. Compared with the results of the archaeological excavations it gives a fairly good picture of the different ways of life of these Baltic tribes east of the mouth of the Vistula. In addition, it provides sufficiently accurate data about their harbour of Truso.¹⁵

Next, in chronological order, comes the account of an Arab-Jewish traveller, at the same time merchant and diplomat, as was the custom in those days. It is that of Ibrahim Ibn Jakub (written about 973) who travelled through western Europe, from the Adriatic to the Baltic Sea, towards the region of Wismar. In this account several regions are described of the Poles, Czechs, and other Western Slavs, of which accurate and quite valuable information is given. We also find there a brief passage relating to the *brus*, *i.e.* the Old Prussians. This passage corresponds to some data provided by Wulfstan (about the valour of the Old Prussians, their political organization according to the clan system, *i.e.* the lack of a concentration of power, etc.). Ibrahim's description remains in some measure an isolated example, because the majority of Arab travellers approached the peoples of north-eastern Europe from the east, following the great trade route of the Volga and generally managing to get as far as the stretch of the Volga inhabited by the Bolgars.

Coming back once more to the statements about the Aists, or Balts, let us note from a methodological point of view that it is invariably in times of violent upheaval that geographical and, partly, political curiosity is focussed on these distant shores. Therefore it may be assumed that to a considerable extent this interest was due to the superior intelligence of the great leaders of those times. On the other hand, it is sufficiently evident that the peripheral situation of these peoples both with regard to the Eastern and the Western world becomes one of the most characteristic factors in their history, and explains their late Christianisation among other phenomena.

Passing over the intervening centuries, we must further mention one of the most notable of the mediaeval chronicles, *viz.* the *Gesta Ham-*

maburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum written between 1072 and 1076 by Adam of Bremen. Apart from the Nordic texts, this is the first one to deal in a direct way with the Latvians as well as with the Old Prussians, *i.e.* with the Balts in their own coast-land. As is pointed out by Schmeidler in his excellent commentary, Adam's chronicle had the advantage of being written not only by a person very cultured according to the standards of those times, *i.e.* by one who had a good literary knowledge of geography, but who had also many chances of enhancing his learning with the help of information obtained by keeping up a lively contact with travellers, merchants, and soldiers, and by his conversations with Sven Estridsen, King of the Danes. This contact is of decisive importance when the eastern Baltic is dealt with, for literary knowledge in this respect, as we have seen, was either of little use or it induced the writer to roam in the nebulous spheres of legend; in these spheres even Adam roams, especially in his last chapter *Descriptio insularum aquilonis*. The eastern Baltic has for Adam the qualities of a territory yet to be discovered, because it was an area which had only then been partially explored due to the many dangers in the form of storms and pirates (*incipiti demum iactura ventorum ac pyratorum*¹⁶). In view of its inaccessibility there are comparatively few precise geographical data to be obtained from his account. Indeed, the Baltic Sea appears to him as a "gulf of indefinable length", with a great many islands, very vague in their outline and populated by "savage barbarians". This is reminiscent of Mela:¹⁷ "Beyond the Elbe the large Gulf of Danzig is strewn with great and small islands (. . . *magnis parvisque insulis refertus est*)." In addition, a "long arm of the sea" connects it to the Black Sea — evidently confused memories of the Viking route to Constantinople;¹⁸ on the opposite side it washes the shores of the fabulous realms of the Amazons, the Cynocephali, the Anthropophagi, etc. Before speaking of Scandinavia — that, too, an island — and of the territories populated by Finnish tribes, Adam mentions the "islands" of *Churland*, *Aestland* and *Samland*,¹⁹ situated towards the Russian and the Polish territories, not far from the entirely legendary parts mentioned above. The Baltic peoples, thus delineated, are represented either as having taken refuge in out-of-the-way places, difficult of access, and jealously defending their spiritual patrimony (the Old Prussians), or as savage aggressors (the Kurs). The passages yielding information about the Old Prussians, about their loyalty, their high standard of civilization comparable to that of western Europe, about their tenacious and jealous religious-pagan conservatism, their natural abilities (*homines multis naturalibus bonis praediti*;²⁰ cf. the brilliant characterization of the Old Prussians by Bartholomaeus in the 13th century) have already been commented upon innumerable times and therefore need not be quoted

here. Only that part which deals with the Kurs has not been interpreted so far; Schmeidler very wisely refrains from doing so. Hence it might be worth trying briefly to comment upon it here. The tenor of this particular passage²¹ is as follows: "Among the islands of the Eastern Baltic there are several more towards the interior which are under Swedish (*svenoni*) rule; the largest one among them is called *Curlandia* and it is at a distance of an 8 days' journey; its population is most ruthless and all other tribes avoid it because the people are too much addicted to idolatry; much gold and the best horses are to be found there. Their houses are filled with objects pertaining to their practice of necromancy and the magic arts. From all parts of the world, especially from Spain and Greece, people come to consult their deities for prophecies. We are convinced that the island mentioned in *The Life of St. Ansgar* belongs to the Kurs and pays tribute to the Swedes. At present a church has been built there with the help of a merchant, prompted to such action by the many gifts received from the Danish King. The King himself, who joyfully confides in God, told me all this." This, as may be seen, is one of the most interesting ancient testimonies about the past of the Latvians and of the Balts in general. On the one hand, it is still wrapped in legendary mist—it could not be otherwise; on the other hand, it contains some valuable particulars such as might have been narrated to the Danish King by eye-witnesses. Most important are those parts of the information which deal with the fighting against the Swedes, the fierce character of the Kur pirates and their riches—a result of their piratic exploits (cf. Adam;²² also Rimbert's account, and the Rhymed Chronicle²³); with their magnificent horses which, on the evidence of excavated material, may further be assumed to have had something to do with certain cults; with the adherence of the Kurs and of the Old Prussians to their ancient religion. As regards Kurland (*Kurzeme*), passages from Bartholomaeus Anglicus (13th century), De Lannoy (15th century), Guagnini (16th century), Einhorn (17th century), ought also to be remembered. Apart from the elementary error of considering Kurland an island, doubts are raised by the passage referring to the enormous importance of some place of worship of their own of world-wide fame.

The chroniclers and geographers of the following, *i.e.* the 12th century are analysed in chapter IV which deals with the problems of the Viking expansion. Saxo Grammaticus, not to speak of his minor precursors and successors, has found his appropriate place there, as has Idrisi who is so closely linked with the Norman tradition.²⁴

Now let us say a few words regarding the Byzantine sources. They are of great importance as far as the Balkans and southern Russia are

concerned, but do not, unfortunately, extend as far as the Baltic peoples. It would be hazardous to compile a history of the ancient Slavs not knowing the Byzantine sources, but for the Balts the "Slav barrier" is insuperable. How much, for that matter, would we appreciate some allusion similar to the account by Constantine Porphyrogenitus of the preparations made in the Dnieper region by the Russian tribes to start on a trading expedition on that waterway; how elucidating would such an observation be on the Balts, remembering his remarks on the Petcheniagi, etc! In the two great publications by Stritter²⁵ and in that by Dieterich, the name of the Baltic peoples appears but seldom, nor do these brief notes add anything of importance to our knowledge. Archaeology has produced only few and sporadic finds of Byzantine coins and relics in the Baltic countries. One single Byzantine text, that of the chronicler Simocatta (7th century), has tried to find its way, quite erroneously, into Baltic historiography. It relates the arrival, at the court of the Emperor Mauritius in Thrace, of three Slav envoys from the shores of the "Western Ocean" (cf. also Mela's legendary account²⁶). These messengers carried no arms having only lyres with them (let us recall the Novgorod legends of Sadko), which fact they explained by their not being accustomed to the usages of war.²⁷ Some historians of the romantic era who viewed everything through the coloured prism of their period were inclined to take them for Slavs or Balts, *i.e.* Old Prussians, on their way from their "blissful" lands, while the modern historians, being much more sceptical, suspect these people to have been simply spies from the neighbouring regions of Thrace.

The Arab writers, who are generally very keen and intelligent observers, have proved of immense value on account of their descriptions of the peoples of southern Russia, *e.g.* of the Khazars, the Bolgars along the Volga, and of the Slav tribes, because in many cases they are the only documents available of those centuries. Another account, that by Ibn Fadlan, of the Rus and of the Bolgars, approaches, as far as its expressiveness and visionary power are concerned, the chronicles of H. Cortes and of Bernal Diaz del Castillo which give a picture of an entirely new world as seen for the first time. However, the information about the Balts is extremely poor, for none of the Arab travellers, not even Ibrahim Ibn Jakub, who visited the neighbouring regions, ever succeeded in getting as far as the countries themselves, *i.e.* they had not been able to cross the vast tracts peopled by Finns and Slavs, despite the fact that the trade with the East had developed in the Baltic region to a considerable extent, as may be gathered from the large number of oriental coins and objects found there. The development of Arab historiography kept pace with the progress of commercial activity in the 9th



Map 7. The distribution of the Balts in the early Roman period (from the Birth of Christ to 200 A.D.). On the map is shown the greatest extension of the territories occupied by the Balts before the beginning of the Slav expansion. The data are based on archaeological research which in these eastern regions, however, is still rather inadequate. On the whole, the distribution of the Baltic peoples as shown coincides with the statements of linguists concerning Baltic toponymy and the diffusion of the language (cf. map 4).

and 10th centuries. The geographers and travellers who wrote about southern and central Russia and about the Volga regions—the realm of the Bolgars—are well known. The most prominent of them were: Ibn Khordadbeh (about 850), Al-Balkhi (about 921), Al-Istakhri (about 950), Ibn Hauqal (about 977), Al-Maqdisi or Muqaddasi (about 985), Al-Bakri (about 1050), Al-Mas'udi (10th century), and Idrisi (1154); the epigones of the 13th and 14th centuries, important as compilers of the material collected by their predecessors, were: Ibn Sa'id, Kazwini, Ibn-Jakut, El-Vardi or Virdi, Abu'l Feda and others. Of these, Idrisi occupies a special position from the Baltic point of view,

and is therefore considered at greater length in the chapter on the Vikings and the Latvians, being linked with the Norman tradition.

The routes of oriental trade are depicted in broad, if somewhat vague, lines by the Persian Ibn Khordadbeh (who wrote in Arabic); Ibrahim Ibn Jakub, on his part, confirms this outline. The descriptions by Ibn Fadlan and by Mas'udi are lengthy concerning the Rus and the Slavs, but devoid of information about the Balts. Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hauqal, according to the latest findings of the orientalists, were the elaborators of a literary tradition, *i.e.* of the original text of Al-Balkhi; in their writings they give a description of the Slav territories adjoining, in their northwestern parts, the regions which must be supposed to have been populated by the Balts. Thus, we arrive at the supposition and suspicion that behind the vague proper names may be hidden some Baltic people, *e.g.* the Lithuanians or the eastern Latvians. Such a view is held by several scholars, *e.g.* by Saveliev (Harkavy, on the contrary, denies it), by the French translators of Mas'udi, and by some Latvian scholars (*cf.* also the attempt made by Frähn to interpret the well-known text of Ibn Hauqal). It is not possible to go into the details of this somewhat complicated and uncertain problem here on account of the diacritical marks of the Arabic letters. Hence we shall limit ourselves to quoting from the work *Hudud-al-Alam* of an anonymous Persian of the 10th century,²⁸ who, when writing, "doubtless had before him a copy either of Al-Balkhi's or of Istakhri's works" (Bartold). He writes about the "saqlab", *i.e.* the Slavs, in the following manner: they dwell in the thickest woods, and sow only millet; they have plenty of honey from which they make mead, and have herds of swine; they burn their dead, and worship the sun; they have several stringed instruments; in the winter they live in underground cellars, and they have many fortified sites, etc. A description follows of the Rus who, he says, live in the northern wilderness; they are a wicked, quarrelsome, intolerant, and warlike people; they will not reveal their conditions of life, and they are said to kill every foreigner who tries to enter their territory. This last observation might be compared with the behaviour of the Old Prussians as described in the Latin texts dealing with the martyrdom of St. Adalbert (997).

In recent years another branch of Arab geography, *viz.* cartography, has been brought to light by geographers and orientalists. Long before Idrisi, who in a certain manner was still under the influence of Ptolemy, this art appears, outside the Ptolemaic tradition, in the work of the same Al-Balkhi from whom it was handed down, in the compilations of Al-Istakhri and Ibn-Hauqal, to Muqaddasi, the most notable of the cartographers. As regards the Baltic, these maps, which have been collected



Map 8. The territory of the Balts during the second half of the Middle Iron Age (600—700 A.D.). In their expanding movement towards the north and east, the Slavs overlapped the eastern Baltic regions, isolating separate smaller Baltic remnants.

by K. Miller and others, do not reveal anything of importance; we find on them the names: *rus*, *uarank* (Northmen), and *sakaliba* (Slavs)—occasionally all the three names are given together, as in Al-Kashgari's atlas of 1074.

The whole of this rather foggy information of the above Arab geographers, if examined by the comparative method of criticism, may, for all that, throw some light upon the ancient homeland of the Balts, especially on its eastern regions.

In conclusion, it may prove useful to delineate—difficult and dubious though this task will be—the major phases of the East European trade during the first millennium after Christ, and to visualize the great trade routes which, on the one hand, connected the Baltic to the west, and, on the other hand, provided access to the Russian plain and to the great trading centres in the Near East. The phases, more or less clearly definable and discernible, are as follows: (1) the period of the Roman Empire until the 3rd century after Christ; (2) the period of the Great Migration and of the disturbance of the balance of power from the 4th to the 9th centuries; (3) the period of the commercial relations of the 9th and 10th centuries, resulting from the Nordic expansion and the Arab commercial

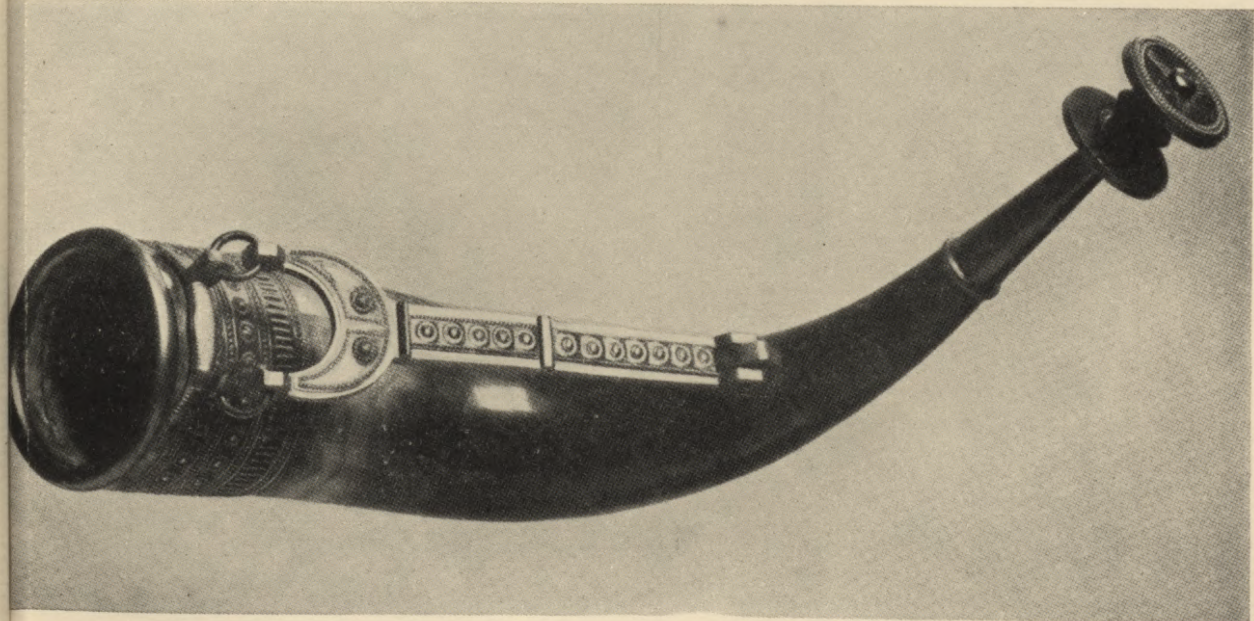
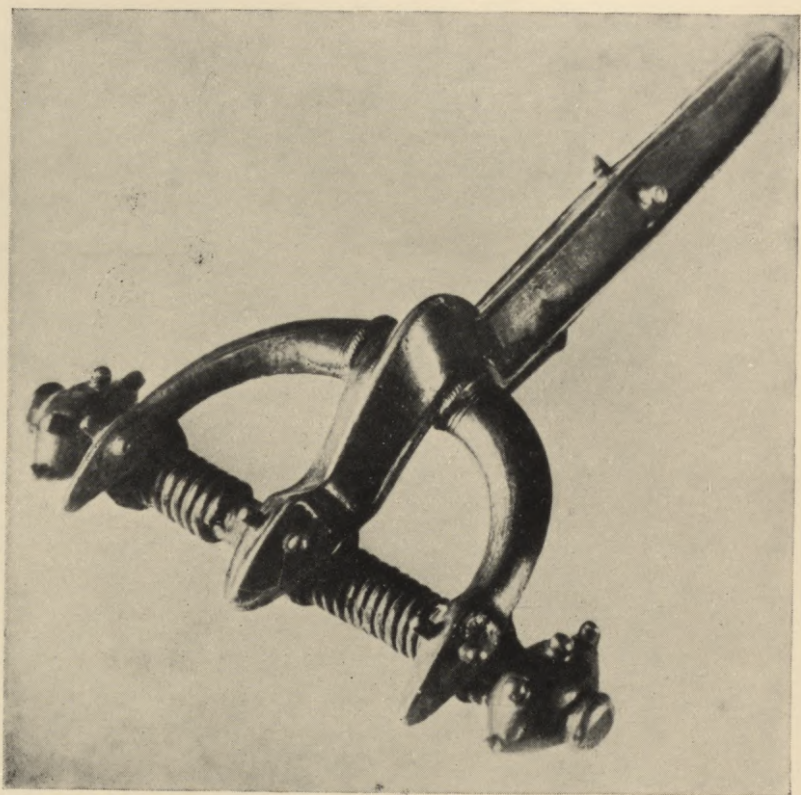
traffic; (4) the period of the decline of the eastern trade and the decline of Nordic expansion which occurred simultaneously with the growth of Russian power in the 11th and 12th centuries.

With regard to the first period, it is almost exclusively archaeology which has its say here. Systematic research in this field from the early studies onward up to the Second Archaeological Congress in Rīga (1931) [F. Balodis' book *Det äldsta Lettland* (1940),²⁹ and lastly, O. Kunkel's article *Die Ostsee* (1942)¹], show that we are able not only to enumerate the objects—few in number—or commodities which were conveyed in both directions (bronze and glass vessels, pearls, various utensils, etc. from the Mediterranean; and hides, amber and probably also some raw material like wax, honey, herrings, etc. from the Baltic), but they throw some light on the trade routes used, one of the best known being the "amber route".³⁰

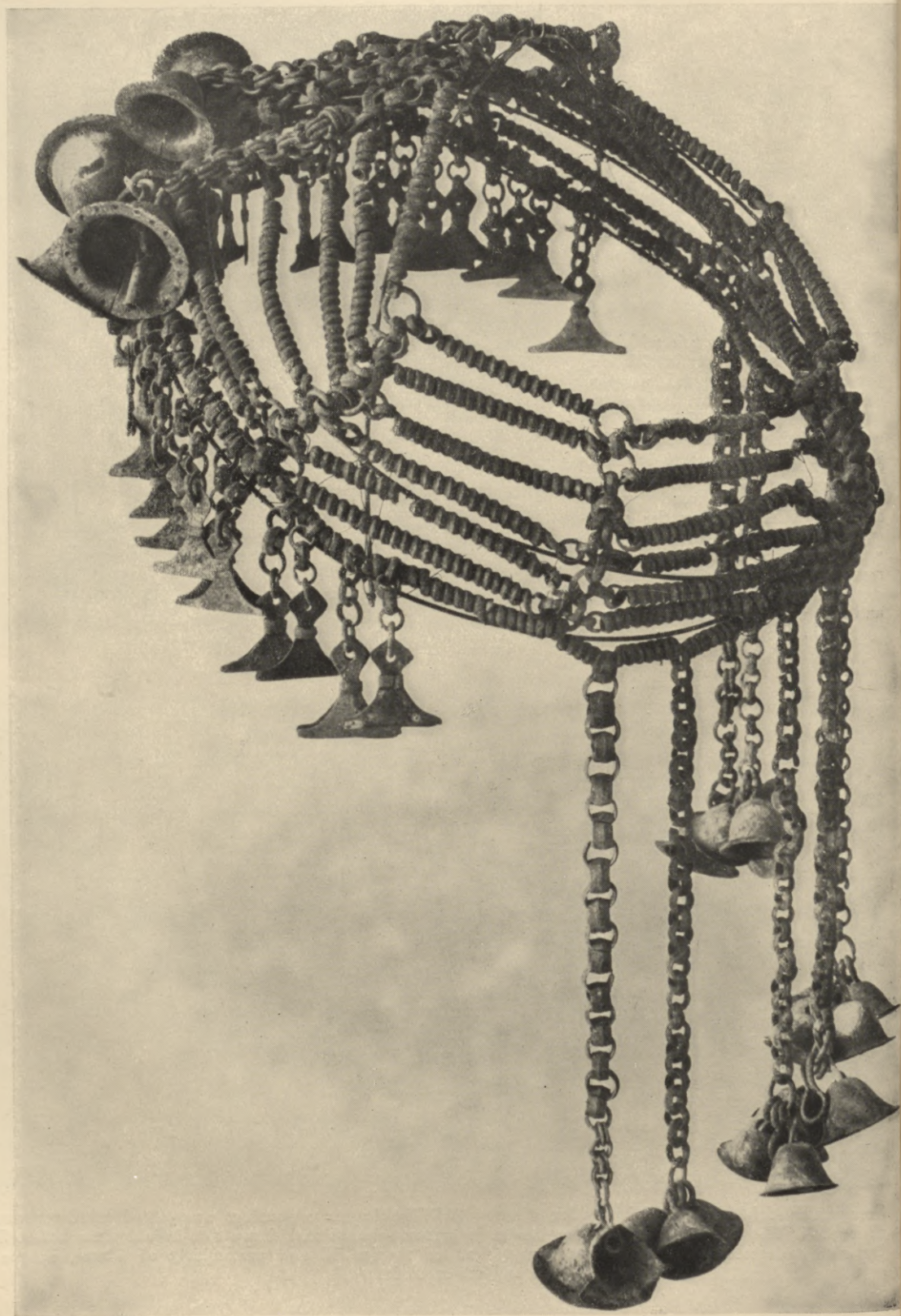
Still more uncertain and vague is the information available in connection with the vast migration, lasting through centuries, whose sweeping effect was so great as to evoke an almost prehistoric vision of "masses of Slav tribes growing into a flood that crushed the boundaries of their original homeland"—an extremely significant fact for the Baltic countries. For these centuries, too, only archaeology is able to provide an explanation for the decline of the traffic between the Mediterranean and the Baltic sphere of civilization; there is, however, a void between the archaeological discoveries referring to the last phase of the Great Migration and those which point to the early times of the Vikings. As far as the Baltic area is concerned, some reference to commercial relations may be found in F. Balodis' work.²⁹

The trade between the North and the East is dealt with in chapter IV. It is the geographical aspect of this problem that we wish to present here. Both waterways, one leading to the Caspian and the other to the Black Sea, had the lakes Ladoga and Ilmen as their points of departure, these two lakes being connected to the Gulf of Finland by way of the Neva and other minor rivers. This access to the Baltic Sea from the Russian rivers was controlled by the Swedes until the Northern War, *i.e.* until the beginning of the 18th century. It may therefore be regarded as a logical consequence that the solution to the problem of a Russian access to the Baltic Sea was found and fixed in this particular corner by the foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703. The separate stages and trading centres, established at wide intervals on the banks of the first waterway, were, from the beginning of the 8th century, the following: the fortresses of Old-Ladoga and Novgorod (*Aldagen* and *Holmgård*, in the Nordic sagas), from there, across the portages between the rivers, the boats were trailed over so-called "*voloki*"; then the route passed Biarmi (Biarm-

Silver cross-bow brooch with ends shaped like animal heads (7th century A.D.). This brooch is a typical example of ornamental form of the Middle Iron Age in Kursa and has originated in the Klaipėda region. The motif of the animal head has been derived from Scandinavian sources, but is here greatly stylized and simplified. During the subsequent centuries this form of brooch was further developed in several regions, but in the process it lost its expressiveness by becoming larger and flatter. It disappeared entirely in the 10th century.



Semigallian drinking-horn of the 8th century A.D. The bronze mountings are plated with ornamented silver foil. The upper portion of the handle is crescent-shaped and shows two in-laid glass beads. Similar richly decorated drinking-horns are typical of Semigalia, and particularly of Kursa, in the 8th and 9th centuries A.D.



Ornamental head-dress of a Letgallian woman of the 7th/8th centuries. The characteristic head-dress of the Letgallian woman was a wreath consisting of rows of bronze spirals. The illustration shows a sample of such head-dress, with particularly rich adornments of pendants and little bells

land), known particularly for its market of hides and silver, and ran on to Bolgara in the region of present-day Kazan which was an important place of trans-shipment; from there down the Volga to Itil near the Astrakhan of today, and, finally, across the Caspian Sea to Armenia, Persia and Turkestan.

The most conspicuous trade centres on the second, *i. e.* the Dnieper traffic route, besides Novgorod, were the following: Smolensk, the capital of the Kriviches, the eastern neighbours of the Latvians, Liubech, Kiev, which, according to Thietmar, had in the early 11th century as many as 400 churches and 8 market-places, and, lastly, Constantinople. The Daugava route as far as Polotsk, the second largest centre of the Kriviches, was also quite important, as is clearly shown by the fights which took place around, or on account of, the castles of Koknese and Jersika.

Thus, the inter-continental situation of the eastern Baltic littoral becomes clearly delineated; it was a target for incursions and for looting on the part of the Scandinavians who were a strong expanding element in those times. They also had aspirations of a political nature. However, it has never been a key-position of the first order, like the mouth of the river Neva, thus explaining why Estonia and her islands, being much nearer to the Gulf of Finland, are rather more frequently mentioned in the Nordic sources than the coast of Kurland (Kurzeme) or the mouth of the river Daugava, which fact is perhaps, in part also a result of the obvious necessity of keeping at bay the Estonian pirates who were a constant threat to the security of the traffic to Sweden. The trade routes through the eastern Baltic coastland, which by about 1000 A. D. was already populated by Latvians, have been outlined by F. Balodis.³¹ This network of lines of communication which at first sight strikes the eye as curiously, and fatally, reminiscent of the railway-network of modern Latvia, emphasizes the significance of this country for transit trade. The two main directions were: firstly, that of the Daugava water-way towards Koknese—Jersika—Vitebsk—Polotsk and further on; secondly, that which came—partly by water and partly by land—from Semigallia (Zemgale)—Lithuania—Old Prussia etc., passing through Livonia (Vidzeme) towards the north-east and reaching the present-day boundary of Estonia where it divided into two branches, one leading on towards the future Dorpat (Tartu), and the other turning off in the direction of Pskov. These two great traffic routes intersected at right angles on the banks of the Daugava at a place a few miles distant from Riga, where, quite recently, a fortified hill-site was discovered, excavated by Latvian archaeologists, and called Daugmale. The road-network in the coastal districts of Kurland (Kurzeme) was rather dense, which is quite natural considering the partiality of the Kurs for the shipping trade

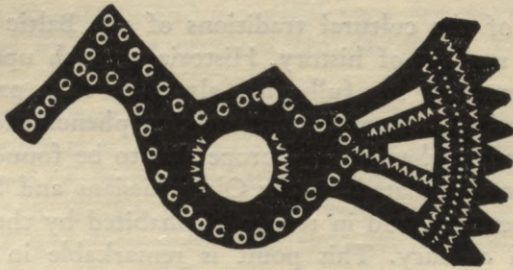
and for piratic exploits. The run of the second great traffic route, which has been traced by Latvian archaeologists, illustrates the communication of the eastern Baltic with the Vistula basin and the adjacent territories. These relations have been described by W. Heyd,³² with the aid of very scanty historical documents covering the following centuries.

As far as the commercial significance of these hazardous enterprises and long journeys is concerned, there exist several testimonies, especially by Arab geographers, which have been collected and compiled with extraordinary patience by G. Jacob.³³ In order to get some idea of the character of these accounts, let us quote from that of Ibn Khordadbeh; the passage refers to some Russian merchants who belong to the Slav people: "From remote countries they bring furs of beaver and black fox, as well as sabres, to the shores of the *rum* (Black Sea) where they give a tithe to the Byzantine emperor. They also go by the Slav river (Volga) and reach the capital (Itil) of the Khazars, where they pay their tithe to the king of that country. From there they set out on the Caspian Sea and go ashore wherever they like . . . occasionally conveying their commodities on camels to Bagdad."

Several Arab writers even enumerate the commodities; apart from hides and furs which for so many centuries have been an international trade article of the first order,³⁴ mention is made of Slav slaves (in part castrated for employment in harems—a fine page, indeed, from the history of human civilisation!), of amber, weapons, some foodstuffs, also of wax, honey, etc. From the East came precious textiles, various metal objects, *e. g.* looking-glasses, figurines, glass beads, medicaments, etc. In Gotland and Sweden, archaeology has brought to light, among other objects, large numbers of Arab dirhems; other remains have been excavated in large numbers in Latvian soil, and in several places even miniature scales for weighing coins have been found. A general outline of all these problems in relation to the Latvian territory is given by F. Balodis.³⁵

In conclusion, it must be pointed out that trade relations also developed between the numerous tribes differing in language and even in levels of civilisation, especially among those who populated the southern parts of Russia and the basin of the Middle Volga. Here, too, the Arab chroniclers are useful as they give us further information about this "dumb trade". For other information reference can be made to the article written by Henning.³⁴ In the Baltic coastland and in the Daugava basin, of course, trade relations were handled differently. Some idea of these may be formed by reading the accounts from historical sources of the intercourse which existed between the Vikings and the Latvians, and between the Rus and the Latvians.

All this scattered and fragmentary information confirms and completes the material available on the past of the people, and the country of Latvia, from its early history. The geographical position of the Baltic helped the Latvians to secure a permanent home there, and the existing waterways involved them in a lively trade. From the beginning of the first millennium after Christ, this people, equal in culture to the rest of their western neighbours, came into contact, for better or for worse, with Scandinavia. The Danes and the Swedes were attracted by the wealth of Latvia, of which both their own accounts and descriptions, and the abundance of relics found in the ancient Latvian grave-sites, give ample evidence.



*

* Bronze pendant of the 11th century A.D. Varied bird- and animal-shaped pendants developed in ornamental art under oriental, and, especially, East Finnish influence, and were widely diffused in the Liv region. Yet they are also to be met with in Latvian ornament after the 11th century.



III

THE INDO-EUROPEAN TRADITION

The antiquity of the cultural traditions of the Baltic peoples is well known to every student of history. Historians touch upon the destinies of these peoples more or less fully, but always as if in passing. They are unanimous in stating at least the one striking phenomenon, i.e. that the ultimate shelter of heathenism in Europe was to be found in the eastern Baltic, in territory populated by the Old Prussians and by the Latvians up to the 13th century, and in territory inhabited by the Lithuanians as late as the 14th century. This point is remarkable in itself, and the explanation of it is to be expected from those quarters where the research of the history of these nations has been done. Here we will give a short and exact survey of this traditional material; of how it has been preserved throughout the many centuries and, to a certain extent, during the more recent times by the still extant Baltic peoples: the Lithuanians and the Latvians. First we must study the results of research in both archaeology and linguistics, as well as in folklore. The reader will find in this chapter many quotations from and frequent reference to works by authorities of acknowledged repute. Our task will consist in arranging and in adapting the essential conclusions of these prominent men of science to the general purpose of this work.

* Ornament of a shawl-selvaqe of the 11th or 12th century A.D. A three-coloured selvaqe. The elements of the ornament consist of swastika motifs which, alternately placed, fill trapezoid areas. The spaces between them are filled with an angular meander ornament. The basic element of composition of this ornamental strip is the square placed diagonally, the selvaqe pattern representing but a narrow cut of the ornamental design. The elements of this composition and its peculiar shape are characteristic of the geometrical ornament of European early mediaeval textile art. The earlier samples of this art are from Scandinavia. This manner of textile decoration is also to be met with in European folk-art of the recent past, having survived up to the present time in its unadulterated original form in the ornaments of Latvian peasant textile art. Samples of geometrical woven ornament appeared in Latvia in the 11th century in a fully developed form which indicates some previous period of evolution.

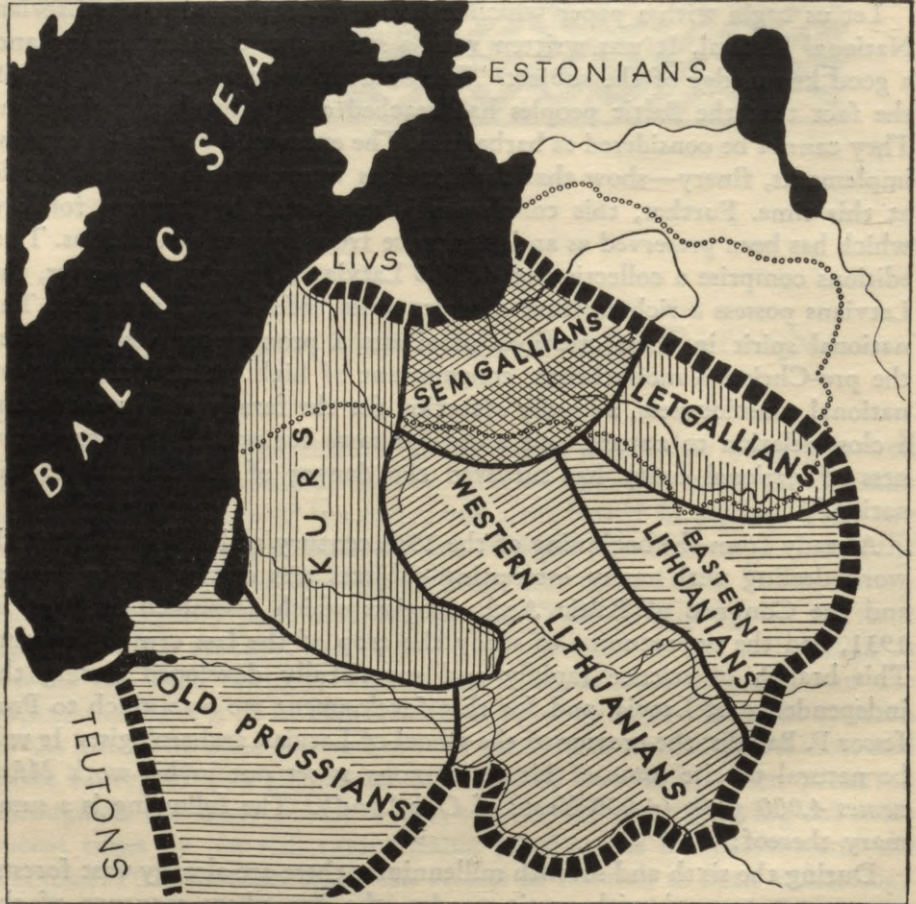
Let us begin with a paper which in 1936 was dedicated to the Latvian National Festival. It was written with a sympathetic understanding and a good knowledge of the subject. "The excavations give clear evidence of the fact that the Baltic peoples had reached a high level of civilisation. They cannot be considered as barbarians. The excavated objects—weapons, implements, finery—show that the Latvians were a well-advanced people at this time. Further, this conclusion is supported by Latvian folklore which has been preserved as an inheritance from bygone generations. Two editions comprise a collection of 60,000 Latvian folksongs. Moreover, the Latvians possess a rich treasure of epics, tales, riddles, and proverbs. The national spirit in these creations manifests a pronounced striving after the pre-Christian monotheism, concomitant of high moral ideals, a clear national consciousness, a kindly affection for the family and its members, a close relation to nature, and a dutiful taste for work. The consciousness of national unity has survived the danger of subjugation of the nation."

Already from the beginning of the 19th century archaeological research work dealing with many interesting subjects was carried on in Latvia, and the Congress of Baltic Archaeologists which assembled in Riga in 1931, had the opportunity to study the crop of the last century's work. This branch of science rapidly and successfully developed during the independence of Latvia, and for this development we owe much to Professor F. Balodis, the creator of the school of Latvian archaeologists. It will be natural to cite some of his conclusions as set out in his work *Mūsu zemes 4,000 gadu* (4,000 Years of Our Land).¹ The following is a summary thereof:

During the sixth and seventh millenniums there are already vast forests, was as yet covered with arctic tundra, the immediate sequence of the Glacial Period.

During the sixth and seventh millennium there are already vast forests, containing pines and birches. At this time there appeared the first tribes of the Middle Stone Age: hunters and primitive fishermen with bone and horn implements.

In the course of the Neolithic Age (4000—1500 B.C.) a new ethnical wave poured over the territory. It may have been the Finnish-Ugrian tribes. They pushed northwards the settlements of the primordial inhabitants (Lapps, Samoyeds, etc.). The newcomers already possessed stone weapons and bone implements. Their weapons were ornamented. These tribes expanded over a very wide area: in the west they reached the mouth of Vistula, in the north Norway, in the east the Yenisey in Siberia, but in the south they reached the junction of the Vistula and the Bug and the source of the Don. They occupied all those territories which are now



Map 9. The Baltic tribes in the late Roman period (200—400 A.D.). The territory populated by the Baltic peoples was of a homogeneous character but as early as in the late Roman period separate local districts existed in which different funeral traditions and local peculiarities in ornament, weapons, and tools prevailed. In Latvia there were four such distinct districts corresponding to the territories inhabited by the Kurs, Semigallians, Letgallians, and Livs respectively.

the object of our investigation, namely: eastern Prussia, northern Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, a part of Finland, and the middle and north of Russia. As Tacitus in his work *Germania* points out, they also hunt and fish. Their only domestic animal is the dog. In Latvia their primitive settlements have been found in many places, particularly near lakes and rivers.

About 2000 B.C. the eastern Baltic areas, which were covered with woods and marshes, were invaded by a new tribe. This tribe proceeded

partly to eastern Prussia, partly to the Lielupe plain, and partly to the Vilna district. These are the Baltic peoples; in Latvia the Latvians. In these areas they are the first tillers of the fields. Like the rest of the Indo-Europeans, they are acquainted with Cord pottery and weapons, such as battle-axes and heavy, oaken cudgels. They no longer live near water, but dwell dispersed in elevated places, having chosen drier soil. They erect square buildings with an ante-room and one or two hearths. Their implements of tillage, as well as the remains of oxen, goats, pigs, horses and carbonized grains clearly show that their principal occupation was husbandry.

The subsequent stages described by the archaeologists will be dealt with, so far as is necessary, in the next chapters.

A subtle and clear survey of the historical development of the Latvian language among the Baltic languages has been given by Professor G. Devoto.² About 2000 B.C. the Indo-European people split and dispersed; some groups that were still faithful to their primaeval instincts went to the south and to the west, as well as to the east. The ancient Baltic tribes belong to the most stable part of the people and suffer less from internal splitting. In the west they bordered on the Germanic peoples, in the south-east on the Slavs, and probably in the south-west they bordered on the Illyrians, coming into early contact with some of the Finnish-Ugrian tribes.

We do not know exactly when they first arrived at the sea. According to the chronology of V. Pisani *k* changes into *s* (Latvian *simts*—Latin *centum*) in the Baltic languages about 1500 B.C.; the demarcation of the Baltic and Slavonic world becomes stronger yet in the course of subsequent changes. The first millennium in which the west is preponderant is followed by the second millennium (700 B.C.—300 A.D.) in which the east predominates.

In the first part of this period archaeology has succeeded in tracing a northward expansion of the Neolithic civilisation of the Cord pottery (about 2000 B.C.) up to the banks of the Daugava. The following Bronze civilisation, which extends to the south from the Daugava up to eastern Prussia, surely can be already considered as Baltic. In the course of the first centuries of the Christian era there streamed northwards across the Daugava two waves of Baltic tribes. One of the waves consisted of Latvian tribes who moved in an eastern direction. A characteristic of these tribes in their new surroundings was their erection of barrows covered with stones. About 600 A.D. in the region of the Kurs they adopt a new funeral rite: they burn their dead.

Thus, during the first centuries of the Christian era the Baltic period ends in the formation of small units, which become separate tribes

susceptible to certain innovations and transigrations that lead to the permanent settlement of the Baltic peoples during the 8th century.

According to the investigations by the Lithuanian linguist K. Buga and others, and considering proper names and borrowings from other languages, it must be concluded that up to the 8th century the language of the Latvian tribes, as regards consonants, shows little difference from that of the Lithuanian. On the other hand, the centuries between the 9th and the 12th produced typical Latvian features. The characteristic discrepancy between both languages in the main, apart from the vocabulary, is the pronunciation of short vowels in the last syllables of endings (Latvian *luogs*, Lithuanian *langas*), the change of *k* and *g* into *ts* and *dz* before short vowels (*kēlias—ceļš*; *gintaras—dzintars*), whereas the softening of consonants before *j*, *n*, *l*, *r* is characteristic of the Lithuanian and Slavonic languages. Some of these phenomena including also the mutation of *e* under the influence of the vowels following it (*Umlaut*), account for, according to J. Endzelins, "the vivacious and agile temper of the Latvians", which corresponds to Meillet's observations that "the language changes most in cases where it is spoken by an active and mobile people with propensities to innovations." V. Kiparsky, on the other hand, compares the relation between the Latvian and the Lithuanian languages with that between "a Romance language and Latin". Generally speaking, the Lithuanian and the Latvian languages have more faithfully than any other Indo-European language preserved the primordial phonetic picture, in particular the Lithuanian with the "queer archaism" of its phonetic.

The early investigations of the Latvian language were completed by the publication of two monumental works. These are *Lettische Grammatik* (Latvian Grammar) by J. Endzelins,³ the founder of modern Baltic philology, and *Lettisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Latvian-German Dictionary), I—IV with Supplements, by K. Mühlenbachs and J. Endzelins.⁴

In the field of Latvian mythology the first authority was Professor P. Šmits.⁵ He based his work on the genetic development of the Indo-European mythology, analysing the beginnings of the Latvian mythology, which can be reconstructed from the ancient folksongs. Though changed and modified by later influences, the elements are still discernible, and may be singled out by means of comparative methods developed in the course of the last two centuries. In P. Šmits's general survey we read: "Thus we are able to observe that certain myths originating in the Indo-European primaeval people have been preserved among the Latvians throughout the centuries. But, since nothing in this world is stagnant, it must be admitted that the Latvian mythology has altered as well. Many ancient beliefs have been forgotten and many others have supervened. Every new current of civilisation will have brought along new views

on life and new myths. Since the Latvians had more connections with the outer world than the Lithuanians, it may be assumed that the latter have preserved the myths of their distant ancestors in a purer form, but the Latvian traditions in their turn are ample and complete." In his conclusions P. Šmits compares the similar motifs in the three Baltic mythologies. All three peoples have in common only God: Latvian—*Dievs*, Lithuanian—*Dievas*, Old Prussian—*Deivas*; and Latvian—*Pērkons*, Lithuanian—*Perkunas*, Old Prussian—*Percunis*; possibly also *Dieva dēli* (God's sons) and *Saules meitas* (Sun's daughters) are to be referred back to the Indo-European primitive people. Besides, there is a closer relation with the Lithuanian deities, e.g. Latvian—*Laima*, *Austra*, Lithuanian—*Aušra*. Together with *burtnieki*, i.e. interpreters or priests, Latvians have in common with the Lithuanians *vilkači* (werewolves), *raganas* (witches), and *lauvas* (elves). This proves, as the facts in linguistics and history do, that of all the three Baltic peoples the Old Prussians were the first to separate, while the Latvians and the Lithuanians still stayed together for some time.

A general comparative analysis of Baltic mythology can be found in the fundamental work covering 13 volumes: *The Mythology of All Races*.⁶ It is the third volume, published in 1918, that contains the Baltic mythology together with the mythologies of the Celts and the Slavs. The author L. H. Gray, who is also editor of the whole work, has pointed to the ancient origin of the race. He analyses the Baltic myths, building up his theories on somewhat antiquated material. He states that he has not been able to find anything but "a little more than some fragments of myths concerning the Cult of the Sun." On the other hand his comparison with the Indian and Iranian mythologies is interesting, and both his conclusion and way of approaching his problem methodically are important: "These are only miserable and sparse remnants of a vanished great mythology, but though they are only fragmentary, their value is great. They help to explain the migrations of some branches of our Indo-European race. They cast light and in their turn are illuminated by the distant Indian and Iranian mythologies; they reveal poetical images and richness of imagination that was characteristic of our race in its earliest stage of development. It shows how ridiculous and baseless were the accusations that this tribe consisted of cowards and rude materialists—though some superficial and biased thinkers try volubly to perceive the origins of religious thought just in these feelings. We must regret the scantiness of the remnants of the Baltic mythology, but we should not forget that we ought to be grateful and happy for the little that has been left."

The documentary evidence of history, apart from the folksongs, starts

at the end of the 12th century. At the beginning of the 14th century Dusburg writes: "The Old Prussians wrongly worshipped as a deity the whole creation: the sun, the moon, the stars, the thunder and quadrupeds down to the toad." The Riga provincial statutes of 1428 treat of many primitive superstitions of the people. It mentions thunder as their God (*... a tonitruo, quod deum suum appellant ... infelicem suam expectant felicitatem*).

A Jesuit pater in 1613 writes: "They, *i.e.* the Latvians, have various gods: one for Heaven, one for Earth, to whom many others are subordinated, deities of fishing, of the fields, of the gardens, of animals, horses, cows..." At the beginning of the same century Einhorn discussed this subject in several of his treatises, in which he says: "The Latvians worshipped the sun, the moon, the thunder, the lightning, and the winds; at the same time they had still other gods and goddesses, such as the Mother of the Sea invoked by seamen, the Mother of the Fields worshipped by husbandmen, the Mother of the Woods invoked by hunters, the Mother of the Roads worshipped by the wayfarer, and the Mother of the Gardens invoked by women and housewives..." All this evidence, especially since the 16th century, makes together a fairly big volume, enabling W. Mannhardt to write his large book *Letto-Preussische Götterlehre*.⁷ The merit of this writer is that he has connected Baltic mythology, *i.e.* the Myths of the Sun, with the Indo-Iranian myths (*Die lettischen Sonnenmythen*).⁸

Up to our days there have been preserved such "truly primitive" basic motifs of Indo-European mythology that stand, as P. Šmits points out, "very near to monotheism"—"the God of Heaven", says Gray, "into whose hands pass the functions of the highest God of the Universe." But still there are various other personifications of the elementary forces: Thunder, Mother of the Earth, as well as "God's Sons" that can be compared with the Greek Dioscuri, then the Sun with her Daughters, and finally the three fates, the Latvian *Laima*, *Dēkla*, *Kārta*, comparable to the Greek *Parcae*, etc. Mention must be made, moreover, of two other conspicuous groups in Latvian mythological belief: the Cult of the Ancestral Spirits, which from the chronological point of view lasted longest,⁹ and the personification of elementary forces, *i.e.* the Mothers' Cult. As to the former cult, we shall read many a description of it in the subsequent chapters, descriptions that will bring back many ancient beliefs of other peoples. The latter cult should be considered with special care, as evidence is scanty as to whether the Old Prussians and the Lithuanians were aware of it. Einhorn, and not only he, listed quite a number of these "Mothers". Now, we have evidence of 70. The Estonians, neighbours of the Latvians,

had the same cult. Though, according to P. Šmits, this interesting phenomenon belongs to a later stage of development, *i.e.* to a time not only after the splitting of the Indo-Europeans, but also after the separation of the Baltic peoples, it should not be attributed to a too recent mythological phase. P. Šmits is of the opinion that it could be explained also by some external actuation, in this case by a Finnish-Ugrian influence from very ancient sources, the roots of which should be looked for in a primitive civilisation with a strongly developed matriarchate, or at least with filiation in the maternal line. A similar phenomenon, as P. Šmits maintains, may be observed with the Gauls, the Germanic peoples, the Picts, and the Basques.

A more detailed enumeration of these cults is contained in the Bull of Pope Innocent III (1199) where it is said that in Livonia "the honour due to God is rendered to common animals, to trees in leaf, to clear springs, to the green grass and to impure spirits." There are similar accounts referring to the Old Prussians and the Lithuanians. More extensive descriptions of the Latvians are to be found in Henricus de Lettis' Chronicle (13th century), and there are others dating from the beginning of the 16th century (S. Henning, and others). Similar statements are to be found in reports on church visitations from the 16th century onwards. However, such practices were prohibited in 1570 by the Rules of the Church of Kurland (Kirchenordnung).

From the 13th century onwards documents were written which tell us of the sites where the cult was practised; mention is made of *sacrum stagnum* (holy lake), of holy groves in 1476 and 1503. Similar evidence of various cults, and where they were practised, is to be found in descriptions written in the 17th and 18th centuries. The holy groves were not destroyed in Latvia until the 19th century, while single holy oaks, lime-trees, etc. still grow there.

Upon this we will conclude our observations of the peculiarities of Latvian mythology; there is still plenty of room for research here, and the material is abundant.

The Latvian folksongs, or the so-called *dainas*, which are the principal source of information about the mentality of our people, have with a few exceptions been transmitted by direct and verbal communication from one generation to the other, from the most ancient times to the period of their collection, which was begun during the 19th century and continued up to the present day. The folksongs are still sung today in their own tunes which have now been adapted to the simplified modern rhythm. The ethnographer would say: they are sung in the harmonisation of modern taste, though with some adequate and archaised turn, but sung

with love and rapture, illustrative of national unity, creating moments of noble spiritual elation, as proved by the great patriotic Song Festivals held periodically ever since 1873. A similar vitality of the ancient folklore may also be observed in some other regions of eastern Europe, but what confers on the Latvian tradition the mark of distinction is: (1) the tremendous number of folksongs in proportion to a population of less than two millions; (2) the very clear traces of ancient and even mythological remembrances expressed poetically; (3) the dominant importance of the folksongs in the formation and maintenance of national feelings throughout the many centuries. Seen in such a light this ancient national tradition becomes in its way a unique phenomenon. The manner in which the tradition was maintained, *i.e.* the transmission from mouth to mouth throughout the centuries, is not on the whole an isolated fact. We see the same in the *Kalevala* of the Finns, in the *Kalevipoeg* of the Estonians, which were collected at the same time as the Latvian *dainas*, and also in some branches of Russian epics which were collected in the vast regions of northern Russia.

There are an extraordinary number of these folksongs. K. Barons collected eight big volumes containing about 218,000 folksongs, of which 35,789 were original songs.¹⁰ The Archives of Latvian Folklore, in continuing his work, increased the number of published original songs up to 60,080, and collected about 800,000 variants. The fact that even in the first half of the 20th century Barons's work could be continued at such a pace proves that the creative tradition is still alive, and this finds an additional confirmation in the large number of variants. The tradition is evergreen; it has remained alive throughout the stormy centuries of Latvian history.

The collectors of this gigantic inheritance have divided the material into several sections. Let us quote K. Barons's own words with which he submits the results of his life's work to foreign readers:¹¹ "The subject of the Latvian folksongs is the material and spiritual life of the people itself; they always refer to some stage in life of some person, therefore they must be arranged in accordance with man's different stages of life, from the cradle to the grave. The first volume contains cradle songs, rich in form and subtle in invention. The second volume begins with love songs dedicated by young men to their fair maidens who are hard-working and chaste. All songs are penetrated with a deep feeling, with a conviction that only a sound body and a sound soul should be allowed to give life to coming generations. And what an amount of biting wit and gaiety there is in these songs! The third volume is dedicated to nuptial songs. Marriage was neither an easy nor a simple thing for the ancient Latvians. The feelings and passions of young people who were in full enjoyment of health

and vigour are restrained by the experience and wisdom of the old who are conscious of their dignity and their authority to watch over the well-being of their children and grandchildren. They ask whether the future daughter-in-law will be a kind and good mother? of a lively and gay temper? whether the future son-in-law will be a brave, serious and virtuous man? What a lot of difficult and anxious questions! Finally it seems that the happiness of their children is humanly possible, and then begin the preparations for the nuptials. The Latvian nuptial customs comprise many solemn ceremonies and give evidence of very old traditions. The young people rejoice, the old dispense their advice in earnest and moderate songs directed to the newly married, who reply in joking words to conceal their feelings. In these songs the people's creative genius is concentrated mainly on conjugal life; its sorrows and joys. Young and full of vigour the newly married couple sets out on the journey of life; years pass by, and old age and infirmity stands on the threshold. Death comes to sever the soul from the body, and with what a philosophical calm it is expected! The earth opens to receive man, as a mother receives her tired child into her arms, nursing it fondly. Latvian poetry has found the most beautiful words to express the infinite love of the blessed earth, our common mother. The customs are very old, the views on life and death are strikingly related to the Indian world of ideas. The fourth volume contains songs dedicated to various kinds of work: husbandry, cattle-breeding, bee-keeping, hunting, fishing, seafaring. The social order, the relations between the various classes, is expressed there. Exact and subtle words are used to describe international relations, the defence of the native soil, war and warriors, the state and its integrity.

All that has been said until now can give only a very superficial idea of the Latvian folksongs, but it is difficult to say more unless the songs themselves be cited. Even that would not be enough. The other European peoples have forgotten too much of their Indo-European mentality to be able to understand this poetry of the ancient Latvians without vast commentaries. It must therefore be asked if in these times of positivism they would interest foreign readers at all."

The reader, no doubt, will say that such a conclusion is somewhat antiquated, but it is redeemed by K. Barons's admirable whole-heartedness and his indefatigably noble patriotism.

Let us add to this general account another, a modern observation contributed by Jonval about the changes in the folksongs brought about by Christianity: "With the beginning of the 13th century a reciprocal influence between the religious beliefs of the aborigines and the religion of their German conquerors can be stated. Very often the Latvian god assumes Christian features, but Mary appears as a pagan goddess. Christian

ideas have implanted themselves in heathenism, failing to alter it. In fact there remains yet a pre-Christian kernel which is very important as we can find there both peculiar Latvian features, as, for example, the goddess Laima, and elements from the Indo-European period, deities such as the Sun, the Sun's daughters and God's son."¹²

Observing the massive documentation of a people's spontaneous, artistic and original creation where many ancient motives intermingle with fresh layers from subsequent centuries, a creation in which the breath of many past generations can be felt, the scholar must tackle the problems of chronology. This is one of the most thankless and complicated tasks. It has been pointed out that: (1) the nature of the Latvian folksongs is purely lyrical; (2) this poetry has very little contact with history, which should manifest itself in allusions to actual events, but the songs contain no references whatsoever to historical persons; though we find that there are some recollections of a general kind of the wars with the Lithuanians, Russians, Poles, and occasional references to Swedes; (3) the existing proper names refer only to mythological characters, they are fairly old and appear within the frame of the song, although it must be supposed that, going from mouth to mouth, much will have been changed in the songs; (4) the folksongs reflect certain social conditions, giving also glimpses of many a legal notion, but these reflections are only of a general nature; (5) the songs are usually verses of four lines arranged in strophes, which naturally have no place for dramatic or epic narration, except in cases where we find certain indications. Let us venture to compare them with the well-known Portuguese ancient "women's" lyric.

Failing to find a clear and decisive clue, the scanning eye of the scientist loses its way in this luscious garden of emotion. Herder and his predecessors looked for traces of Latvian epic songs, such as in a certain sense did exist in Finnish and Estonian folklore, but not finding them, they concluded that this kind of poetry had never existed in ancient Latvia. The absence of epic songs, interesting in itself, led them to the assumption that the Latvians, who during long centuries had been deprived of political life, had directed their whole attention to the only sphere left open to the Latvian mind craving for liberty of thought and feeling. The first definition of the Latvian folksong is to be found in a chronicle of the beginning of the 17th century written by D. Fabricius: "Their songs consist of two-lined verses, each line of an equal number of syllables; for the most part they are witty and contain a complete meaning; when sung they match in tone and melody." A *daina* is to be found in records of 1584; the first printed *daina*, a humorous song, is dated 1632, and the same song is found in K. Barons's collection almost 300 years later. Other *dainas* were printed throughout the following centuries. Thus, historical

information shows that the *daina* in its strophical structure and, in regard to prosody and performance, was in the 19th century the same as in the 16th century. Since it has not changed during the time when folksongs were in particular favour, we may assume that it remained unchanged for many a century before. But when and how it was created and what was the process of its spontaneous development is still a secret.

Here are some of the conclusions of Latvian scholars on this particular question. Professor L. Bērziņš points out that as these songs have been proved to have existed throughout the centuries, their contents and form must be of similar antiquity. The majority of these folksongs have been known in all parts of Latvia, parts which during certain periods of their history were politically separated. So they must in fact have been created at an earlier time. This is also proved by the "very regular and simple prosody of the genuine folksongs" from which the imitations of German ditties in this respect differ in a radical way. One should also consider as a certain indication of antiquity the possibility of their being improvised and created in a collective manner. This was greeted with great astonishment by some foreign observers. P. Šmits, opposing the aforementioned theories by means of very complicated philological arguments,¹⁸ arrived at the conclusion that by far the greater part of the folksongs contain ancient philological elements that have arisen between the 13th and the 16th centuries. However, the younger generation of scientists, among them A. Švābe, applying their analysis to the genesis of legal conceptions and ancient usages, declare that the songs reflect circumstances and customs that refer to the Iron Age.

As mentioned, Latvian folklore shows no traces of epic or mythological epic songs, whereas clear signs of such are to be found in Lithuanian folklore, and in that of some Old Prussian tribes. Such songs for use at the cremation of the dead are mentioned in the Treaty of Peace of 1249 between the Teutonic Order and the Old Prussians. Herder as well as his friend Merkel, not to mention others, were vainly seeking for this epic poetry, and thus the former came to the conclusion that the Latvian poetic genius was idyllic, subtle, and delicate.

It would be extraordinary if we were readily to admit the lack of pure epic feeling in the Latvians, but as L. Bērziņš points out, the lyric and epic elements in Latvian folksongs are not separated.

We may easily clear up this point by simply stating that many of the *dainas* were composed by women. This is conspicuous in many cases where the maiden speaks in the first person. L. Bērziņš says in this connection: "Latvian poetry is the realm of women, particularly with regard to the oldest songs dedicated to the cult, which were sung only by women. When men took part in the composition, the songs betray an epic strain."

Here let us refer to the statement by Cicero that woman with her conservative nature watches over the national traditions and those of the family. Woman's rule in European national poetry is a rare thing, but not an unique one, e.g. the beautiful Portuguese mediaeval songs. But the Latvian national poetry has lost all connections, if it ever had any, with the contemporary literature of other nations. Thus we must interpret our folksongs as an expression of the mild radiance of woman in the domain of the home and the family, of the delicate gamut of feelings of the mother and the daughter, of the sister and the bride; we can say without exaggeration that the affection between brother and sister as expressed in our folksongs has no parallel in world literature. It is the sister who embroiders for the brother his war pennon, weeping she sees him to the gate, speaking to him kind parting words, and stroking his steed she decks it with flowers. All this group of songs and others breathe a romantic lyricism of nature, a warm family affection and the glorification of everyday work, the secret exultation of subtle and sensitive hearts:

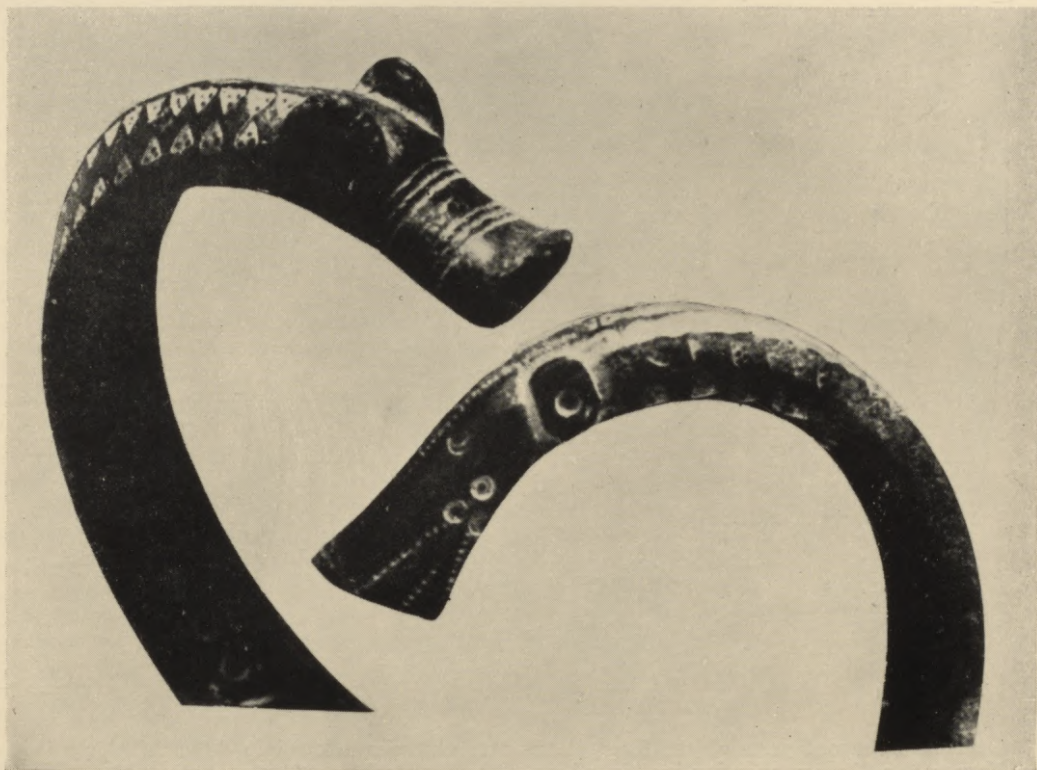
"Sing sister dear, you sing to me,
And I will jubilate to you."

This kind of elation plays an important part in the style of the national song. Gold and silver are favourite epithets serving as a rhetorical disguise to a bleak life: "father's mud is silvery", or again, the sun sheds tears in the wood like golden dew, and, just as in the vision of St. Francis, becomes the "dear sister".

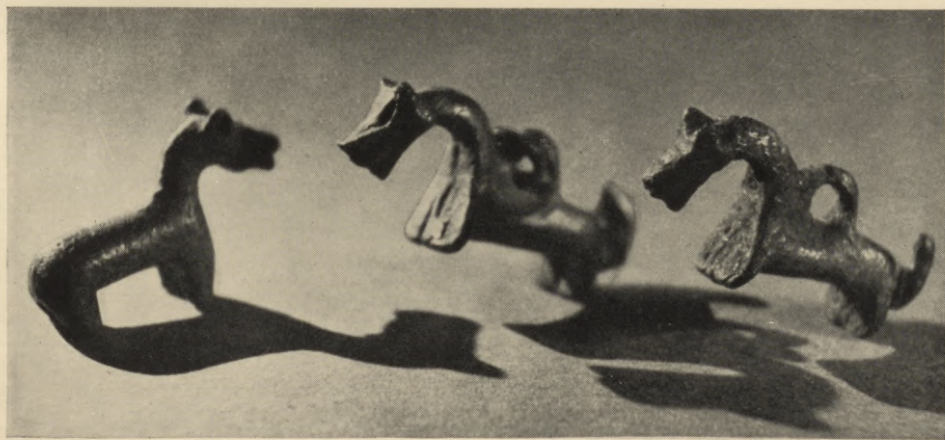
Another characteristic quality of the Latvian folksongs is its almost biting witticism, as already recorded in the 17th century and later by Herder.

In this connection we must remember the innumerable diminutives characteristic of this subtle and emotional poetry; "the caressing magic of diminutives" (Jonval). They remind us of the vast number of Italian nouns with suffixes, coming from vulgar Latin, i.e. from the language spoken by the people, *-illum*, *-ittum*; these also express not only kindness but very often raillery and disparagement, thus changing and modifying the psychological trend of the Latin language. Many of the Latvian proper names have conserved the resonance of this etymologic sensitiveness: Bērziņš, Kalniņš, Upītis, etc.

According to P. Šmits's short formula, the poetical form of the *dainas* is the following: The ancient songs reflect two types: the trochaic and the dactylic of which the latter is rare and is possibly a variation of the former, as in some places the trochaic and dactylic combinations alternate. The trochaic verse has eight syllables which are divided into four feet of two



Ancient Latvian bronze bracelets with stylized animal heads. About 1000 A.D. there appear, under Scandinavian influence, ornamental motifs on bracelets and horse-shoe-brooches in the shape of stylized animal-heads. Before that time, from the 6th century onward, different kinds of stylized animal-heads were known in Latvia only on cross-bow brooches. In the 11th and 12th centuries the above animal or dragon-head motif was a characteristic feature of the ornament of the eastern Baltic, and particularly popular among the ancient Kurs and Letgallians.



Bronze horse figurines of the 11th century A.D. During the later Viking period bronze weights, shaped like animals, were widely used in the Liv region where they were usually modelled like horse-shaped pendants. Some fifteen such pendants were brought to light on the Daugmale castle-hill.



Ornamented sword parts of the Kurs (10th—11th centuries), found in different places in Kurzeme, a—bronze mounting on tip of sword-scabbard; b, c, d—bronze sword pommel and hilt-bars; e, f, g—fragment of bronze hilt-bars; h—bronze tip of sword-scabbard (Gotland). The shape of the Kurish double-edged sword has been derived from the Viking sword. The ornamented sword and scabbard mountings have also been influenced by Scandinavian prototypes, especially by such hailing from Gotland. The design shows a combined oriental palmetto and Scandinavian plaited ornament motif. The fragments of hilt-bars (f, g) are samples of the Gotland type, imported from that island or worked in Kurzeme. The style of the ornament is very similar to that on the scabbard-tip (h) found and made in Gotland.



Bronze horseshoe-brooches with dragon-heads of the 11th and 12th centuries. There is a difference of style in the dragon-heads on bracelets and on horseshoe-brooches. On the latter, the motif of the dragon-head is conspicuous for its very plastic and protruding pointed ears, wide-open jaws and visible tongue. This type of horseshoe-brooch is found mainly in Latvia, especially in Kursa, though quite analogous brooches are known in Gotland where it is believed that they were introduced from Kursa. In Latvia brooches with dragon-head motifs are to be met with up to the 15th century. After the 12th century, however, the dynamic and plastic qualities of these ornaments deteriorated, the dragon-heads gradually became flatter and lost their animal character.

dipodies; after each pair of feet comes the caesura. Every fourth syllable or each last one of every dipody must be short, so short indeed that it could be omitted, if the tune demands it. The main accent always rests on the first syllable of the dipody, but the third one has a secondary accent:

Kas tie tādi/kas dziedāja
(Who were they/that were singing).

It must be added that the *dainas* are to be sung, thus the tune is closely connected with the rhythm of the words, bearing upon them, and so some of the final syllables are omitted, or a vowel is added as a stop-gap.

Both the origin and the prosody of the Latvian folksongs are the fighting ground of theorists. That this prosody is old, is admitted. Discussions begin with the attempt to solve the fatal questions "when" and "how". Theories have been brought forward about the period of primitive Baltic tribes, about the influence of the Finns and the Goths, about a spontaneous and separate development of the Latvians and Lithuanians on one side, and of the Old Prussians on the other side, and so on.

A brief look at the neighbours of Latvia will, perhaps, reveal the nature and the artistic value of the *dainas*. Beginning with the northern neighbours, the Finns and the Estonians, we see that their oldest poetry assumes epic and mythological forms. "The Finnish *Kalevala*," writes Pavolini, "is poetry of a fabulous and legendary world. It is full of fantastic adventures, of mythical narrations about the creation of the world . . . and with only a slight characterization." None-the-less there are some central figures, around whom the entanglement of the epic progress takes place, with the *Väinämöinen*, the Finnish Wise Man at the head of all. We meet something similar in the Estonian *Kalevipoeg*, who is the Defender of the Land and its Civiliser.

From the Baltic peoples the Old Prussians must be excluded for the simple reason that there is no material left. The few indications that have been preserved in German and Latin chronicles should be ascribed to visions and legends concocted by monks. The rich world of the Lithuanian national traditions, which was detected and brought to light a little before the Latvian folksongs, is, in tendency and conception, closely related to them, though there are far more of the Latvian *dainas*, for P. Šmits says: "If the linguist finds more archaisms in the Lithuanian language, the mythologist finds a richer material in Latvian mythology." Already in the 16th and 17th centuries, when in official documents and in the language of the ruling classes the Lithuanians were merely a "decayed people", we find information about folksongs of an epic nature, and already in the 18th century they have their first national and, if I am permitted to add,

superb poet C. Donalitius—Duonelaitis (1714—1788). In the second half of the century the great Germans, Lessing and Goethe, not to mention Herder, brought to light the remainder of Lithuanian national poetry.

The southern neighbours, the Poles, on the other hand, can produce no epic traditions illustrating the beginning of their civilisation which is more Latin than Polish, and there is little evidence of the lyric in their folksongs.

The Russian people have a very rich epic tradition, some of its elements can even be traced back to the 12th century and earlier, e.g. the magnificent *Discourse of the Campaign of Igor*. The most expressive symbol of those times and of the Russian peasant is Ilya Muromets. This son of a peasant, like his other fellows, including the knight Dobrinya Nikitich, symbolises the tragic struggle against the falchion of the fierce nomads, and the psyche of this giant who rests tranquil for thirty years in the picture of the inertia of the peasant race: "Get up, Muromets; while thou sleepest thou dost not feel imminent danger." This inertia is characteristic of these heroes who are no fighters either by nature or birth.

Here let us look at some texts, which, though doubtful from the chronological point of view, are significant of the national spirit of the different peoples. Dobrinya Nikitich, just as Ilya, is forced to fight and complains about it, "Alas, my lady mother, why did you give birth to your unhappy Dobrinya? Why didn't you after my birth hang a stone round my neck and push me into the limpid green waters? I should have rested for all eternity on the bottom of the sea instead of roaming the steppe, harassing unfortunate people and guiltily shedding blood, making many widows and children wail." The renowned viking Egil Skallagrímsson sings in gruesome joy: "I am as if inebriated on the battlefield, my love, where javelins swish, where the swords clash dripping with blood and where flocks of greedy ravens croak; the hosts of vikings dash forward in their fury, conflagration rages all around, and people collect in litters the blood-stained corpses of their fellowmen." But the young Latvian does his duty, yet keeps his moral countenance:

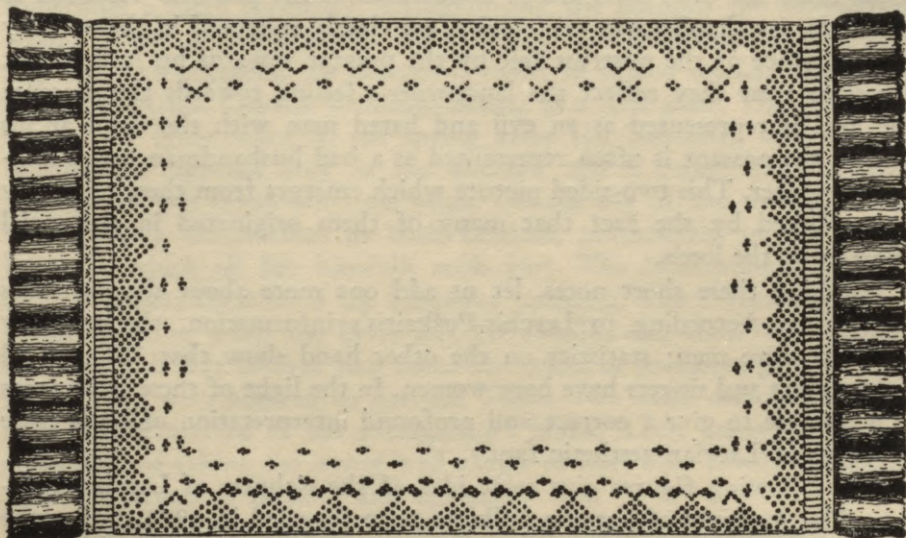
Going forth to meet the foe
Into a stone I shut my heart.
Dawns the day, the sun is rising,
Resounding bursts the stone.

Such is the Latvian warrior's noble morality. And yet, "sensitive people are unhappy", said Alfred de Musset (*les délicats sont malheureux*).

Latvian folklore is rich in all kinds of material: national tales and legends, riddles, proverbs, etc. The legends and tales were systematically

collected for the first time by A. Lerchis-Puškaitis. His work was published between the years 1891 and 1903; in 1925 Professor P. Šmits published his collection of 15 volumes of *Latviešu tautas teikas un pasakas* (Latvian Tales and Legends).

In analysing the rich material presented by these tales, the scientists have first of all tried to separate the matter of popular legends which have developed from the usual ambulant European motifs, from the Latvian



Replica of a Latvian shawl of the 11th century A.D. After the 9th century A.D., woollen shawls in Latvia were ornamented with small bronze rings twisted into the fabric. In this example the ornament covers the four edges of the shawl. Each border is enriched with a row of bronze spirals and a coloured twilled selvage with a fringe. Such ornamented shawls were especially favoured among Letgallian women and richly developed in the 11th and 12th centuries. This manner of ornamentation with interwoven bronze rings is also to be met with in Finland and among Finns living further east who had apparently been influenced by the Balts. The earliest samples were found in Latvia where this manner of ornamentation had reached a very high standard, and here it survived longest. Textiles decorated in such a way are to be met with in Kursa as late as the 13th and 14th centuries, and shawls ornamented with brass spirals sewn to them are to be found in the national costume up to modern times.

narrators' efforts to localise the themes. However, this is not the proper place to review the work and theories propounded in this field. Some general conclusions will suffice to fit this material within the scope of development of the popular legends and tales. Šmits does not give much credit to the Latvian narrators who "rendered the ambulant motifs in their on way, adapting the subject, often inserting Latvian myths." When we look at the results of the research work we have to admit that

the material contained in the Latvian tales is not as national or original as that contained in the folksongs. However, one of the original myths we meet there is the Daughter of the Sun, who is represented as a fair woman with golden hair and a bunch of keys at her belt—the symbol of a good housewife. The tales abound in stories concerning animals and plants, particularly the oak and the linden, for they are holy trees and symbols of manhood and womanhood. But Švābe has shown that for the social historian these tales are of importance as the peasants' relations to the lords, *i.e.* the German aristocracy, are clearly mirrored in them. They give evidence of the mistrust felt by the peasant towards his lord, yet at the same time they reflect the landowner's feeling towards the peasant: the lord is represented as an evil and hated man with the devil at his elbow; the peasant is often represented as a bad husbandman and a negligent worker. This two-sided picture which emerges from these tales may be explained by the fact that many of them originated in the social quarters of the lords.

Finishing these short notes, let us add one more about the narrators themselves. According to Lerchis-Puškaitis's information, the majority of them were men; statistics on the other hand show that 70% of all *daina* sayers and singers have been women. In the light of these statements it is possible to give a correct and profound interpretation of both these products of Latvian aesthetic fancy.

The following figures give some idea of the richness of Latvian folklore. The Archives of Latvian Folklore were founded in 1924 during the country's independence. Co-operating with voluntary correspondents, the Archives collected, within a short space of time, 775,000 folksongs, 301,000 tales, 48,000 legends, 450,000 riddles, 244,000 proverbs and sayings, 334,000 beliefs, 48,000 incantations, 65,000 items of popular medicine, and so on—altogether 2,300,000 examples of popular knowledge. In some branches the work had advanced so far as to be arranged in order ready for publication. The Archives of Latvian Folklore brought out a Catalogue of Latvian Tales about Animals, which in a remarkable way completed Aarne-Thompson's collections. The Archives had also published four volumes of Latvian Beliefs (in alphabetic order) arranged by P. Šmits. These volumes published in 1944 contained numerous descriptions of usages, a large compilation of divinations and oracles, two volumes of charms, and a description of a Latvian witch and werewolf trial held in Latvia, and various editions of documents referring to these subjects which had previously been published in the period between the 16th and the 18th centuries.

There are many ancient traditions in Latvian festivals. The Latvian marriage is not only a matter of personal concern between two individuals,

it is an object of interest to their families, their kinsmen and their closest friends. Therefore the choice of the bride is made with the consent of the family or at least with its knowledge, which in its turn takes part in the preparation for the betrothal and nuptials. The theme of the ceremony is based on the leaving of one family to join the other. The young people, perhaps, became acquainted with each other at their work, in the markets, in church or at festivals, where the bride could be watched, as happened during visits in the evening, that is why the nuptials were sometimes a mere formality. Often during the autumn the bridegroom would set out on horseback in the company of a spokesman to go wooing. On such occasions the betrothal would be agreed to, and the dowry and gifts settled. Church weddings belong to a later time. The custom of taking the bride home in the spring after the betrothal, and of celebrating the nuptials only in the autumn was a common occurrence. The dowry was taken with the bride. On the eve of the wedding there were parting celebrations in both families, particularly in the bride's home in which all her kinsfolk took part. The bridegroom's kinsfolk did not appear there until the following morning. There were ceremonies of leave-taking when the bride left her family, and those who stopped them on their way to their new home demanded or presented gifts to them before they were allowed to pass on. There were more ceremonies when they finally arrived at the bridegroom's home. These ceremonies, especially that of taking the newly wed couple to bed, were closely connected with the rituals of fertility and opulence.

Characteristic of Latvian marriage is the "bride's abduction", details of which are given to us in documents of the 16th and 17th centuries. Further evidence is to be found in the words used in more modern marriage ceremonies: the bridegroom's relatives were called *vedēji* (they who carry off), the bride's relatives, *panāksnieki* (they who overtake). The folk-songs describe the carrying-off of the bride and the chase that followed; but later matrimonial customs made the followers (*panāksnieki*) go to the bridegroom's (nuptial) house in pursuit of those who carried off the bride, where they remained apart the whole time. The ancient sword fights, however, were replaced by the "war of songs" at the nuptials, when 4,000 to 5,000 ceremonial songs were sung over the period of three or more days until both sides made peace. However, one part of the old marriage customs has remained unchanged: that it is the duty of the brother to watch over his sister as a new bride.¹⁴

The funeral customs are closely connected with the cult of the dead. At the bottom of this lies the belief that death is merely a transition to another life identical to the earthly life. That such beliefs were held is confirmed by archaeological and historical evidence (Dusburg and others)

drawn from the 14th century onwards. These customs were followed by the three Baltic peoples: the Old Prussians, the Lithuanians and the Latvians. The dead, therefore, had to be provided with all that was thought necessary for life in the next world: a horse, weapons, food and drink. It was believed that immediately after death the man's grave became his house, but that later he would emigrate to the land of the dead, which was supposed to exist somewhere under the ground towards the west where the sun dropped below the horizon. If a mother died a folksong was sung to wish her "a hundred good evenings."

Of great importance was the Mother of the Earth and her substitute Mother of the Dead. When the dead person was well provided with all necessities, he was supposed not to disturb the living, though he was to remain in permanent contact with his clan, and as such he was invited to their festivities. But once a year all the dead were invited to a feast (usually in October) at which food and drink would be provided. When the feast was over they were bidden to depart. These beliefs were of significance at a man's funeral, for he himself was believed to be present. The corpse was dressed and seated in a chair, the mourners clinked his glass and drank "the cup of leave", wailing with sorrow at his departure. Some things were put into his coffin, but his clothes and bedding were burnt or otherwise destroyed. A funeral was not an occasion of sorrow as it was believed the deceased had gone to another life. If the deceased was unmarried, then on the following day his wedding was celebrated—the ancient nuptials of the deceased. The funeral was terminated by the introduction of his heir to his new duties with marks of respect and trust.¹⁵

The cult of the Dead was not without importance in the *Annual Festival*. The chthonian element in them is mixed up with sacrifices dedicated to the deities of fertility. Besides the annual Christian holidays, there are still remains of the archaic elements, especially during the summer and winter solstice, where the ancient customs have survived. The celebration of *Jāņi-day* (the evening and the night of 23 June) is very solemn. Towards evening not only the buildings, but also the cattle which have been driven home, were decorated with wreaths and garlands. Then "Jāņi grass", to which particular power was attributed, was plucked and taken to "Jānis' father" and "Jānis' mother" and draped around their shoulders. The "Jānis' children" then were served beer and cheese. At night fires were lit in barrels on long poles and people drank and sang in groups while calling on neighbours and singing about them. Only once a year on *Jāņi-day* were these special *Ligo* songs sung. These were songs which always ended with the word "Ligo", meaning cheer, make merry. The Latvians possess a large number of these songs: about 60 to 70 tunes containing several thousand lines. The subject deals with the mystic *Jānis*

(*Joannes pusillus*, according to Jesuit information of the 17th and 18th centuries) who once a year came "to see his children: how they ate, how they drank, how they glorified him." These holidays symbolised fertility and the blessing of the fields and the cattle. The ancient Christmas holidays contain similar features, only less emphasized. Christmases were celebrated like "Jānis' children", and the "Christmas holidays" came like men "driving in painted sleighs" to bring their blessings.

In Jesuit reports of the 17th and 18th centuries, four holidays are mentioned which marked the beginning and end of harvest time, the feast of the dead and the celebrations in the holy woods or groves.¹⁶

Besides these riches of verbal folklore there is also a vast stock of tunes. During the last century A. Jurjans, a well-known Latvian composer, not to mention his predecessors who worked by less exact methods, began to collect these tunes systematically. Since 1894 there have appeared in his edition six volumes of *Material about Latvian Popular Music*, which included about a thousand tunes. The Archives of Latvian Folklore were able in 1939 to count already about ten thousand tunes that were being prepared for systematic publication. Performances in European countries of Latvian choirs and singers have met with appreciation from critics whose reviews one day will bring to light what an aesthetic value has been ascribed to the Latvian popular air by experts in many a European centre of musical life. In any case reading these accounts one gets the impression of a very favourable attitude, as often happens when specialists get acquainted with something new and fresh.

Approaching the problem of ancient Latvian art, we must limit ourselves to a few bibliographic notes, in particular concerning the first centuries of the second millennium A.D., when the geometrically ornamental style, "reserved in its nature, but at the same time perseveringly active", was adorning innumerable objects of Latvian applied art. B. Vipper published in 1939 a monograph on Latvian churches (*Baroque Art in Latvia*) and in his book *L'art Letton (Essai de synthèse historique)* 1940, he pointed out the principal evolutionary stages of the Latvian plastic and constructional conception. Of the art of these ancient periods, he has remarked, "It might be said . . . that the Latvian style in art is marked by two opposite elements: by an idyllic isolation and a striving after a happy equipoise; and, on the other side, by activity and an unrestrained rushing forwards."

Finally, I should not like to omit mentioning the problems on Latvian national costume which at many performances and shows abroad has excited a good deal of surprise and astonishment. What those impressions were, is best shown in a page from *Portrait de la Lettonie*, written by the well-

known reviewer of *Le Temps*, René Puaux, who had attended one of the Latvian Universal Song Festivals in which about 12,000 singers, men and women, from all parts of the country had participated. Most of these singers wore ancient costumes which "had been preserved in old painted wooden chests." The description by this foreign observer is interesting: "There are Roman togas, Byzantine diadems, Moscovian wreaths, skirts with stripes from Dalecarlia, Bohemian cloaks and even white veils under which secluded oriental women hide their faces." A picturesque representation, but the essential part of it is that the design of the Latvian national costume and the principal elements, especially in women's garments, are of ancient provenance and, as shown by folksongs, language and customs, belong to traditions dating back for many centuries. It is important to note that the embroidery and the cut of some of the cloaks of the 11th and 12th centuries, or, as Puaux says, "Roman togas", were brought to light by excavations, but the manner of wearing these garments can be seen from drawings of the 16th century, principally in Italian books. In the book *Vecākie latviešu kostīmu zīmējumi* (Drawings of the Oldest Latvian Garments), I have tried to elucidate the merits of the 16th century in the solution of these problems.

There is ample material available to show us what the national costume was like from the earliest times. Latvian national costumes as they exist to-day were classified and collected at the Latvian Historical Museum. Descriptions with illustrations were published by Professor R. Zariņš in his large collection *Latvju Raksti* (Latvian Ornaments), nos. 1-52, and in publications issued by the Latvian Historical Museum, which gave detailed explanations of technique and ornamentation. Other publications described the local origins of the costumes and showed how they varied in different parts of the country.

The oldest iconographic examples prove that there was no essential difference between the ancient and the modern dress.¹⁷ This leads to the conclusion that the Latvian national dress has *continuous* traditions from the Iron Age (400—800 A.D.) up to our own times.

Costumes taken from excavated tombs of the Middle and the Later Iron Age still show traces of beauty. It was the custom of those times to bury the dead with their best things for use in life after death. Women's dresses were richly decorated with bronze ornaments. A blue woollen shawl with bronze ornaments, bracelets and rings, necklaces and a headgear, and a fillet, provided a rich find of the utmost value. The fillet and the necklace had small bells instead of the usual pendants. Laurentius Müller¹⁸ had observed that it was the custom of the Latvians to wear such small

bells, and Maletius had noticed the same thing in the 16th century with the Old Prussians, the Kurs and the Zemaites. The blue colour of the woollen shawls has been preserved in Kurland up to modern times. There in the nether parts of the province the blue shawls are still decorated with tinkling rows of brass pendants.

The woollen shawls of the New Iron Age (800—1200 A.D.) were richly ornamented with bronze which was interwoven or intertwined with the cloth. The square fabric had a border and in the middle characteristic bronze swastikas. The Stāmeriene shawl shows 37 different variations of this pattern, from the most simple to the very complicated. Here we see the national creative genius coupled with subtlety of technique and accomplishment. The Stāmeriene shawl finds its equal in the Kaldābrūņa girdle of a more recent time, which has 36 variants of the swastika in 51 sections. Even men's dress was decorated with bronze ornaments: spirals, pendants and small bells; there were also bronze bracelets for the men and bronze galoons for their caps.

During the Middle Iron Age women's fillets were made of bronze with several parallel rows of scrolls richly worked with five or more lines in succession (see *Ainava*, Plate XV). The Rikopole fillet shows six rows in eight partitions with six long bronze chains along the back, provided with pendants and bells.

The tradition of metal ornamentation is still practised. In Kurland, where many old traditions have been preserved, the national dress includes a heavy brass girdle of chains and an ancient blue woollen shawl with tinkling brass pendants and ornaments at the lower edge.

In Old Prussia and Lithuania this bronze ornamentation was not considered essential. In Gotland, in the Early Iron Age, bronze buttons were attached to caps. Bronze ornaments in woollen material were unknown in Scandinavia. During the New Iron Age only in Finland, outside Latvia and Lithuania, were such bronze scrolls woven into the material, but the design and technique were different.¹⁹ This kind of metal work was done a great deal in Latvia where the raw material was imported. The local craftsmen were highly skilled in creating peculiar shapes for these ornaments, and some illustrations of the more interesting ones will be found in this book.

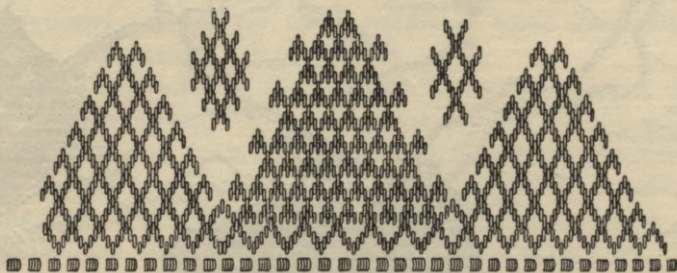
The Roman Catholic priest, Jordan of Auleja,²⁰ has left us an interesting description of some 17th century Latvian homes. He tells us that in a village, which was most difficult to get to, about 40 inhabitants who had not been baptized were living in rooms each with an ante-room. The Chief's room was like the rest and built of logs. It had two windows or holes that could be closed from inside with a board, the ceiling was

made of small pieces of timber and the floor was covered with clay. To the left of the entrance was a hearth without a chimney, at the windows were benches made of thick boards, and in the room was a table and beds. On the walls were hung all kinds of implements, headgear, a neck-ring with the head of a ring-snake, rings, bracelets, small chains and brooches. All the objects were shaped rather artistically in bronze or copper. There were also various antique Latvian weapons, such as stone axes, points of spears, clubs, swords, knives and bows with long arrows. Close to the huts there were small granaries and sheds. The village had two Superiors one of whom was a priest, and the other acted as the economic chief and the village judge. Jordan goes on to describe a funeral in this village. The deceased was dressed in his holiday garments of decorated homespun cloth. On his head there was a small round cap made of broad bronze rings held together by a string of leather. Round the neck there was a braided ring from which hung small copper pendants. On the chest by the way of armour there were chains made up of links of different sizes, and on his wrists there were bracelets of the same material. The corpse was then shod like a Capuchin monk with straps bound round his legs above the ankle. Thus dressed the dead man was seated on a stool with his back against the wall and his face towards the door. In his belt they stuck an axe. When all were assembled the host offered ale. Everyone of the drinkers first asked the deceased a question, then wished him luck, begging him not to forget their relatives, friends and acquaintances when he met them in the next world . . . The grave was filled and a barrow raised . . .

Castle-hills which are to be found all over Latvia,²¹ have been examined and old wooden fortifications have been reconstructed. These castle-hills were built in places affording natural protection; usually there was water on three sides or some other natural hindrance to an enemy. The fortifications consisted of several ramparts which raised the central fortress above the surroundings (see Plate XI). The ramparts were strengthened with wooden stakes. Above the ramparts were to be found the characteristic wooden huts and in the central space, which was most heavily protected, the main dwellings and storehouses. Some of these castle-hills could give protection to a large number of people.

The net of these castle-hills which covers Latvia seems to indicate that the tribes who populated the country had a settled political and administrative organization. From what has been excavated from these sites we can say that the people were farmers who knew the plough, and who cultivated rye, oats, barley, wheat, flax and hemp, and perhaps peas and beans. Singed grains of corn are sometimes found in great quantities in

the castle-hills (Daugmale, Tērvete, Apule). Bones too, were found in these sites, which implies that these people were also employed in fishing, hunting, and cattle breeding. In addition chronicles tell us of apiculture, and coins and silver ingots of the period between the 8th and 12th centuries indicate that there was a considerable commercial activity.



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* A 13th century ornament from Kurzeme. The ornament consists of small bronze rings twisted into the material of a rich woman's foot-bandage. The style and technique of the ornament are analogous to those of the richly decorated Letgallian woollen shawls of the 11th and 12th centuries.



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IV

THE VIKINGS AND THE LATVIANS

This chapter is an attempt to create a general picture, based on the evidence of linguists and archaeologists, of the relations between the Scandinavian peoples, during the period of their greatest expansion, and the population of the eastern shores of the Baltic. It is a difficult task and imposes considerable scientific responsibility. However, the achievements of historical research during the last century and the problems of our time make such a task a duty, as only by a more complete insight into the ways and vicissitudes of the Latvian people will we be able to understand their life and development in a territory so greatly coveted by all their neighbours. This corner of the earth has been, and will be, regarded as one of the key-points of the whole of north-eastern Europe, the possession of which is apt to shape the destinies of its temporary conquerors

* Map 10. The Viking traffic routes to the East. Of the principal routes of communication from the Baltic Sea to the East, the important Daugava-Dnieper riverway, which led on to Byzantium, passed through Latvian territory. Of some significance for cultural relations of that time was also the Nemunas-Dnieper waterway which crossed south Kurish and Lithuanian territories.

whose rise and fall is also to a considerable extent dependent on their intrinsic power.

While emphasizing, with rare zeal, the German-Saxon expansion towards the east in the 13th century, the schools of historians of the last century have overlooked the expansion of the same race, *i.e.* of the Goths and the Northmen, in earlier times. It is this particular problem that is to be discussed here with the help of rather disconnected and imperfect, though sufficiently interesting and important, material which cannot simply be ignored or used for the contents of some insignificant "preamble" or for some casual "observations".

Of the eastern expansion of the different Germanic peoples, three general stages can be observed. The first is that marked by the migration of the Goths who, coming from their peninsula, arrived at the mouth of the Vistula and moved further on towards the south-east of Russia, probably crossing the area of the Pripet marshes, *i.e.* an important part of the so-called original Slav territory. According to some historians, this movement started as early as the 2nd century A.D., while the height of this expansion was reached in the 4th century during the extensive though unstable reign of King Ermanaric, which was ended by the heavy onset of the Huns in 375 A.D. (*Hunni . . . Ermenrichi late patentes et uberes pagos repentino impetu perruperunt, bellicosissimi regis et per multa variaque fortiter facta vicinis nationibus formidati*).¹

G. Kossinna² has tried to indicate on his map the expansion of the Goths. Though the problems touched by him have been greatly disputed, his cartographic vision may be of considerable use for future research. The expansion of the Goths, it is true, affected the Balts—or more cautiously expressed, the Aist tribes—only in the south-west. However, it is possible to find traces of some political and cultural reverberations of these contacts. Apart from certain historical texts and some archaeological material, there are indications of a linguistic influence to be observed, according to some philologists, on the Western Latvian Speech, as, for instance, in the words *gudi*, *gatve*, *klaipts*, and perhaps *alus*, etc.³ This expansion however, was not in the nature of an assault, for the hordes of the invaders advanced through the nearest territories of the neighbouring peoples without pursuing any of those big political and economic aims which assumed importance after the kingdom of Ermanaric had been established. This kingdom is regarded as the first attempt towards an improvised political organization in the Russian plain.

The second phase in the Germanic advance towards the east was that of the Northmen which began to take effect from the 9th century onward, and of which we shall speak at greater length here. The expansion of these restless tribes from Scandinavia, this "island" (*Scandza insula quasi*

officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum),⁴ which is so diffusely discussed by Jordanes, a sworn eulogist of the Goths, did not hit the country, later to be called Livonia, with the full impact of a frontal attack. It is from this time that the Latvian name for the German, in general, dates, i.e. *vācis*, or *vācietis*, which originally denoted a Gothic tribe (*va-goth* = *vāki+goth*).⁵ The Scandinavian pirates, frequently under the command of one of their kings, repeatedly invaded the shores of Old Prussia and of Kurzeme where from time to time great battles were fought which resulted, politically, in the imposition of tribute. For all that, these inroads seem to have been neither of a systematic nor of a lasting character, since the main thrust of the attacks was directed to the points of access to the river-ways from the Baltic to the Caspian (the *Ostervigi* of Snorre Stur-lason) and to the Black Sea (*Vestervigi*), which was the main trans-European thoroughfare between Scandinavia and Byzantium. The Daugava may also have been one of the objectives of the Northmen, but the two other routes were more attractive as they opened up the possibility of continental expansion: the foundation of the Russian state, be it a direct or an indirect consequence, is one of the links in the chain of the political successes of the Northmen, which must indeed be considered extraordinary.

The third Germanic, or in this instance Saxon, invasion lasting from the late 12th century onwards coincided with an advance of the Danes towards Estonia (Tallinn = Danish castle), which constituted a frontal attack on the eastern Baltic littoral, directed towards Old Prussia by land, and towards Livonia by sea, leaving Lithuania untouched. The plan of this great expansion involved the conversion of the Baltic into an inland Germanic Sea and the creation of a strong bridge-head position against the Russian region. It was a crucial blow resembling in its operation the crusades in the eastern Mediterranean, in which the ideal of the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre became merged with economic and political objectives, as was demonstrated by the creation of numerous new states in places of strategic importance.

This scheme of the *dominium maris Baltici*, which remained in force during three and a half centuries until 1561, maintained by the military power of the Teutonic Order and the commercial power of the Hanseatic League, had one weak point, that of the unsolved Lithuanian problem. As we shall see later, Lithuania, by remaining between the two wings of the Saxon expansion in Old Prussia and Livonia, became a danger to the Saxons' future designs, which included the colonization of Livonia by sea.

These are the three great tidal waves which occurred in the course of one millennium, between the 4th and the 13th centuries without, however, achieving more than a partial effect, because, for all that, the fates

of Old Prussia and Latvia and Estonia have been different. Superficially they bear some resemblance to the results of the Germanic expansion in the Apennine peninsula.

To return to the Viking expansion during the 9th century and after, it is necessary to view it in the light of the general events of this era and to trace its development in chronological order by *ea bellorum tempestas que Northmanis tumultuantibus in toto pene deseivit orbe*.⁶

A complete picture of the routes of the Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian Vikings may be gained from the map given at the head of this chapter. From it we are able to form an idea of how this movement expanded and advanced far into the European continent, and we may understand the fears of the hagiographers and historiographers of those times in describing the bold and reckless actions of the Northmen. In the west and in the south of the continent the course of events can in general terms be characterized as follows: the 9th century was one of robbery, attacks, and destruction; the Vikings made their way into the continent, advancing along the courses of the large rivers: along the Thames, the Seine, the Loire, the Garonne, the Elbe; they took London (839), Paris and Hamburg (845). In 881 and 891 the first large-scale attacks were launched. The 10th century was more or less quiet. The Vikings no longer returned to their own country each year, as they used to do, but wintered abroad, founding centres and settlements of their own, or staying in their new states, castles and fortresses, and applying their peace-time trading methods. There began to flourish, in the newly created states of western and southern Europe, a rich civilisation, Nordic in character, e.g. Rollo in Normandy, in 911; the town of Haithabu in Schleswig, in the 9th century; Jomburg, a fortress near the mouth of the river Oder (about 950). The 11th century was marked by a renewal of Viking activity (G. Kossinna). By conquering the Anglo-Saxons in 1066 and by the establishment of a kingdom in Sicily (1016), the Normans attained the climax of their world-influence in history, mainly owing it to their two famous leaders, William the Conqueror and Robert Guiscard. The consequence of the Viking expansion also became apparent in eastern Europe—the foundation of the Russian state in 862 (according to Nestor); assaults on Constantinople and on the regions near the Caspian Sea; the destruction of the kingdom of the Khazars in 965, etc.

To Latvia the results of this movement were only of secondary importance. The historical development of the eastern Baltic littoral would, however, certainly have been different had the Northmen pursued some special or quite definite aims there, such as, for instance, the creation in this territory of a kingdom like that of Normandy or of Sicily. Instead, it was the scattering of the Viking power, in an attempt to establish

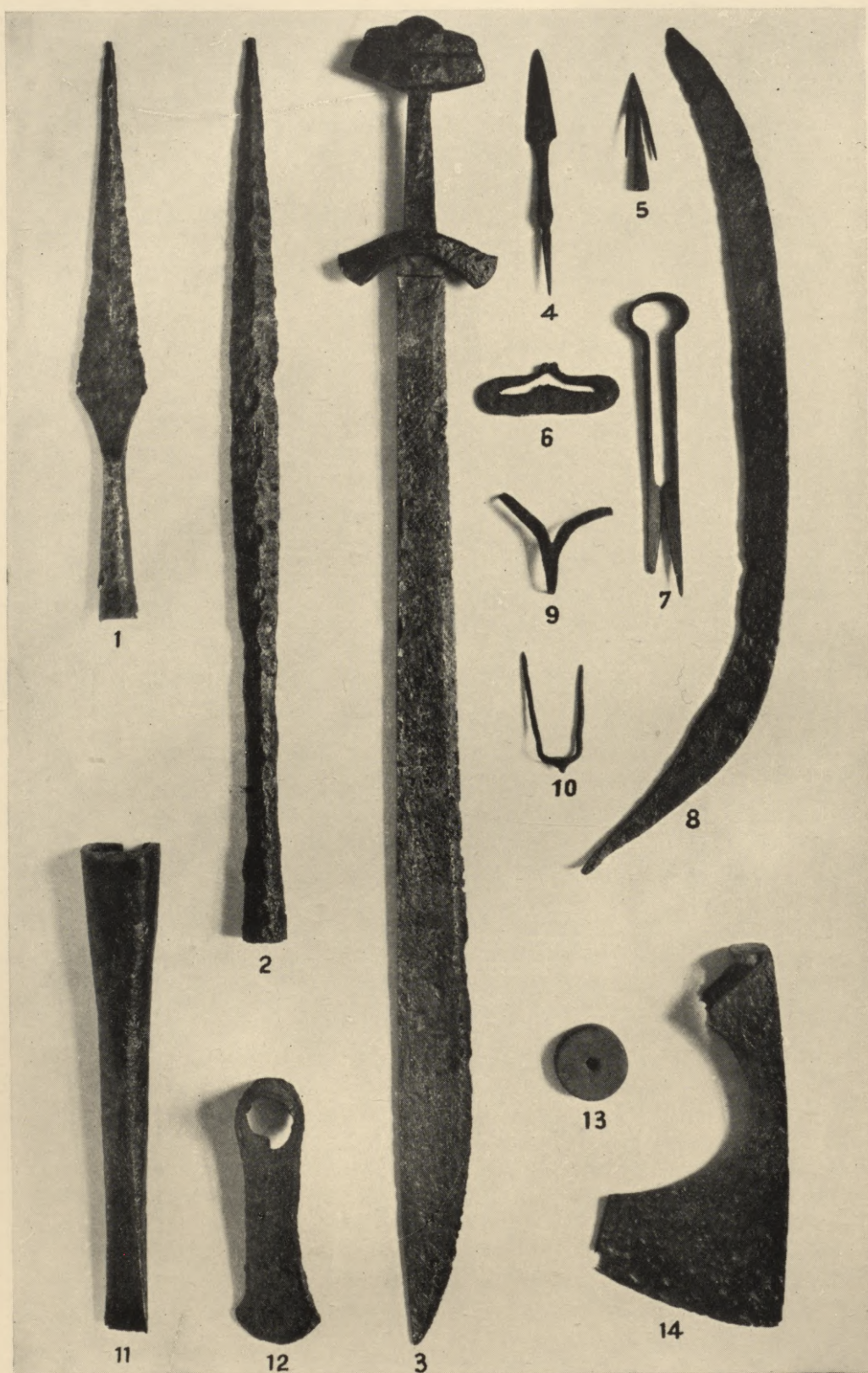
themselves commercially in the eastern plains, by creating bases on the lakes Ladoga and Ilmen, that resulted in the Baltic coastlands slipping through their fingers. Even in the vast territories of eastern Europe, their scattered forces were only able to last until indigenous political units had developed. Thus the admirable achievements of the Vikings were doomed soon to fall into oblivion. They did not succeed in solving the "mystery" of that vast space.

With regard to the Baltic, and, more particularly, to Latvia, the historical data for the 9th and subsequent centuries, *i.e.* on the Viking period, are rather scarce and, from a critical point of view, very vague. Of these, the following main groups can be indicated: firstly, some runics which are chronologically more or less defined, and a few contemporary historical documents, *e.g.* Rimbert's *Vita Anscarii*; secondly, there is Saxo Grammaticus' lengthy chronicle of the late 12th century (he lived from c. 1150 to c. 1220), which describes the numerous raids and wars between the Scandinavians and the Latvians (especially the Western Latvians, or Kurs, of earlier times), shrouding the events in a good deal of legendary mist. In addition, there exist several Nordic sagas of the 12th and of later centuries, which tell us in the reserved and elegant style of Nordic prose about the incursions and fights of their various chieftains and kings on the shores of Old Prussia, Kurzeme and Estonia; the texts by Snorre Stur-lason and by Egil Skallagrimsson, for instance, despite their elaborate literary character, may give sufficiently faithful visions of the life and the fights of that period. For systematic studies of the material to be analysed, at least four separate groups of evidence should be considered: (1) documents giving accounts of the commercial relations between the Vikings and the Latvians—here the results of archaeological research and the conclusions of historians are of the greatest value; (2) chronicles and sagas which describe the incursions into the Kurzeme coastland and give, among other information, the names of the respective kings and places, which, generally, do not easily lend themselves to interpretation; (3) texts which mention or relate the raids of the Kurs and the Estonians on the opposite coast, *i.e.* of Scandinavia and Denmark; (4) the conclusions which may be derived from the various sources on the way of life of the Latvians in those times—they serve as pointers, a "thread of Ariadne", to guide us through the dim maze of those centuries.

1. The contact of the Scandinavians with the Kurs, the Livs, etc., on the shores of the Baltic has, apart from their obvious military aims, naturally been of a commercial character; the voyage of Wulfstan to Old Prussia may be assumed to have been prompted primarily by such interests. According to Scandinavian accounts, Adam of Bremen (see chapter



Weapons and tools of the Kurs of the period 11th to 12th centuries, found in different places in Kurzeme. Weapons: 1—double-edged sword with bronze hilt-bar and pommel; 4, 5—arrow-heads; 6, 7, 12—spear-heads; 11, 13—axes; 14—knife; 2—shears; 3—awl; 8, 9—flint-holders; 10—whetstone; 15—stirrup; 16—bridle-bit; 17—blacksmith's tongs.



Semigallian weapons and tools of the 11th century A.D. 1, 2—spear-heads; 3—one-edged sword; 4, 5—arrow-heads; 6—flint-holders; 7—shears; 8—scythe; 9—ice-spur; 10—calkin; 11—chiselshaped pick; 12—pick; 13—sandstone spindle; 14—axe.

II) mentions some adventurous sailors who set out for the Baltic coast. These cruises seem to have been quite profitable, for very often various precious metals are mentioned in the brief runic inscriptions or in the chronicles. Investigations made by Bugge and by Arne have revealed that most of the runics date from the 11th century. These runics mention the cruises of several Nordic navigators who died in the Baltic countries, near the rivers Daugava and Venta, and who used to sail round the peninsula of Kurzeme, touching also Zemgale (Simkala), where, according to an inscription, gold was found. In one of these runics, c. 1030, mention is also made of Livonia, the territory of present-day Latvia and Estonia. Saxo, the Danish chronicler, gives in one of his passages a certain psychological reason for these cruises: "*Orientis partes piratica pervagatus, cum speciosa domum spolia retulisset, ideoque se dignitatis incrementa accepturum speraret.*" Similar views, but very circumstantially related, are to be found in the well-known saga of Egil (see below). The Guta-saga, when mentioning the early events of the 5th century, tells us of the first emigration from Gotland; they followed the course of the Daugava (*Dyna*) through the country of the Aists (*Aestland*) and proceeded towards Russia (*Ryzaland*) and Greece (*Gricland*).⁷ A peculiar incident is mentioned in a passage from the Danish chronicle of Eric. There it is related how a considerable number of serfs (*Drellen*) and peasants had escaped from Denmark in about 900 and settled down in Old Prussia and in Zemgale, being attracted by the fertility of these regions. A. Švābe⁸ believes this fact to be one of the reasons for the introduction into Kurzeme of the three-field system, where each field was called by its Danish name *vanga* (cf. *Alšvanga*, the name of a settlement). The sources also mention isolated cases when the sea was covered with the sails of the approaching enemy fleet (*mirareris late ventis velificatum mare*; the population had scarcely time enough to shout *cavete undas*),⁹ when, from the sea which may bring freedom, but which also brings many dangers, the Vikings, for whom war meant pride and joy alike, rushed forth against the people living on the coast.

2. The Scandinavian (Swedish and Danish) incursions in the Kurzeme coastland, and elsewhere in the Latvian territories, seem to have occurred many times, especially in the 9th century, which marked the beginning of the Viking advance in an eastern direction. It is the century in which, according to the Russian chronicles, Rurik and his brother were "called" to settle the affairs in the vast eastern plain; even if this be nothing but a legend, like so many others about the origin of a state, the wording of the text must be recognized as being quite extraordinary, and the passage from the chronicle of Nestor—"our country is vast and rich, but there

is no order in it, therefore come to our land to govern and rule over us,"—has to a very considerable extent influenced Russian historiography. It calls to our mind another remark, that of a great Polish patriot, the Jesuit P. Skarga, of the 16th century, who gave vent to his worries in one of his sermons, exclaiming: "Poland lives on account of her disorder!" The Kurs and the Estonians did not invite the Vikings (neither did the Western Slavs, whose struggles with the Northmen have been described by the same Saxo), nor did they create similar legends, but they themselves were called cruel and fierce heathen, like the Old Prussians; such a qualification is given them as late as in the middle of the 15th century by Fra Mauro Camaldolese in his great atlas, for he tells us that there has been a succession of fights, defeats, attacks, levies of tribute, and counter-attacks. The *Life of St. Ansgar* ("The Apostle of the North" [801—864]), written by a contemporary chronicler Rimbert roundabout 875, contains a lengthy account of the assault of the Swedes on the Kurs who had previously been subject to Swedish domination, but who had long ago showed their discontent with this state of affairs by rising against their oppressors (*Sueonum principatui olim subjecta [ea gens] fuerat, sed iam tunc diu erat, quod rebellando eis subjici dedignabantur*). Knowing this, the Danes sent a large fleet to attack the Kurs, but suffered a heavy defeat, in which half of their warriors were killed and a lot of gold, silver, and other possessions were lost. Olaf of Birka, king of the Swedes (died 882) then gathered a huge (*innumerabili*) army, attacked and captured Jürpils (Seeburg), the fortress of the Kurs, whence he advanced towards another stronghold, that of Apulia. In the former, there were some 7,000, in the latter about 15,000 Kurish warriors. After several unsuccessful assaults, the Swedes, realizing their inability to take the fortress, decided to retreat. But a miracle happened for, after they had paid homage to the Christian God, the Kurs gave in, returning all the gold and silver captured from the Danes, with an additional tribute of half a pound of silver per head (*homo*) of the population inside the besieged town. The land of the Kurs (*Kursa*), consisting of five communes (*civitates*), had to give hostages and was forced to pay tribute, as before, to the Swedish king and to recognize his suzerainty. According to historians this mass-attack on the Kurs might have taken place between 853 and 855. The Kurs region itself was much larger at that time, comprising within its boundaries a considerable part of present-day Lithuania.

Saxo, too, repeatedly mentions and describes in his chronicle the inroads made in this part of the Baltic during the early stages of the Viking expansion. The descriptions of these incursions are, as might be expected, extremely vague and romanticised, but they are not to be ignored, because they were intended to be explicit and graphic. Besides, as Saxo himself



Map 11. The Baltic tribes in the 9-12th centuries. The arrows indicate the direction of expansion of the Vikings and the Slavs. The Latvian, Lithuanian and Old Prussian tribes had by this time consolidated their position within the borders of their territories, which, with the help of archaeological and historical sources, may be established with sufficient precision.

explains at the beginning of the XIIIth book, they are based on living, popular tradition. Considering the description of the geographical contour of the Baltic Sea (according to Saxo—still an ocean, *Oceanum circum-*

positum) given in his Introduction and depicted in the Vth book, certain progress is evident when compared with that given by Adam of Bremen. This applies particularly to the northern part of the Baltic Sea, which must have been more familiar to the Scandinavians owing to their expansion towards Lake Ladoga. It is for this reason also that the Finns are better known to the author than the Estonians and the Latvians.

The first assault, mentioned by Saxo in his Ist book, was that, launched by the Danish Viking, Hading (*alias* Hasting), against the Kurish king Lokerus (between 866 and 894). In the first attack the aggressors were completely defeated. However, the raids continued, being directed against the king of Hellespont who defended his well-fortified capital Duna (in Latvian: Daugava). This fortified place was captured by stratagem (birds were released which set fire to it), the king was taken prisoner and was ransomed for an amount in gold equal to his weight. P. Herrmann, whose investigations¹⁰ are of great value has separated the legendary elements from the historical core and clarified the foundations of the geographical concepts. Basing himself on Herrmann's work, A. Švābe writes: "It is no longer doubted that the Hellespont, mentioned in Hading's saga, is anything else but the Daugava-Dnieper waterway which connects the Baltic to the Black Sea." The different names for the river Daugava (*Duna, Dyna, Wina, Weina*) are reflected in Saxo's chronicle in the more or less historical names of persons, such as Dianus, Anduanus, Handuванus, Winus, thus confirming the existence of significant events in this region. Such an explanation permits us to rectify the error committed by Adam of Bremen who supposed the Baltic and the Black Sea to be connected by a sea-channel, reminding us of the famous formulation of Nestor about "the way from the Varyags to the Greeks" (Ladoga—Ilmen—Dnieper).

The next, one of the most interesting episodes, deals with Frotho, Hading's son, who with a large fleet attacked Dorno, king of the Kurs (*Dorno, Curetum . . . rex*). Becoming aware of the approach of superior enemy forces, Dorno, after a beautiful speech, which is recorded according to all the rules of rhetoric, ordered his country to be devastated so as to reduce his adversary to starvation, while he himself retreated to one of his strongholds (here let us remember Rimbert's narrative), fortified with all possible means (*indubitate firmitatis municipio*). Again it is only by a ruse that the Vikings succeeded in capturing the town. They then advanced towards the Slavs (*Rutene gentis*) and took the fortress of Polotsk (*Paltiska*). Having been so successful Frotho began to cherish hopes of subduing the whole East (*spe Orientis imperium complexus*). On his way back, resorting again to stratagem, he occupied the capital town of the Hellespont state on the lower Daugava (Dvina), with the inten-



Letgallian weapons of the 10th/11th centuries, found in various parts of Vidzeme and Latgale 1—spear-head; 2—spear-head with single barb; 3—spear-head with double barb; 4—spear-head; 5—single-edged sword; 6—single-edged short-sword; 7—spur; 8—narrow-bladed axe; 9—broad-axe.



Fragment of ornamental limestone disk with runic characters (11th century A. D.). It is the only runic inscription which has been found so far in Latvia. The fragmentary writing reads: "The runes were made by..." It is a unique object of unknown purpose. A similar, but unornamented one, found in the south of Sweden and now in the Gothenburg museum, is believed to have been used as the weight of a lever-balance.



The Nedervalla runic stone, Sweden, erected by a certain Sigrid in memory of her husband Sven who used to sail on "rich ships" round Cape Domesnäs to Semigallia (c. 1040 A.D.). The Nedervalla runic stone stands at Mervall, Selebo district, Södermanland, and is typical of the numerous runic stones in Sweden, which tell of the voyages of the Swedish Vikings to the shores of the Latvian lands.

tion of securing a key-position, or base, for his future military operations in this direction. The importance of this action is emphasized by his "diplomatic" marriage of the daughter of King Handuvan. These classical aspirations of the Nordic tribes towards gaining influence and power are well known to us through other foreign historians of that time, and the active urge to move up the river Daugava may be compared to the "call for the Varyags" by the Slavs in the Novgorod region. The political ideas of these Nordic tribes, for whom war was more pleasant than peace (*bellum iucundius pace*)—peace, to them, meant laziness and corruption—are grandiose indeed.

The chronicler goes to enumerate the incursions of the Scandinavians into the East, among the Slavs, Finns, Estonians, Kurs, and Old Prussians. Likewise, he describes hundreds of battles, taxes imposed, and the movement of the restless tribes and masses of peoples round the Baltic Sea which the Vikings would have preferred to have possessed for themselves. In the eighth book we come across the figure of Bicco, the Liv ruler, who, not unlike Patkul during the Northern War, was a master of political intrigue. In the ninth book it is the imposing figure of Dian, king of Hellespont, which catches our eye. The eleventh book deals again with the states of the Kurs, the Samlanders, and the Estonians, who were conquered by Knut the Great (Canute) (1018—1035).

The evidence provided by the Nordic sagas, though scanty, is interesting enough and, in the opinion of specialists, sufficiently reliable, except for the legendary and modern texts, e.g. the Ingvar-saga. "They are concrete, related in an expressive vernacular, objective and devoid of the author's own reflections, conceived in a dynamic dramatism, provided with dialogues, and evincing a chronological clarity based on genealogies. They resemble novels and historical stories as far as their outward form is concerned, but are pure history by their contents. Several of them are real sources of history. In general, all these historical sagas illustrate the conflicts of the Northmen with the eastern Baltic peoples from the 7th to the 12th centuries, especially with the Estonians and also with the Kurs. However, the accounts of the trade relations (except some allusions in the Egil-saga, the Olaf-saga and the Knythling-saga) can only be verified by archaeology."¹¹ Perusing the somewhat ancient, but in some ways unique edition of sagas by C. C. Rafn, it is possible to find quite a number of indications of inroads, encounters and incursions into our country by the Vikings. Usually they are mentioned incidentally and tell us little of what happened to our people at this time. For all that, we find there descriptions of naval actions, attacks on the seashore and ordinary raids.¹² Hints like these are to be found in the well-known *Heimskringla* by Snorre Stur-lason, and in other places.¹³ Among the various names of places and

people mentioned is that of Visivalldr (in Latin Visivaldus). To Rafn, the publisher, it naturally becomes a Russian name Vsevolod. However, it might just as well have been a Baltic name, *Visvaldis*, in spite of his coming from the east, from Novgorod (*ab Oriente e regno Gardorum, Heimskringla*). After all it is the same editor who identifies Samland with Zemgale (II 134—135), which makes his explanations and commentaries altogether questionable. It may also be mentioned that the legendary Star-catherus (Saxo VI), famous for his military expeditions against the Kurs, Old Prussians and Semigallians seems to have been of Baltic descent.¹⁴ It is in this connection that mention must also be made of Vidgautus (*Knythlingsaga*).¹⁵

Texts of some length dealing with the Kurish littoral, do not occur more than three times. Thus, in his *St. Olaf-saga*, Snorre makes Thorgnys at a peasant court meeting (*ting*) talk of the glorious Swedish past and, censuring the decay of morals, remind his audience that Erik, king of Uppsala, once achieved several large conquests in various countries, subduing "Finland, Karelia, Estonia, Kurzeme, and various eastern regions; even now one can still admire the strongholds and vast fortifications . . ." (c. 860). To-day we can still admire the extensive network of fortresses—castle-hills which were developed by the Kurs in order to check the onslaught of the Northmen (archaeologists report their number to amount to some 80). The castle-hills mentioned by Rimbart are those which, after the excavations of recent years, have yielded a considerable wealth of early historical material of Swedish and local origin.¹⁶

In another place, and, for once, very extensively, are described the incursions from Iceland of the well-known Viking Egil Skallagrimsson and his pirates into the coastal regions of Kurzeme in the early 10th century (between 920 and 925). Egil tells us of his raid on a wealthy Kurish farmstead: how he was bound and taken prisoner there, how he then freed himself, rescued his comrades and some Danish prisoners and, eventually, set the house on fire destroying it and killing the inhabitants. Thus he made his escape with plenty of rich booty. Some readers of the *Egil-saga* have failed to observe a certain passage from it where it is mentioned that on other occasions, too, he has carried a sword named "dragon" which he acquired in Kurzeme. Though the intention to put the Viking to the fore is obvious throughout the saga, the description of the country-side and of the destroyed homestead, gives us a particularly clear insight into the land of the Kurs, at least from a Nordic point of view.

The third account is that of the legendary *Ingvar-saga*. It is a narrative of Ingvar's passage through Kurzeme in order to collect tribute. The tribute was refused and so the Northmen attacked, conquered and punished the population. Crowned with glory and laden with rich booty, they

returned to their own country. This is one of the numerous passages telling of the warfare of the Vikings.

3. Since all historical documents of that time are of Scandinavian origin, with the exception of a few vague indications found in Latvian folklore, it is but natural that their victories are made the most of, while their defeats are only mentioned in a cursory way, if at all. But even those few passages by Saxo enable us to state that the peoples and tribes which were attacked defended themselves heroically and even proceeded occasionally to counter-attacks. The Kurs and the Estonians enjoyed the reputation of being the most dangerous pirates in the Baltic Sea; the Old Prussians, it seems, were compelled merely to defend themselves, as has been pointed out by Adam of Bremen. The Slavs of the southern littoral, before their political and religious centres were destroyed (*Sclavorum insolentia piratica nostros acerrime lacessebat*), caused the Vikings much trouble. The beautiful and thrilling description of a naval battle in book VIII, which in style is at once original and impressive, gives us an inkling of how dearly the Northmen had to pay for their *dominium maris Baltici* (cf. also the Nialssaga). In addition, the peoples of future Livonia took an active part in maintaining the balance of power on the Baltic, making, for instance, common cause with the Swedes or with the Danes (book III), taking part in Danish enterprises (book VIII), or, finally, sticking together (*permixtos Estonibus Curois*) in order to be able to attack the enemy.

There are also to be found in the sagas casual allusions to the activities of the Balts. The *Heimskringla* tells us of the participation of Kurs and Estonians in the fights between the Swedes and the Danes (c. 740); in the St. Olaf-saga such significant events as the failures of this king in Estonia are mentioned. We are informed that the attacks of the Kurs and the Estonians on the opposite shores of the Baltic Sea lasted without interruption until the beginning of the 13th century. Here are some examples: towards the middle of the 11th century, in the churches of Denmark, people would pray "God, save us from the Kurs!"¹⁷ From Nordic sources we are told that Estonians and Kurs took part in the destruction of *Sigtuna*, the great Swedish trading centre, in 1187.¹⁸ The chronicler, *Henricus de Lettis*, writing about the year 1203 (VII, 1) and after a detailed description of a raid of this kind, observes: "... as the Estonian and Kurish heathen up to this time were wont to do in the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden" (*sicut tam Estonos quam Curones pagani in regno Daciae et Svetiae hactenus facere [sc. incursiones] consueverant*). The same *Henricus* in a later document has left us a wonderful account of how the Kurs assaulted the newly founded town of *Rīga* in 1209: "And the Kurs, having

left their vessels on the banks of the Daugava, drew up their troops on open ground, and each of them carried before him a wooden tablet, made of two parts, and also a stick much like a shepherd's staff to support that tablet. And when the sun shone on the white tablets, the waters and the fields reflected the light of them. For great and valiant was the army, and they approached the town." Also the towns-people took up arms, and there engaged a violent battle which lasted two days and which is minutely described by the chronicler; finally the Kurs retreated, "not before having collected their dead; they returned to their vessels, and having crossed the Daugava, kept quiet for three days; and, burning their dead, they wailed over them . . ." (XIV, 5). Then there is an itinerary by Guillebert de Lannoy, the noted traveller, of his journey in 1413 and 1414 through Kurzeme and Livonia, with a description of the funeral rites among the Kurs: "The Kurs . . . are a sect and they have themselves cremated after their death, clad in their best garments, in the nearest grove or forest, on a pyre of oaken logs, and if the smoke rises straight up into the sky, they believe that the soul is saved, but if the smoke is carried sideways—that the soul is lost." This account reminds us of the descriptions of the funeral ceremonies of the Old Prussians and also of the Lithuanians.

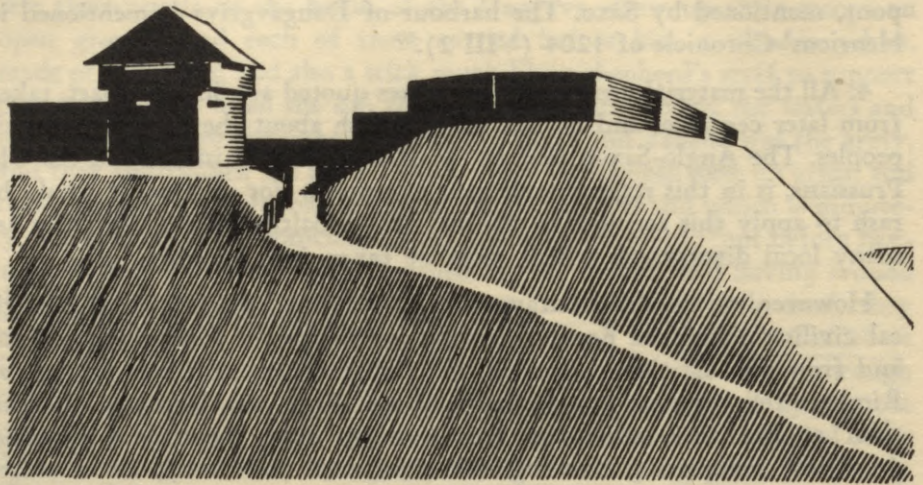
However, it was not piracy alone in which the Vikings and their neighbours were engaged, for there are sufficient data available which also tell us of peaceful commercial transactions. The Scandinavians even had trading stations of their own, for instance, at Grobiņa. According to the *Égil-saga* they set out on trading voyages, but would pillage and ravage when the trading season was over. The Balts were engaged in similar trade activities abroad. According to the investigations made by V. Bilkins, the principal trading centres of the pre-Hanseatic period in the 9th—10th centuries, after Schleswig, were Haithabu, and Birka in central Sweden. As early as 800 A.D. Gotland was also an important centre, and products from there are to be found in great numbers in the surrounding countries. Of the Baltic tribes, the Sambs of Prussia, the Amber Land, excelled in trading enterprises, and in the 9th century A.D. the town of Truso was known as an important commercial centre. There the tradesmen arrived from Schleswig, Norway and Sweden. Also at Birka, according to Adam of Bremen, *Semborum naves solent pro diversis merciorum necessitatibus sollempniter convenire*. Furs of marten, which the Sambs are said to have brought to Germany were alleged to have spoilt the German character (I 60, IV 18). In the 13th century the Kurs had three sea-ports: Winda (Ventspils), Lyva (Liepāja) and Memel (Klaipėda). In the last named port the Germans built a castle in the 13th century to protect the mouth of the river Nemunas. The Semigallians had also a port of their own, the *portus Semigalliae*, presumably Helles-

pont, mentioned by Saxo. The harbour of Daugavgrīva is mentioned in Henricus' Chronicle of 1204 (VIII 2).¹⁹

4. All the material mentioned, and dates quoted are, in great part, taken from later centuries and do not tell us much about the life of the Baltic peoples. The Anglo-Saxon text by Wulfstan on the Aists, *i.e.* on the Old Prussians, is in this respect a pleasant exception. For all that, it would be rash to apply this account to the rest of the Baltic peoples, for there are many local divergences which must be taken into account.

However, we are able to draw some conclusions, especially on the political civilisation of the Kurs, from the testimonies of Rimbert and Saxo, and from the official reports, in the 13th century, of the papal legates. Rimbert tells us that the territory of the Kurs was larger in the past than at the time when he was writing, that they had a kingdom (*regnum*) comprising five regional dominions (*civitates*), *i.e.* a united kingdom of all the Kurs, with a king (*rex*) at the head who ruled the local, or provincial, political chiefs (*princeps*), who each had at his side a regional priest (*sacerdos civitatis*), a military chief (*dux*), and, at times, a regional council (*concilium civitatis*). In general, such a political constitution reflects the organization of the Germanic tribes of those times. On the other hand, Saxo insistently mentions the existence of large political units, ruled by kings or, in his own words, by tyrants; units which caused a great deal of trouble to the Vikings whom they fought, and also others to whom they owed all sorts of obligations (diplomatic marriages, etc.). Though some of the political leaders are mentioned by name in the text, it is not possible to establish their personalities in a more precise way, no further material being available to us. Anyhow, it is obvious that their political-military organization was of considerable importance—a conclusion which is in full contradiction to the opinions adopted by some schools of historians of the 19th century. Indeed, one of the most eloquent documents is the covenant concluded between the vice-legate of Pope Gregory IX, Baldwin, a Walloon monk of the monastery of Aulnes in the diocese of Liège, and King Lamekins of the Kurs who promised to adopt the Christian faith and to pledge his vassalage to the Pope (in 1230). This is one of the most precise and detailed documents of early Latvian history, and there exists already an ample literature of monographic studies on its juridical value and political importance.²⁰ The process of Christianisation of pagan Europe knows of several similar documents, and therefore this particular one ought to be appraised as a separate link in the chain of the policy of the Holy See.

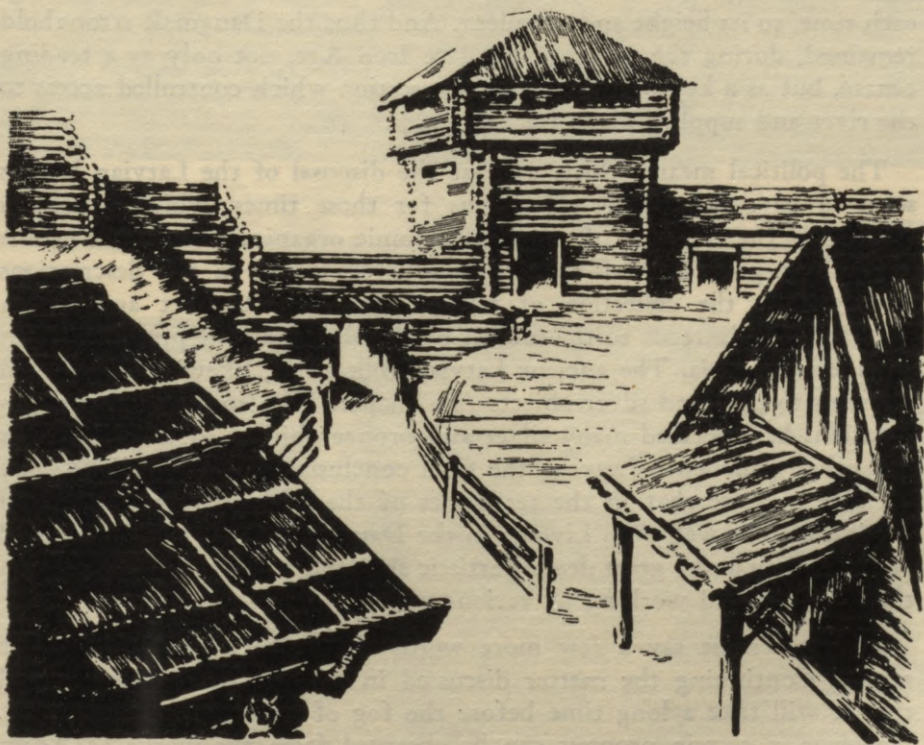
The military organization of the Baltic political communities likewise appears to have been well developed and of a marked structure. Rimbert,



Entrance gate and fortifications of Mežotne Castle. View of the path leading up to the castle. The excavations on the Mežotne castle-hill, carried out in the years 1938 to 1940 by Dr. V. Ginters on the site of the castle rampart and gate, as well as near the castle itself, for the first time provided a complete picture of the principles and the shape of the gate and ramparts of a Semigallian castle, owing to the unusually well-preserved remains of wooden structures and defence walls found there. As is usual in these castles, the ascent to the castle-gate was by means of a comparatively narrow and steep path laid on the steep side of the castle-hill and slanting up round the bend of the rampart. The attacking enemy had to go up by this path, with his right shoulder unprotected by his shield and exposed to the action of the defenders on the castle rampart. The ascending path in front of the gate passed the defensive gate-tower before reaching the gate proper by a sharp turn and passed through it into the castle-yard. The attacking enemy outside the gate was on two sides exposed to the missiles sent down on him by the defenders. The gateway itself was narrow and covered. According to the chronicles, the wings of the gates turned on hinges and were provided with crossbars, being altogether the most fortified and protected part of the defence system of the ancient Latvian castles.

Saxo, and the sagas repeatedly mention the strength of their fortified castle-hills. The attacking Vikings had to recur to the most varied methods, not excluding treason, for instance, in order to prevail over the capital of the Hellespont king whose fortifications were held to be impregnable; the same is said about the strongholds of King Dorno. Should these allegations lack conviction, it would be well to remember the writings of Rimbert and to study the results of our archaeological investigations. There is a passage in Saxo's chronicle which helps us to form an idea of the manners in which these castles were built. The well-known "aerie" of Jarmericus (book VIII) is described as follows: "Having enriched himself with so many people's property, Jarmericus, in order to build a safe shelter for the booty, erects on a high rock a castle of mira-

culous workmanship: the mound is built up from the surrounding earth, the foundations are faced with a course of stones, the lower part is surrounded by a rampart, the middle one with shooting-dens, the top with bastions (*propugnaculis*)." The last part makes us think of the famous Semigallian castle-hill of Mežotne (Arabic: Madsuna). The Latvian hill-castles (*pīlskalni*) have all been recorded and, partly excavated. The western defence system of the Kurish castle-hills is truly impressive, as can be seen from the scheme traced by F. Balodis;²¹ there are still 80 castle-hills in western Latvia, *i.e.* former points of defence and political centres. We can imagine, then, the foresight of the Kurs in building these castle-



Entrance gate and fortifications of Mežotne Castle. View from the castle-yard. Reconstruction of the fortifications (9th century), the remains of which were revealed by excavation. An uninterrupted line of narrow defence structures made with logs with flat roofs and a breastwork of timbered logs ran along the top of the castle ramparts. They formed a defence gallery which could be used by the defenders for communication. The entrance gate and the corners of the castle were fortified by tower-like and more strongly built defence structures. The residential quarters and outhouses were situated round the castle-yard and were mostly built in notch-joint log construction.

hills; they were necessary for the defence of their country and they provided centres around which a great deal of cultural activity focused. In his second work²² Balodis gives a graphic description of the findings of the archaeological excavations in the "Semigallian harbour", a castle-site near the river Daugava, not far from Rīga: "On the site of the castle-hill of Daugmale (it possibly corresponds to the capital of Hellespont, *Duna*, mentioned before) there are four strata to be distinguished, each with traces of fire; these layers can be dated to the late Iron Age and they prove that between the 9th and the 12th centuries the harbour has been on fire four times, probably during wars. Fights must have taken place not only with the Vikings, but with Livs and with Russians also, and with other peoples who passed along the Daugava. The excavations show that the Semigallians always contrived to renew the castle-hill, adding, each time, to its height and grandeur. And thus the Daugmale stronghold remained, during the whole of the late Iron Age, not only as a trading centre, but as a key-point and customs station which controlled access to the river and supplied pilots for the rapids."

The political means which were at the disposal of the Latvian leaders seem to have been quite efficacious for those times, which makes us presuppose the existence of a sound economic organization there. There is certainly a good deal of exaggeration to be found in the descriptions dealing with the collection of tribute, etc. But Rimbert and Adam alike, constantly recur to the subject of the abundance of precious metals brought to Latvia. The ancient Latvian folk-songs, likewise, are rich in allusions to gold and silver objects (see chapter III), and, indeed, the excavations have yielded many silver and bronze objects, particularly rings and other ornaments. Leaving the final conclusions to the specialists, we are able to state that in the territories of the Old Prussians, Kurs and Semigallians, as well as in Livonia in the Daugava region, a high standard of civilisation and a great deal of artistic skill and technique was shown in the handling and working of various metals.

Now we must say a few more words about the geographers of the region. Continuing the matter discussed in chapter II, it must be said that it will take a long time before the fog of the legends is dispersed. However, a certain progress can be observed from the works of Adam and Saxo. The cartography of those times which was still of course built up on legends rather than observed facts, does not provide us with any useful information. Nor do the cosmographic works of that period succeed in getting out of the vicious circle of repeating the established commonplaces of the late Latin authorities, a fact which makes them appear as "works of art rather than works of reference", for,



The Dobe castle-hill. The castle-mound is almost rectangular, with well-finished sides and very steep slopes. On the south side there is a rampart about 70 m long and 7 m high. E. Brastiņš, the Latvian investigator of castle-hills, thinks that this hill may be identical with the castle-site of Sidrabene in Zemgale, mentioned in the Rhymed Chronicle.



Excavations of the Mežotne castle-hill. Timber construction of the castle-gates passage (9th century A.D.). The passage of the castle-gate was originally a covered one, the defence structures of the castle rampart being built over it. It was reinforced and edged by timber walls made of upright logs which have been preserved to shoulder height. The passage widens towards the castle interior and its sides are strengthened with horizontal log walls (See reconstructions on p. 90, 91).

institutum esse. cum reuerentia ac deuotione tanq[ue] patrem. suum sic d[omi]ni tempore.
 et in om[n]ib[us] tanq[ue] d[omi]no suo et q[ue]o alioz morte debito xano. p[ro]fessissime obediens esse.
 obtinebat ip[s]i reuerentiam ac subiectio[n]em d[omi]no et q[ue]o suoz debetam impendentes. Ad ea
 u[er]o uia q[ue] p[ro]fuerit tenent indignie de Gochlarua p[ro] o[mn]i p[re]uio tenent q[ue]o suo singly
 p[re]uio annuatim p[ro]soluerit. ita q[ue] ne b[er]no date nec s[er]uicie subiciant. p[re]uio
 cum eis indullimus libertatem. q[ue]o. eos apostatate no[n] regeret. P[re]uio t[ame]n uito et
 in cartula p[re]uio co[n]scripto reb[us] p[re]uio. obtinuerit. Extraditio[n]es sup[er] p[re]uio[n]es tam
 p[ro] xano. reuisione q[ue] p[ro] f[er]ra uoluntate facientes frequenter. Intra b[er]nuu
 d[omi]no ip[s]i se p[re]sentabunt. sedm esse arbitrium p[ro] o[mn]i p[re]uio se habebunt. et oronatio
 nem. oratio ali[is] ip[s]i uoluntate. n[on] p[ro]fere s[er]uantes ac p[re]p[ar]a. no[n] obediunt in om[n]ib[us].
 et p[ro] o[mn]ia obtempnabunt. Salua in om[n]ib[us] a[n]i[m]e d[omi]ni. ip[s]i. Q[ui]s ut p[re]uio obtinuerit firmi
 tatem. p[re]sentem cartam exm o[mn]e[m] p[re]uio. sigilli n[ost]ri d[omi]ni. h[er]ic. Lealen ep[iscop]i. et alioz supra
 reuolutoz. munimus appensione. Actum anno d[omi]ni. m[ille] c[etero]. xxx. in die Iuio
 centum. Nully s[er]u. 7[er]o. n[ost]re ofit. 7[er]o. Sup[er] aut. 7[er]o. Dat. R[ati]o. 11. s[er]u. febr. 7[er]o.
 Pontificatus n[ost]ri Anno Quinto de Kadde. de Wanneman. et de Wirta Neophi
 et annuat. et ut in alia usq[ue] omnium. Tenor aut[em] litteraz. q[ue]z e[st] talis. tis.
 Frater. b[er]no. monachus Aluen d[omi]ni. O. si Nicola in carcere Tulla
 nodia Card[inal]is sedis aplice legatu[m] penitentiari. et nuntiu[m] in hyouuam. om[n]ib[us] ad
 quos p[re]sentis scriptum p[ro]uenit in ip[s]m. Cum inspicante gra[ue] s[er]u. u. q[ue]o. atq[ue]
 quatu[m] uult p[ro]uocare no[n] qualib[et] indigne amittentib[us]. atq[ue] p[ro]uocantib[us] p[ro]p[ri]o.
 in de Lubonia. saluet de Bannowe. de Wanneman. de c[ir]ca W[er]no. de Valle q[ue]
 no[n]a s[er]u. h[er]ic. Wals. Calle. Ganchule. Wanne. Pyre. ygenelle. Cadoue.
 Anse. Talle. Ardwalle. Pope. et plib[us]. alus firmi suscipunt xanam. ad hoc ip[s]m. ob
 stas suos rediet. et facta reuenerentio[m] imp[er]tinere receperunt. Nos u[er]o de omni
 co[n]silio et co[n]sentu ecclie b[er]no. q[ue]o. t[ame]n. om[n]ium suum
 b[er]no. et oratoz. tale cum eide[m] p[re]uio. munimus ac firmam conditio[n]em.
 uoluerit q[ue]o. auctoritate d[omi]ni. ip[s]i. insurandum recipierit. et debito more p[ro]p[ri]o.
 q[ue]o suo linoz p[re]uio. obediunt. et eadem uita ad que tenentur uita xani. ip[s]i
 n[ost]ra sibi destinando honeste eos in necessitate p[ro]uocab[un]t. et eide[m] tanq[ue] uita xani. i

Text of Reg. Vat. 15 f. covering a treaty concluded on 28 December 1230
 between Baldwin Alencis, Vice Legate of Pope Gregory IX, and the Kurish
 King Lamekins (Lamnechinus rex.)

57
 Reges sedo. hoc p[ro]uilegium scriptum. et tractatum e[st]. hec sunt no[m]i[n]e ville in de
 uocatione ecclie ab archiepo Salustiano et a Conite Ceta. P[ro]fessores sigg.
 Balouanus. Temud. Chimus. Woflan. et uru. et Chorbou. Weg. et
 buta au[tem] q[ue] a s[er]o p[ro]fere stepho ecclie s[er]o martiri sunt donata h[ab]uit. ita pars b
 p[ro]f[er]a. Nully s[er]u. 7[er]o. hanc paginam n[ost]re annotationis. 7[er]o. Sup[er] aut. 7[er]o. Dat.
 R[ati]o. Nuy. s[er]u. febr. Pontificatus n[ost]ri Anno Quinto. Neophis de Curonia.
 et annuat. 7[er]o. usq[ue] imp[er]iu. Cum s[er]u. ex p[re]te uita s[er]u. a nob[is] humilit[er] postula
 tum. ut libertates et immunitates a re. f. n. b. Semigallien ep[iscop]o ap. se. le. tunc
 i minori officio s[er]uato ius d[omi]ni. fil. n. o. si Nicola in carcere tullian[us] diac
 Card[inal]is dum in illis p[re]s[er]u. legationis officium exeret t[ame]n gerente. vniu[er]sitate
 n[ost]re p[re]s[er]u. et p[ro]uocato[n]e p[ro]fessis aplice dignitatem munimine redotare.
 nos deuotioni n[ost]re sp[irit]ualem gratiam imp[er]iu uolentes q[ue] ab eo se hoc p[ro]uoc[er]e s[er]u. et
 uoluerit. et in eodem latus exm. ofit[er]u p[ro]uoc[er]e. quaz tenorem de uerbo ad u.
 bum p[re]s[er]u. uisum annotari. aut ap. ofit. 7[er]o. usq[ue] omnium. Tenor. au[tem] lit
 teraz. ip[s]az. e[st] talis. Frater. b[er]no. monachus Aluen d[omi]ni. O. Card[inal]is sedis aplice legatu[m]
 p[ro]uocantibus ac nuntius. o[mn]ib[us] ep[iscop]i. fidelib[us]. in ip[s]m. Cum inspicant gra[ue] s[er]u. s[er]u
 sa u[er]o q[ue]o. quatu[m] uult p[ro]uocare. Lamekin b[er]no. et pagani de Curonia. de tra
 re. C[ir]ca lina saluet durps. et Saggeta. et kaligundie. quaz h[ab]uit n[ost]ra. Chaygo
 la. Ofua. Lange. Wendis. Nozmus. Kaenala. Pygalbas. Saru[us]. P. d[omi]ni. Sac
 se. Edualia. Aufwanges. Actus. Mostanorachos. et de alij kaligundis vultus ex
 usq[ue] p[re]te W[er]no s[er]u. offerret se ad s[er]u. et suscipiantam. Terras suaz. se et obli
 ves suos p[ro] manum n[ost]ram. ad manus d[omi]ni. ip[s]i. conferentes omnino etem ordi
 nationi. stare p[ro]fere p[ro]uocant. Nos u[er]o d[omi]ni. ip[s]i. uices in hac p[re]te agentes de con
 muni consilio ecclie b[er]no. lib[er]is de b[er]no. om[n]ium. et uisum. et
 p[ro]p[ri]o. ac euum b[er]no. tale cum eis pacem. uniu[er]sibus. et firmam om[n]i
 nem. uoluerit q[ue]o. in p[ro]fuerit sacerdotibus recipient auctoritate n[ost]ra sibi destina
 tes honeste et necessitate p[ro]uocabit eos. et eis tanq[ue] uita xani. in om[n]ib[us]. obedi
 et co[n]s[er]u. p[ro] o[mn]ia saluetatib[us]. monites ac p[ro]fere. ab hostib[us]. eos sicut seipsos defendent.
 ab eis o[mn]i[us] uita q[ue]o. mulieres et infantes sacri reuenerentio[n]em baptisatus in
 uoluntate recipient. et alioz. trans xanoz. ob[er]uab[un]t. Ep[iscop]i. aut[em] d[omi]ni. ip[s]i. auctoritate

Lamekins and his Kurs undertook to become Christians, and he surrendered
 his land, himself and hostages to the Pope. Judging from the place-names
 mentioned in this document, the realm of King Lamekins was situated on,
 and chiefly to the west of, the Venta river.

"the taste of those centuries tends more towards the miraculous, and the mediaeval maps are for the most part meant to eke out this particular branch of literature" (Kimble). An immense step forward towards a rectification of the geographical concepts of the world was marked by the appearance of the well-known silver tablet, and of the world-maps composed and elaborated at the court of Roger II, King of the Normans, by the Arab prince Idrisi (c. 1154). This work may indeed be called revolutionary, for it was undertaken with the idea of representing on maps the aspect of the world according to observations, not "according to the books", as the king is supposed to have said to Idrisi. It soon proved to be of great value: the work by this Arab occupies a place of honour in the history of geography.

As a matter of course, the information provided by Idrisi on the Baltic territories is very vague and, if we may believe Ekblom's keen intuition, the confusion is partly due to the misconceived and erroneous representation of the Baltic regions on the map. Yet some rays of light penetrate even into these remote parts. The explanatory text to the map still bears evidence of the influence of the "books" (thus, for instance, some of the descriptions of the peoples of the coast-land are strongly suggestive of Pliny, cf. chapter I). However, a few historical observations are also to be found there, as, for instance, the note on the castle-hill which was fortified against the Russians, and some observations concerning the traffic routes connecting the most important centres. The proper names in the various editions of the maps refer mainly to Sweden, Finland, Estonia (*ard laslande*, or *lestlanda*). Kurzeme is called "the land of the magicians" (*ard al magus*), i.e. of the heathen, which is the usual name for these countries, the religion of which is unknown to the author, and the names referring to it are very few, very vague and much contested.

Madsuna, according to Ekblom, might be identified with the famous Semigallian fortress Mežotne, *Sumi*, or *Sarnu*—with Alsunga, or Alšvanga, a place on the western coast of Kurzeme. The "Dark Ocean" (cf. *thalassa skoteinès* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus) with its numerous islands proves that Idrisi, like his predecessor Adam, cannot free himself of the tradition of fables: for him, too, there exist in these regions islands of Amazons, of virgins, of witches, etc., though the griffons and other monsters which still merrily populated the volumes of maps of the 14th century (Hereford, Ebstorf, and others) have disappeared.

The main feature of the sources indicated is that they are too incoherent to form a complete picture. This deficiency is all the more felt, because it covers three or four centuries. Another very great handicap is that the information provided by these sources is fundamentally non-factual. However, it would be wrong to ignore them as has been done up

to now. The beginnings of many other ancient civilisations—like that of the Celts, Etruscans, and, partly, of the Romans—are no less obscure. Yet some critical, or we may even say hypercritical, schools of historians of the last century have been compelled to cede their positions to work based on more careful historical investigations. Therefore we are not only entitled, but even obliged, to try to systematize this material as far as possible, in order to form a general, if incomplete and dim, vision of the past of the Latvians or the Balts in general, and to include them in the process of development of the rest of the European civilisations. In this way the Baltic peoples may be shown in a different, more equitable light than that which has been thrown on them before. Let me hope that my attempt will encourage others, and that in due time we shall be able to raise the history of the Baltic from a "provincial" level (on which it was kept until recently) to that of an autonomous and personal history, which indeed it fully deserves.

After this brief résumé of the historical and the pseudo historical sources regarding the 9th and the following centuries of Latvian history, I will attempt to approach the thorny and much disputed problem of Scandinavian expansion on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. An answer to it has in part already been given by archaeological investigations, especially by those made in Sweden. First, however, some historical problems of a general character ought to be recalled.

The first of these problems is that of the river Daugava and its possible rôle as a route of the Viking expansion. As we were able to state, the historical and literary material is extremely scarce as is the information derived from archaeological excavations, though the most recent findings of Latvian archaeologists on castle-sites such as, for instance, Daugmale, increasingly testify to the fact that this "track" was used by "armed traders or by invading warriors who engaged in commerce" (Kliuchevsky). Kossinna does not hesitate to include this large river in the road-net of the Viking expansion, while Vasmer, who bases his theory on the data provided by the place-names, believes that, besides the connection of the Daugava with the Dnieper by Kaspjyavolok, there have been six eastern routes: the first four leading from Lake Ilmen to the Volga, the fifth, in the same direction, over Lake Ladoga and the Svir, and the sixth—up the river Daugava as far as Lakes Penno and Volgo where the river Volga has its source; this waterway of the Daugava has been of great importance and the intercourse maintained by Polotsk and Vitebsk with Scandinavia proves that it has been used intensively.

The second point of interest to be observed is that in the Scandinavian texts the Estonian region and coast is more frequently mentioned than

the territories of the Kurs and of the Old Prussians. From this and other observations the fact is rather easy to explain: (1) the Estonian coast, especially in its northern part, provides a natural access to the base of



Map 12. The topography of the Latvian castle-hills. The Latvian castle-hills, though dating from various periods, mainly originated from the Late Iron Age. The most important of them may be identified with the help of other historical sources which mention the locations of ancient Latvian tribes and communities. The castle-hills are to be found mainly in densely populated areas and in places of strategic and commercial importance, as well as in the ancient Latvian borderlands of the west—in Kursa, and in the eastern and southeastern regions of Letgallia.

the Scandinavian expansion near Lake Ladoga, Lake Ilmen and other lakes; (2) it is plausible to assume that the Vikings had a greater interest in the wide possibilities which the waterways of the Russian plains promised them, than in the Baltic coasts themselves which might indeed serve as a useful and even indispensable *pied à terre*, or jumping-board, during the peak-seasons of migration; (3) it must not be forgotten that continuous threats of the Estonian pirates, offering resistance in their fortified castles, represented at times a serious danger to the Scandinavians, as, for instance, on the island of Oesel (a notable naval base even nowadays).

The third fact to be stressed is the non-existence of a prolonged occupation in these coastal regions: they are only temporarily subjugated; the population often regained their freedom and turned to counter-attacks

which must not be underestimated. That is why Scheel,²³ who greatly admires the force of expansion of the Northmen, states in conclusion that the ideal of Swedish political hegemony in the Baltic area fell far short of what it was in reality. Similar are the conclusions with regard to the changing and short-lived Danish success in Kurzeme and, especially, in Estonia up to the end of the 13th century.

When we associate the above with the various tides of the general movement of the Vikings, already alluded to, and include it in the lucid and categorical scheme laid down by Bugge,²⁴ we can state that between 793 (when the monastery of Lindisfarne in Northumberland was sacked) and the beginning of the 11th century when the Viking incursions ceased, there are at least four periods to be distinguished in our country's history, of which we have only a very sketchy outline, yet it gives an insight into the military, commercial, and cultural development of the mutual relations between the two shores of the Baltic Sea.

I. The first period, or more exactly, the total information available to us up to the 9th century, is, as a matter of course, extremely poor as far as definite data are concerned. After the emigration from the island of Gotland towards the east, which is mentioned both in the Gutasaga and in the Yngling-saga, and which took place between 400 and 850 as far as may be gathered from the scanty information of the northern sources, the Swedish kings started their eastern policy about the year 600,²⁵ *i.e.* considerably before the time assumed by A. Bugge. Also Rimbert and Saxo provide some clue and from the former's sufficiently accurate narrative we are able to understand that, after repulsing the Swedish-Danish inroads, and rejecting their claims (*sed iam tunc diu erat, quod rebellando eis subijci dedignabantur*), the Kurs again won back their freedom and independence about 800, a date undisputed by historians. T. Arne²⁶ supports it with the material obtained from excavations: "on examining the Swedish finds in Russia, we see that the oldest of them are of the 8th century, and that they have been excavated in Kurzeme." A little later, in the early 9th century, the Swedes established bases on the Lakes Ilmen and Ladoga for the great trade route to the Caspian and the Black Sea. These observations allow us to form a fairly distinct idea of the initial activity of the Vikings in the East and, to a lesser degree, of other historical occurrences on the shores of the Baltic.

II. Quite an important movement, one of wide implications for the entire East, starts in the middle of the 9th century. It is in this connection that Rimbert's brief episode (told in c. 875, but referring to the years 853—855) deserves more than merely local attention in regard to the foundation of the Russian state and to the florescence, lasting almost

for two centuries, of the trade with the East. It is part of that push of the Vikings towards the vast expanses of present-day Russia which was to have such far-reaching consequences. "It is interesting to state," writes B. Nerman,²⁷ "how the assault of the Swedes on Kurzeme coincides with their trend towards the territories east of the Baltic Sea." And, "thus we



Ornament of Kurish halter of the 12th century. Parts of horse halters, among them ornamental strap mountings, are frequently to be found in Kurish graves of the Late Iron Age. This sample shows the frontlet ornament which consists of two strap-end mountings and a cross-shaped pendant. This ornament is of iron, its surface being silver-plated and the ornamental lines being done in niello technique. Similar ornaments on parts of harnesses, halters and stirrups have been found in Kursa in fairly large quantities. The forms and ornamental design betray Scandinavian influence.

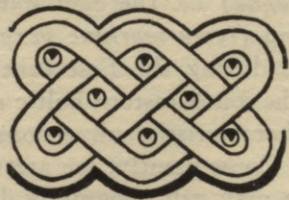
Analogous specimens outside Kursa, however, are unknown, which testifies to their local origin.

become aware of the conscious adoption by the Swedes, immediately after the middle of the 9th century, of a policy directed against the eastern Baltic" (p. 51—52). For the Kurs this meant a temporary subjection to Swedish domination, as has been described by the same Rimbart; for north Livonia, *i.e.* for Estonia, it involved many complications with the Russo-Varyags, their immediate neighbours. Besides Rimbart, it is also mentioned by the so-called Chronicle of Nestor (862 A.D., see chapter V), and it is Snorre Sturlason's St. Olaf-saga which informs us about these significant events, while Saxo mentions occurrences of somewhat later years (between 866 and 894). The repeated incursions and wars in Kurzeme testify to the endurance and power of resistance of the Kurs, due to their political organization; it shows plainly the difficulties which the Swedes had to face in subduing the Kurs completely.

III. At the end of the 9th century and during the 10th century there is a vast expansion of the Vikings over the Russian plain, as is shown by their assaults on Constantinople and on the Caspian littoral, and by their conquest of the powerful Khazar state (in 965, Prince Svietoslav), etc.—brought about by a general development and growth of their political and economic influence along the extended network of the Russian riverways. This influence is depicted in the Ingvar-saga, so interesting to the writer of Russian history, and also containing some Livonian reminiscences. It must be remembered that this was the time when the huge deposits of the Arab dirhems were made in Gotland, Sweden, and, in quite respectable quantities, in Latvian territory also, especially near some riverways.²⁸ It is but natural that this movement should have its repercussions along the coastal regions of our country, though it gradually ceded in importance as a starting point for the trade route to the strongly developing principal base of Novgorod (*Holmgård*). The Swedes do not succeed in retaining in their hands absolute control over the Kurs, and the latter again contrive to regain their freedom.²⁹ The historical material about the Scandinavian countries is now more complete, having been enriched with the Runic texts, analysed by Bugge and Arne; in these, as also in some literary sources, a number of proper names are mentioned from the western coasts of Kurzeme and further on as far as the mouths of the rivers Lielupe and Daugava, which allow us to form an idea of the commercial relations, and the appropriate commercial methods, which were extremely active even for those times. In the early 10th century, presumably about 920—925, the raid on the Kurish littoral by Egil Skallagrimsson took place. His picturesque and highly extolled saga is an expressive poem on the topic which may be characterized by a quotation of Saxo Grammaticus: "... and he became a pirate of the seas" (*praedo maritimus factus est*). The saga is, at the same time, the most extensive of all northern texts on the Latvians, rich in detail and description of places, as seen through the eyes of a Nordic poet. If the chronology of the ancient Danish kings is correct, it is to the beginning of the 10th century that the wars with Dorno, king of the Kurs, mentioned in the Frotho-saga, and those with "Hellespont", *i.e.* the capital of the Livonian king, and with Polotsk (*Paltiska*), are to be referred.

IV. The last period is that of the 11th century about which there is less information available, in fact, little more than a few Runic stones which tell us about fighting in Vidzeme (*Liflandi*) and about cruises towards Zemgale (*Simkala*) round the cape of Domesnäs (*Tumisnis*). "These Runic stones and a few archaeological data," writes Arne, "prove that the Baltic littoral, together with the Russian empire (*Gårdarike*)

and Greece, continue to be the target of the Viking incursions up to the 11th and the 12th centuries. From the aspect of eastern trade, these centuries mark the end of the import of dirhems and the beginning of a national industry both in Russia and in Latvia (brooches and other ornaments were also exported to Sweden).⁸⁰ From the point of view of general history, the 11th century, according to Kossinna is a period of vigorous Viking expansion, particularly in the west and to the south of the continent. In the east, however, the activity of the Russian princes becomes evident and begins to show signs of a trend westward (cf. the great victory, in 1106, of the Semigallians over the Russians). Towards the beginning of the 11th century the Kurs are again independent, and a decline of the Scandinavian interest in this direction becomes apparent. Considering this slow but profound change of inter-relations, we eventually become aware of certain political-geographical, or geo-political, consequences, *viz.* the growth of a new and very important centre in the Baltic—the island of Gotland, whose capital, Visby, was a rather insignificant fortress in the 10th and 11th centuries, but developed in the following century into a centre which controlled almost the entire commerce of the Baltic Sea, outshining the once notable centres Birka, Sigtuna, Haithabu, and the Old Prussian port of Truso.



* A 12th century decorative ornament from Kurzeme. Plait and knot ornaments engraved on bronze mountings or worked in niello technique on silver-plated iron objects developed under Scandinavian influence and were very popular in Kurzeme in the 11th and 12th centuries A.D.



V

THE SLAV EXPANSION

As we have seen, repeated efforts had been made by the Norsemen to gain control of the Livonian littoral, especially of its Estonian part; their attempts met with little success, for they did not contrive to create lasting political units there such as had been established by them in different parts of western and southern Europe. According to Helmoldus's *Chronica slavorum* they attacked "the rest of the neighbouring states" (*cetera finitima regna*) i.e. the Slav states around the Baltic excepted, by sea and by land (*terra marique vexabant*), yet their pressure gradually diminished and during the first centuries of the second millennium the situation in the south-eastern Baltic remained without notable changes, without those characteristic subversions customary in the times of the Nordic expansion. Consequently, we are faced in these regions by an equilibrium which we may call geographical rather than political, it being more a state of balance between vast stretches of land as yet unexplored, and hence not dominated by the forces of expansion, rather than the result of a counterpoising of potentially great but reciprocally neutralising powers. It is the resistance of the local nations and their developing political units that has to a considerable extent contributed, in the 11th and 12th centuries, to the political balance of these parts of Europe.

* Disk-brooch of the 13th century A.D. The brooch was formed by an iron disk with a wrought bronze facing soldered on to it. Similar ornaments were known in Latvia from the 5th century A. D. onward, and as late as the 12th century they were mainly to be found in Kursa and Semigallia, though usually in wrought silver mounted on a bronze base. The use of iron for ornaments became widespread in the 12th and 13th centuries. The zigzag pattern was usual in the local ornamentation of that period, the design of the central circular part of the brooch being derived from mediaeval western European ornamentation.

According to the scanty information provided by the historical sources, very important changes took place in the north-eastern parts of Europe during the second half of the first millennium of the Christian era. Since these changes shaped the foundations of the numerous subsequent developments, extensive geographically and decisive historically, it is necessary to analyse this process which has been so momentous in the past and which was to be so important for the future of the Baltic peoples, and to attempt an understanding as to where and how the increasing danger which threatened their fates grew and enlarged. I am speaking here of the Slav expansion which during the centuries discussed in this chapter begins to take the form of the growth of the more or less extensive and notable Russian principalities outside the borders of the regions then inhabited by the Baltic peoples. The Russian political potential was gradually assuming the part of a counterpoise in the scales of the historical destiny of the entire eastern littoral of the Baltic Sea.

According to philologists and historians, the beginning of the extensive Slav migration is to be sought in the 5th or, at the latest, in the 6th century A.D., attaining its greatest extent in the 8th century. After that time new factors began to operate which eventually limited or reduced the vast territories occupied by Slav settlers and, to a minor extent, that of the Slav conquerors. Such factors were the Teutons, the Byzantine Empire, which had regained its strength after a period of weakness, and finally the Magyars who were to play so important a part in the future history of the Western and Southern Slavs. Even if the first symptoms of a reduction and shrinking of the Slav-occupied territories in Central and southern Europe had become apparent at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries (in eastern Europe the process of development was different), the well-known Ibrahim Ibn Jakub, as late as in the 10th century A.D., was still fully entitled to draw attention to the considerable population of Slavs extending northwards from "the Syrian Sea" to "the Ocean". If the level of political culture attained by these masses had been such as to enable them to form into large and solid political units, and if in the course of centuries the Asiatic hordes had not compelled the Eastern Slavs to face eastward, the fate of Central Europe, and that of the countries around the Baltic Sea in particular, would have been different and the Baltic peoples might have experienced an invasion similar in nature to that which Ivan the Terrible led several centuries later. Reviewing the course of events it becomes clear that the Slavs, during the formative period of their political development, sustained a series of reverses which fall into three distinct phases.

The first, chronologically, was the arrival of the Magyars from the Far East. Russian chronicles mention their moving past Kiev at the end

of the 9th century A.D. They settled in the Danube basin on the slopes of the Carpathian mountains—a region for which so many nomadic tribes from Asia, such as the Huns, Avars, etc., appear to have had a strong liking—thus dividing the Slavs of Central and southern Europe into two groups and thwarting their aspirations towards powerful political unity. The second phase was that of the Teutonic expansion, initiated by Charlemagne against the Slav tribes who had settled in the Hamburg area, on the banks of the river Elbe, in Bavaria and elsewhere. Beginning at the same time as the Nordic, or Scandinavian (Danish and Swedish) offensive, this Teutonic pressure lasting through centuries did, in the long run, not only put an end to the authority of the Slavs on the entire southern littoral of the Baltic Sea, but isolated the Czechs and partly paralysed the Poles, hindering, if only for a certain length of time, the development, under favourable geographic conditions, of an extensive and powerful empire in the Vistula basin. The third, closely following the second, was the occupation of the territory along the eastern shores of the Baltic, at the end of the 12th century A.D. This occupation prevented the Slavs, in this case the Russians, from obtaining access to the Baltic Sea for several centuries. Similarly they were cut off by other powers from the Black Sea.

Thus, the first millennium of the Christian era, especially its second half, gave rise to a number of problems which continued to be of vital importance in the subsequent centuries. Though there have been many attempts, the obscure and incomplete sources have made the task of elucidation of these problems a thankless and difficult one for the scholar. Every endeavour, however, has been made to add to and complete the picture, for, as Aristotle has remarked: something can only be understood when one sees its inception and subsequent development.

With regard to the question of the place of origin of the Slavs, prior to their expansion towards the west, south, and east, it is now more or less generally agreed that owing to the absence of commercial intercourse between the Slavs and the Roman Empire it must be assumed to have been located in some isolated area, difficult of access, which by its isolation and possibly limited extent might account for the very poor development of dialects among the Slavs in general and the strikingly conservative character of their language. All these circumstances indicate that the region in question might have been identical with the Polesie area with its expanses of marsh and with Volhynia, *i.e.* in out-of-the-way places to the east and west, respectively, of the lines of communication between the Baltic and Bohemia on the one side, and the Baltic and the Black Sea on the other. It may be presumed that the Slavs in eastern Europe have been in contact with Iranian tribes in the south and south-

east, with Baltic tribes in the north, and with Finnish tribes in the north and north-east, which in remote times populated the regions of Moscow, Tver and Kaluga.¹ Generally speaking, it must also be remembered that the Baltic languages were more widely diffused in prehistoric times, as has been pointed out in chapter II. The question of the origin and the original home of the Slavs has in recent times much occupied the minds of Slav and particularly Polish archaeologists and historians, the most noted of them being Professor J. Kostrzewski, J. Kozłowski, T. Lehr-Splawinski and others. The result of their work has presented the whole problem in a different light. Through the study of the ethnical classification of the Lusatian Culture they have been led to present a new theory of the origin of the Slavs. Assuming, as the theory does, that this large cultural area of the Bronze Age in Central Europe has been of Slavonic origin, the ancient seat of the Slavs occupied the vast region between the Oder and the Bug and the southern littoral of the Baltic Sea between the Vistula and the Oder. Most of the principal literature about the new aspect of this question is to be found in the survey by Professor T. Sulimirski and in the cartographic work by K. Jazdzewski.²

In his recent book³ the well-known Polish philologist, T. Lehr-Splawinski, basing himself on archaeological data, locates the settlements of the early Slavs more to the west (approximately in the present Polish territory) and supposes them to have also occupied part of the Baltic littoral, the so-called Pomorze. With the object of throwing light upon the extensive movements of the Slavs during the period of at least 500 years of which there is no historical documentation, it will be expedient to quote here Niederle,⁴ one of the most outstanding scholars of Slavonic philology: "Until the 6th century the Slavs continued to move but slowly. Before that time they did not settle within clearly defined areas. The great migrations having gradually come to an end, a new situation began to gain shape in Central and eastern Europe. The Slavs came into contact with their more advanced neighbours who already knew ways of tilling the soil in a rational manner. On the other hand, the attacks of the Avars, and their rule that followed, compelled the Slavs to form into larger units and to erect fortified centres. Hence, in the second half of the first millennium A.D., a number of palisaded sites and ramparts were to be found in the territories populated by the Slavs."

It is possible to illustrate these general conclusions with quotations from contemporary authors. Thus, for instance, Jordanes (6th century) writes: "Vast regions, extending from the northern slopes of the Alps to the head-waters of the river Vistula, are populated by the numerous tribes of the Vinids whose names vary according to their different groups, but who generally call themselves Sclavins and Ants. The Sclavins populate

the northern parts as far as the Vistula; the swamps and forest are their towns. Towards the ocean (*i.e.* the Baltic Sea), where the three arms of the Vistula flow into it, live the Vidivars who are an aggregation of various tribes; beyond them the sea-coast is inhabited by the Aists (Baltic people)." Procopius (6th century) speaks of the Ants as composed of a large number of tribes (*ethne ametra*) and describes them as dwelling in "miserable huts scattered rather at a distance one from another". Although this description refers to the Balkan Slavs, Niederle thinks that it is applicable to the other Slav groups as well and arrives at the conclusion that at a later time there might, in suitable localities, have developed larger settlements, *i.e.* villages.

All these immense masses of people expanding, or—as Niederle puts it—streaming, in all directions, but in the main along the lines of least resistance, and scattering over the territory in the form of separate political units, represented a danger owing to their overwhelming numbers, their ability to resist under the most miserable conditions of existence, and, lastly, on account of their great rate of numerical expansion. Thus, the Slav peoples occupied during the time of their greatest expansion a territory at least five times as large as that which they populated before they began to move a few centuries earlier. Many tribes, populations and peoples would have been overrun and engulfed by the Slav tide, had they, the Slavs, not lacked the will and the ability to stick together politically and thereby to develop the highest form of political organization. Indeed, no such union is visible, each tribe and each group leading a life of its own and fighting and quarrelling one with another in spite, or rather because, of their close blood-relationship. Contemporary evidence evinces anything but the idyll such as Herder, in his time, wished to evoke. Two leading motifs predominated: disunity and ostentatious bravery. Even at that time Procopius speaks of the ancient democracy of the Slavs which he assumes to have been the cause of their misfortune. The Emperor Mauritius (6th century) finds that the Slavs and Ants, being continually on the move, are undisciplined (*anarcha*), mutually antagonistic, unruly and unmanageable. Another Byzantine emperor, the renowned Constantine Porphyrogenitus (10th century), underlines the lack of notable political centres among the Slavs, and Ibrahim Ibn Jakub states with emphasis: "in general, the Slavs are rash and aggressive, and had they not been disunited owing to their innumerable clan ramifications and tribal discords, there would not have been a single people in the world to match their power."

Other observers, however, are not so greatly impressed by the Slavs who despite all their symptoms of bravery reveal a rather low level of fighting ability. Thus, Jordanes holds them to be dangerous only in num-

ber and not in armament, while the Emperor Constantine flatly calls them unarmed (*aopla*). In this connection it ought to be remarked that Charlemagne, the first to launch large-scale attacks on the Avaro-Slav kingdom, took good care not to provide them with arms, prohibiting the export of weapons and armour (*arma et brinas*) in 805 A.D. Ibrahim gives a detailed description of Slav fortifications, and Niederle's investigations reveal the fact that the first fortified wall built of stone was that constructed at Novgorod in 1044, while in the rest of the Russian towns, or rather villages, the defensive system continued to be made of wood and clay, as may still be seen from many a 16th century drawing.

According to Einhard, Saxo, and others, under such circumstances, despite the fierce and warlike character of the Slavs (*gens bellicosa, durissima, ferocissima*), the task of the aggressor could not have been so very difficult, especially if they were handled according to the classical principle *divide et impera*, or simply by a superior and more able political organization. Indeed, we see the weakness of the Slavs in their inability to withstand the assaults of the Avars, and their still greater failure to resist the attacks of other Mongolian nomads who succeeded in imposing upon them a heavy yoke lasting for centuries.

The expansion of the Slavs in the 10th century is represented on two maps attached to Niederle's manual where it is shown as extending from the Elbe as far as Lake Ladoga, and from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. There remain several ethnic islands, left more or less intact in the vast Slav expansion: (1) that of the Balts and the Estonians, as the most ancient groups (excluding the regions occupied by the Finns in Central and northern Russia, not yet reached by the Slav expansion); (2) that of the Hungarians in the Danube basin, and farther towards the east the lands of the Roumanians. On examining these maps, another picture emerges: that of a vast river which has broken its banks and flooded the huge plains towards the east, its limits being, on the one hand, the Baltic littoral, and the countries bordering on the Danube and the Black Sea on the other. A remarkable historical process such as this could not very well have remained unrecorded. Indeed, there are scores of German, Nordic, Byzantine and Arab sources of the 9th and 10th centuries which cast some light, even if it is somewhat vague and diffuse, on the occurrences of these centuries which are of such great importance for the ensuing periods. Material on the Eastern Slavs, *i.e.*, the Russians, who interest us primarily, is provided by the last three groups mentioned; and in the Nordic and Arab sources we occasionally find some allusions to the Baltic peoples as well. The movement of the Norsemen towards the east coincided with the magnificent development of the Arab trade activities in the east—the Khazars on the lower and the Bul-

gars on the middle Volga acting as intermediaries—at the time when Bagdad was the capital of the Caliphate and the Abbasid dynasty ruled the Persian Empire. As a result of this coincidence the 9th and 10th centuries have been called “the Age of Arab Trade”. Thus, northwestern Europe came into contact with the south and south-west, and the flourishing centres of the Near East and Persia. This rapprochement took place mainly in that part of eastern Europe which was still untouched economically. Although they were off the main trade routes the Baltic peoples derived a certain amount of benefit from this contact. The quantities of Arab dirhems and other eastern relics found in Latvian soil, especially in the vicinity of the main waterways, indicate that this country, too, was included in the large network of economic and cultural relations.

The geographical significance of the two great waterways has been dealt with in chapter II. In the present chapter, our task is to follow up and point out the development of the political relationships, especially noting its effect upon the Baltic peoples, particularly the Latvians, through whose country passed one of the secondary Scandinavian arteries of communication with the east. A vivid description of the Dnieper trade route is given by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his treatise *How to Administer the Empire*. The so-called *Toparcha Gothicus* (also written in the 10th century) calls the Dnieper “a worker of miracles” (*thaumatoipoion*), for its capricious nature rendered navigation difficult. The arterial routes of the Dnieper and the Volga, together with their basins, which for natural and military reasons were not easy to control, represented the most suitable nuclei for the future political developments in the whole of this area, especially after “the sleeping beauty”—the Russian plains—had been roused from her eternal slumber. This was effected by means of the stimulus provided by the Byzantines, Northmen, Arabs and Persians whose influence, at first, did not extend beyond a long and narrow strip along the Dnieper and its headwaters.⁵ The middle course of the Dnieper offered a centre with numerous possibilities for expansion in all directions, being the meeting-place of a number of waterways and lines of communication, and provided yet another important stimulus for Slav “imperialism”, such as has been described by T. G. Chase:⁶ “Seeking to insure the integrity and the safety of the trade routes with which they had mapped the Eastern Slav lands, the Kievan rulers did not hesitate to launch a series of military expeditions against the neighbouring Aistians. In 983, therefore, Vladimir defeated the Yatvegians; in 1038 and 1040 Yaroslav also put the Yatvegians to rout and apparently even enslaved their easternmost populations. In 1044 Yaroslav successfully attacked the Lithuanian branch of the Aistians and founded the settlement of Naugardukas (Novogrodek) near the upper Nemunas...” It may

be assumed, then, that the process of infiltration of the Eastern Slavs into the basin of the upper Dnieper was different from that directed towards the north-east which has been so vividly described by A. Rambaud and V. Kliuchevsky⁵ (see below). Along entirely different lines developed the fate of the tribes populating the South Russian steppe-lands which have always been subjected to continual threats and raids on the part of the nomad tribes of Central Asia. Thus, in advancing northward, in the direction of Lake Ladoga and the future Novgorod, the Eastern Slavs wedged themselves into the "corridor" of the Baltic peoples. The general agreement prevalent among the scholars of ancient history, philology and archaeology, on the important rôle of this large waterway is indicative of the angle from which the early Baltic-Slav relations should be viewed. It is also generally agreed that, before the beginning of the Russian pressure upon them, the Prussians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Yatvegians, etc., populated much larger areas than they did in later periods, and that many of their fellow-tribes were either exterminated or assimilated by the Slav invaders. According to Kochubinsky, Thomsen, Sobolevsky, Buga, Vasmer and other authorities, the toponymic material is tragically eloquent about the fate of the Baltic peoples, and the findings of these philologists are beginning to gain general recognition as valid historical inferences. Taking this into account, we have to conclude that, apart from the permanently hostile relations between the Old Prussians and Poles, the pressure exerted on the Baltic peoples by the Eastern Slavs must have been considerable. To quote from the recent work of a German scholar: "After crossing the Dnieper and advancing towards the headwaters of the Western Dvina (Daugava) and the Volga, the Slavs drove the Baltic peoples to the north-west and came into contact with the Finns." This "driving away", expressed so commandingly by the German historian, must be assumed to have lasted for several centuries. Indeed, the struggle between the Eastern Slavs and the Balts must have been long and hard—the Baltic tribes and the Yatvegians fighting desperately against the combined, if not co-ordinated, methods of attack of the Eastern Slavs—a struggle upon which, as late as the 12th and 13th centuries, some light is shed by the historians of that time.⁷ It may be assumed that this manner of fighting was somewhat different from that of the Russian Slavs advancing eastwards into the wooded plains of Russia (as may be gathered, for instance, from the different tone of the ancient Russian chronicles), which were populated by a variety of scattered and disconnected Finnish tribes. An explanation for this assumed dissimilarity of warfare may be sought in the light of the fact—let it be repeated here—that the southeastern part of the Baltic "corridor" formed, as it were, a barrage across the Dnieper—Ladoga waterway which was

grimly defended by the Baltic tribes. This had to be broken. Does not the Galind islet near Mozhaisk, according to evidence so often mentioned by linguists and evidence collected with great assiduity by A. Sobolevsky, look indeed like a remnant of the broken barrage? And do not the settlements of the Balts which survived as late as the 13th century near the sources of the rivers Western Dvina (Daugava) and Volga, around Vazuza, Tver, and Moscow, justify Niederle's statement: "These isolated remnants indicate how great were the difficulties of the Slav colonizers when pushing their way into the Baltic zone?"

The above remarks are not conjectural, but are based, as has been pointed out, on investigations made by philologists and archaeologists. Not all of the most recent writings of Russian archaeologists have been available to me, but one quotation alone will throw some light upon the obscurity of these early centuries. G. Vernadsky⁸ writes as follows: "With the coming of the Slavs, these people settled in many cases in towns which had previously been held by the Lithuanians, and so in some sites the antiquities of the older layer are Lithuanian and those of the top layer Slavonic. One of the most important sites of this kind is the famous Gnezdovo mound area near Smolensk (about 36 kurgans are said to have been counted there, the grave-objects found belong to the 9th or 10th centuries and are of Slav, Norse, or Oriental origin—evidence of the wide range of commercial transactions of the Gnezdovo merchants)." Also of great importance, says the author, are the grave-sites which he ascribes to the 7th and 8th centuries and which testify to the commercial relations with the southern and eastern regions of Russia. For us Latvians the most decisively influential factor has been the centre and district of Smolensk, with the "*volok*" some 20 miles long, and with ramifications in the direction of Polotsk, both these towns having been the principal centres of the Kriviches.⁹ G. Vernadsky continues: "As to Lithuanian antiquities proper they are found in the oldest kurgans of the Gnezdovo area, especially of those on the bank of the Olsha river near the village of Bateki, which were explored in 1922. Among the objects found in the Lithuanian kurgans at Gnezdovo and elsewhere, curved iron sickles of a characteristic type with a curved blade and a long handle may be mentioned first. Iron bits, stirrups, copper bells and other items of harness trapping are likewise interesting; as to the copper bells, they are similar to those found in the North Caucasian area. Of weapons there are iron halberds, spears, and swords; of ornaments, heavy bronze bracelets, torques, and rings. Judging from the inventory of Lithuanian graves and sites, it may be surmised that the Lithuanians were *a warlike people and horsemen* (the italics are mine, A.S.). However, since most of the Lithuanian kurgans belong to a later period and others cannot be dated with

precision, it is difficult to say at what time the Lithuanian cavalry originated." Descriptions follow of agriculture, the struggle against the forests, of how people lived in detached farmsteads, not villages, etc. And lastly, the "linguistic fossils": the names of districts, rivers, etc., more or less modified, it is true, by the speech of the later arrivals. Do they not clearly indicate the former extent of the regions inhabited by the Baltic people? Although some preliminary knowledge is necessary to decipher these names in central and western Russia, the ear of any one knowing the two surviving Baltic languages will find no difficulty in feeling and understanding the meaning of many a placename in the once Prussian Prussia.

At the beginning of the 9th century, possibly in the late 8th century, the Slavs as a people were known to Arab geographers and authors as inhabiting the regions of Lake Ladoga, Lake Ilmen, and the districts about the headwaters of the Dnieper and the Volga. In spite of all vicissitudes and hardships the Baltic peoples, apart from the Old Prussians, managed to survive the onslaught of these Slavs throughout the centuries up to the present day, as the Magyars have done.

Some knowledge may also be obtained from the ancient Russian chronicles about the Latvian people. Most of the information is to be found in the so-called Chronicle of Nestor, which relates to the late 11th century and to the early 12th century, as well as in the Novgorod Chronicle. There are passages in these chronicles which somehow convey the impression that the migration of the Slavs had come to an end. Thus, for instance, we read:

"And these Slavs, having settled down along the Dnieper, called themselves Polyans, and others—Derevlyans, because they lived in the midst of the forests; others established themselves between the Pripet and the Daugava and were called Dregoviches; yet others settled along the Daugava and called themselves Polochanians, after the river Polota, a tributary of the Daugava. The Slavs who settled round Lake Ilmen retained their name, built a town and called it Novgorod; other Slavs, called Severians, settled along the Desna, Sema, and Sula. Thus the expansion of the Slav race came to pass." While the chronicler's geographical data are precise and are based upon accurate information, the last sentence, together with other similar passages leads Kliuchevsky to conclude that among other leading ideas in the Chronicle, may be discerned that of Slav unity, or, to use his own expression, of Pan-Slavism. He comments as follows: "The author is greatly occupied with ethnography, because he wants to unite all the Slav components into one whole, to clarify his stand from an international angle, and to find the links which unite these elements, to tie up his unknown homeland not only with the large family of the Slav

peoples, but also with the traditions of the Christian apostles." The chronicler's geographical, and unmistakably Pan-Slavic, conception is like the biblical genealogy of races and peoples. In this instance it contains an enumeration of the immediate neighbours of the Eastern Slavs. This part of the chronicle has been fashioned under the ideological and technical influence of the Byzantine chroniclers, especially that of Georgios Hamartola (9th—10th century). Nestor's dogmatic approach provides an interesting general picture: "... after the Flood the world was divided between the three sons of Noah, Japhet receiving the lands of the north and



Map 13. The Slav tribes c. 1000 A.D. The boundary line of the distribution of the Slavs (-----) and the settlement schema of the Slav tribes (underlined names). The curve of the Slav tribes encompassing the territories of the Balts in the east has by this time acquired its final shape and become stabilized. The eastern neighbours of the ancient Latvians were the Krivitches, and the name of this tribe was henceforth applied by the Latvians to the Russian people in general.

the west . . . the rivers Don and Dniester, the Caucasian and Hungarian mountains, and from there as far as the Dnieper; also the other rivers, Desna, Pripet, Daugava, Volkhov and Volga, which flow to the east towards the parts inherited by Shem. In the territories inherited by Japhet live the Prussians, the Chudes, and the following tribes: the Merians, Veszy, Mordvins, Chudes, Permians, Pechery, Yamy, Ugrians, Lithuanians, Semigallians, Kurs, Letts, Livs, Lekhs (Poles), and Prussians. The Chudes established themselves near the Varyag Sea. Along this sea live also the Varyags who border, in the east, on the territory inherited by Shem, while in the west they extend as far as the countries of the Angles and the Vlakhs (Italians). To the stock of Japhet belong also the Varyags, Swedes, Normans, Goths, Russians, Angles (English), Gauls, Vlakhs (Italians), Roumanians, Germans, Cordialitians, Venetians, Franks, and other peoples living between the west and the south in the vicinity of the race of Ham." Queer as this geographical vision of the early 12th century may doubtless seem, it is nevertheless rich in precise and detailed data concerning the territory (the Novgorod region, Ruthenia, etc.) with which the compiler was himself familiar. However, it becomes long-winded and vague as soon as he begins to talk about the west and the territories "between the west and the south" for the compiler had no geographical criterion upon which to base his general ideas, vague though they may have been, such as generally served the western cosmographers as the foundation for their accounts. Besides, Nestor's mind is too much occupied by the Varyags of whom he has rather foggy notions and he takes excessive pains to enumerate the various Finnish tribes. Finally, it ought to be remembered that the said Nestor is very nearly a contemporary of Adam of Bremen. It is interesting to observe how these two writers, both with similar aims in view differed so widely in mental outlook: Adam invariably fails to elucidate and to record what to Nestor is evidently clear, and vice versa; to the latter the west for ever remains a sealed book. Most significant is the range of Nestor's geographical visions, if compared with that of his near contemporary, the well-known Icelandic chronicler Ari. The latter's information is less confused than Nestor's in so far as it refers to the vast expanse of the world. Yet how fresh and bracing is the breeze blowing from the ocean and what chances are offered to such enterprising spirits, in comparison with the stagnant mentality of the Slavs.

In conclusion, there is another passage from the same chronicle in which are mentioned the relations of the Eastern Slavs with their neighbours: "Beyond the Polochanians lived the Kriviches (from which the Latvian "krievs", *i.e.* Russian, has been derived) who settled about the headwaters of the Volga, the Daugava, and the Dnieper and whose capital

town is Smolensk; the Kriviches are neighbours to the Severians . . . and are also found along the Oka. The Russian language is only spoken by Russian tribes . . . but there are foreign peoples paying tribute to Russia *viz.* the Chudes, Merians, Veszy, Muromtsy, Cheremissians, Mordvins, Permians, Pechorians, Yamy, Lithuanians, Semigallians, Kurs, Norovians and Livs. These peoples, each speaking their own language, belong to the race of Japhet and live in the northern countries." The Russian chronicler, it may be seen, has so extended the area paying tribute as to include even the Kurs inhabiting the Baltic coastland. Nor does he conceal his "imperialistic", not to speak of his "Pan-Slavic", attitude. This passage caused various controversies among the historians of the last century. Therefore, in order to illustrate the geographical and political confusion which pervades this Russian chronicle in regard to the relations between the Russians and their western neighbours, let us quote from another passage which refers to the year 859 (or 6367, according to the Russian era): "The Varyags from beyond the Sea had tribute paid to them by the Chudes and the Slavs, the Merians, Veszy and Kriviches; the Khazars made the Polians, Severians and Viatices pay tribute, namely one ermine skin from every fire-side, to them." Thus it would appear that the Kriviches, for instance, who were close neighbours of the Baltic peoples, collected tribute from them, but, in their turn, paid their dues to the Varyags. It is evident that some geographical confusion has occurred here. Hence there are ample opportunities for controversy which may become prejudiced when incited by national susceptibility.

The Chronicle of Nestor is not the only one to rouse interest among the Latvians; the Novgorod Chronicle alludes several times to the Latvians, always in connection with some border conflict or incursion (as in 1054, 1111, 1146, 1180, 1200 and other years) into the northeastern Latvian territory, this being the direction of the continuous Russian inroads from Novgorod to Pskov, then to Yuriev (Dorpat) and so into Latvia. Another region often raided was along the Daugava, the trade artery of this area. One notable encounter, in 1106, is worthy of mention here, as having taken place between two eminent political units. It was the bloody battle between the Polotsk princes, the brothers Vseslavichi, on the one hand, and the Semigallians on the other. It ended only after the Russians who tried to break into Zemgale had incurred heavy losses; nine thousand Russians remained on the battlefield. This figure is a very big one for those times, and the Semigallians in question are the same who, a century later, were very highly spoken of by the western invaders as well.

Such is the positive information, or that which purports to be, found in the Russian chronicles about the Latvians. It is regrettably scanty in proportion to the rich historiography which has grown out of it. In the

chronological surveys,¹⁰ besides the very frequent allusions to the Russian internal quarrels with the Germans who had arrived not long ago in the Baltic coast-land, next to nothing is said about matters concerning the Latvians. With the exception of the intricate relations between the Russians and the Lithuanians, the Russian wars (*i.e.* those of Novgorod and Pskov) and conflicts with the Estonians are more frequently mentioned, indicating, as it has already been stated in the chapter on the Vikings, that the Estonian territory was of greater importance, being the foreland providing access to the Neva and Lake Ladoga, *i.e.* to the most important river-ways leading to the growing town of Novgorod. Also the foundation (1030 A. D. or 6538 according to the Russian era) of Yuriev (in German—Dorpat; in Estonian—Tartu) in a district where, according to the most recent archaeological investigations, an important trading centre had existed even in prehistoric times, shows what value the Novgorod rulers attached to these parts, especially during the reign of Yaroslav I.

There is no doubt that the Russian principalities of Polotsk, Novgorod and Pskov, which were founded, or developed, in the 10th and 11th centuries, exercised a considerable pressure sometimes of long sometimes of short duration upon the eastern Latvians in Tālava and on those living along the Daugava, the lower reaches of which were populated by the Livs.

Before noting the views adopted by the different historical schools on these contacts and conflicts, let us consider some of the other data available to us, of a cultural nature, which serves to light up these relations within politically unsteady but ethnically remarkably stable boundaries. To begin with, let us note, with due reserve, the views on the state of Russian civilisation in this period (which Nestor himself characterizes as completely barbaric) of the once so popular historian of the 18th century Schlötzer. These tribes, he says, led a life "as savage as that of wild beasts," or "like animals in the forests," or "like heathen ignorant of the laws of God and making the laws themselves." Leaving the task of elucidating the first stages of their people's culture to the Russian historians, we cannot fail to observe that the Russian principalities with which we are dealing in this chapter had, after all, attained a certain level of civilisation and had been able in some measure to exercise a cultural influence on their western neighbours in the Baltic region. Judging from the comparatively few Latvian words borrowed from Russian, we may conclude that in the main these are such as refer to the Christian religion and rites, and were the result of the penetration of the Orthodox creed into eastern Latvia. Literary proof of this fact is provided in the Jersika Gospel, a manuscript copied in 1270 by a certain George, "the son of a

Latvian priest of this town." Another group comprises terms from the trade and juridical vocabulary; there are also some names for winter garments, plants, etc., and some phonetic influence is traceable in the eastern Latvian dialects.¹¹

The toponymic material, on the contrary, does not on the whole evince any ancient Russian influences, whereas those of western, e.g. Scandinavian, origin are evident in some river-names. However, the archaeological excavations which were carried out on an increasing scale during the last years before the Second World War, and which have been investigated from different angles, reveal in a striking way the absence of Russian relics, except for some small crosses and a few objects imported from the East. To mention but one among numerous instances, let us remember the results of the excavations made in recent years at Jersika on the Daugava, which by German and Russian historians is held to be the indubitable capital of an ancient Russian principality. The rich material found there (for instance that from the 32 graves) is purely Latvian, dating from the 10th to the 13th centuries, and only in two graves can a partially Lithuanian influence be traced. Now the question put by Latvian historians and archaeologists is: how has it been possible for this "undoubtedly Russian" principality to disappear from the surface of the earth without leaving traces, amidst the Latvian surroundings, of an administration or a "družina"? On this particular point H. Laakmann¹² has no doubts whatsoever: "The principality of Jersika was much more important than that of Koknese. There reigned Prince Vsevolod Mstislavich who was of the Smolensk princely dynasty, being the son-in-law of Daugerut, the Lithuanian ruler; on his mother's side he probably descended from the Rogovolodichi of Polotsk . . ." These genealogical data are based on the investigations by Baron von Taube which are mentioned further on. There was a number of critical and controversial discussions on this matter published¹³ before the excavations at Jersika were started.

The so-called Baltic German historians have frequently ventilated the question of the intrusion, in the 11th and 12th centuries, of the Russians into Latvian territory, and have arrived at conclusions which are evident from the titles of their respective works. Let us quote two of them. One is F. von Keussler's treatise, written in Russian, on *The End of the First Russian Rule in the 13th Century in the Ancient Baltic Territory*, and the other, M. Freiherr von Taube's *Russische und Lithauische Fürsten an der Düna zur Zeit der deutschen Eroberung*.¹⁴ With "the Russian rule", "Russian and Lithuanian princes" in Latvia, nothing much remains concerning the "natives" and their chieftains (Häuptlinge), as the Latvian rulers are methodically called by von Taube. Keussler's conclusions are as follows: (1) In the late 12th and early 13th centuries the power of the

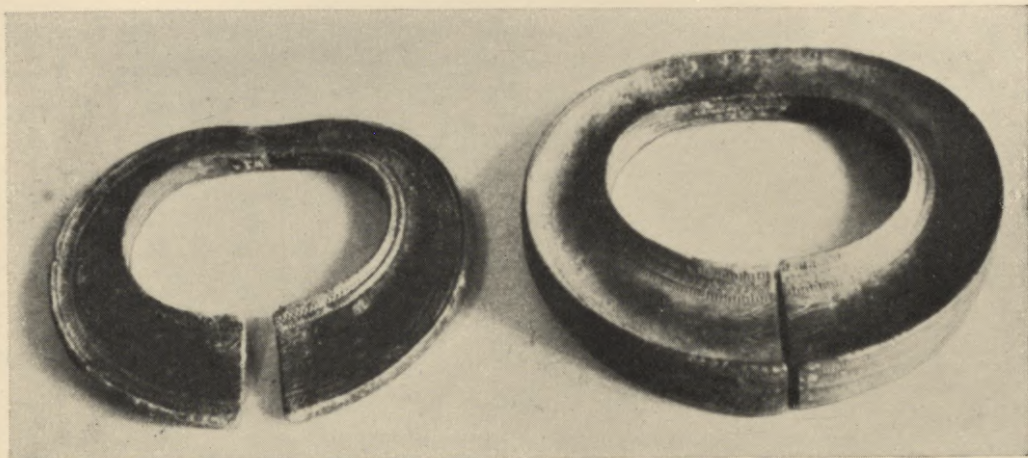
Russian princes of Polotsk, with their fortified bases of Jersika and Koknese, extended as far as the Liv border near Aizkraukle; (2) The district of Tālava paid tribute to the principality of Pskov; (3) Novgorod, on the other hand, had always held Estonia in dependence; (4) The Letts of Kurland: the Sels, Semigallians, and Kurs, were still independent at that time. As regards von Taube, he has put into circulation a new theory about a "combined Scandinavian-Russian undertaking" in the eastern Baltic, founding it on the diplomatic marriages and the respective genealogies, the so-called ancient tribute paid by Novgorod to the Vikings until the death of Yaroslav I, but more especially on the continuous influx into these regions of Scandinavian warriors. This is an hypothesis which elucidates some matters, among them the fact of the competition between the two powers. It cannot, however, with the help of the parallelism of the attacks, explain the irregularities of the Viking invasions, and still less the Russian conditions which were characterized by the prevalence of mutual quarrels and rivalries of the princes and principalities. The following is one of von Taube's conclusions on the nature of the Russian overlordship in eastern Latvia. He admits of no regular incorporation of all Estonian, Latvian and Liv territories in a united, consolidated and powerful Varyago-Russian state. In his opinion, the relations with the eastern Baltic peoples were unsteady to a degree; it was more likely to have been an expansion of the political-economic influence of the Varyago-Russians in the eastern Baltic, brought about in the manner practised in earlier times when taking possession of certain bases in the interior of Russia, as was done when the Varyago-Russian centres of Holmgård—Novgorod, Gnezdovo—Smolensk, and Kunigard—Kiev were founded. In a similar manner the Russians occupied, in the East Baltic, in the Estonian and Latvian territories, certain points and roads which were important from a military and economic point of view, especially those along the rivers. There, at certain junctions, they installed their governors who were dependent upon their superiors, and who subjugated a number of indigenous tribal chiefs (Stammeshäuptlinge) or village elders (Dorfälteste). Thus they secured for themselves the payment of tribute, and occasionally levied the native population for military tasks.

All the same, the ties of dependency must have been rather loose, for the autochthonous tribes were, judging from certain symptoms—their very warlike and aggressive nature, and the territory itself—scarcely accessible. Early in the 11th century, probably after the death of Vladimir in 1015, the Estonians, Latvians and Livs regained their freedom, because Yaroslav, Vladimir's son and his successor to Novgorod and Kiev, was compelled to start in 1030 a new war against Estonia, etc. Also von Taube's cartographic inferences are much to the same effect: "The only correct carto-

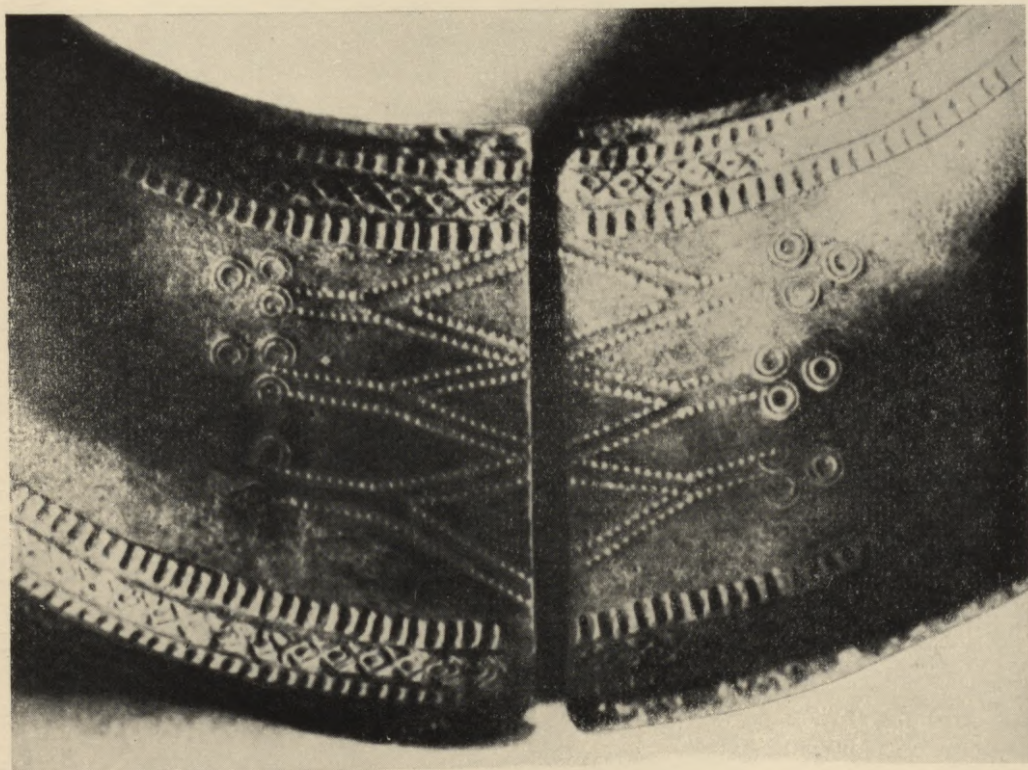
graphic method of representing similar geo-political situations appears to be the system of designating a number of definite centres of Russian domination in the Latvian, Liv and Estonian territories by way of tracing the exact limits of this Russian domain as imagined."

One of the main points of speculations like these, common to this school of historians, is their assumption of an almost complete absence of any political and national organization whatsoever among the so-called "natives", in this particular case, among the Latvians. However, the historical sources, much less the national school of historians, do not supply any evidence entitling von Taube to speak of "chieftains" or "indigenous tribal and village elders". In the two great Livonian chronicles those designations which do occur are those which were current in western practice for denoting the Livonian political rulers, though in a somewhat modified way, which, incidentally, might have arisen from uncertainty in interpreting the local terms. Thus, for instance, in Henricus's Livonian Chronicle Kaupo is *quasi rex et senior Livonum*, while Visvalds of Jersika and Vladimir of Polotsk are *reges*; the rulers of Koknese and Pskov are *reguli*, but Viesturs of Semigallia is *princeps ac senior*, and Vesike, the successor of Kaupo, is called *Livonum princeps ac senior*. The Rhymed Chronicle calls not only the Lithuanian king Mindaugas *konic*, but also Viesturs and Nameitis of Semigallia. Finally, Lamekins, the Kur, is denominated *rex* by the representatives of the Holy See. In his treatise on the Latvian castle-hills F. Balodis gives a complete list of these designations consisting of some 20 quotations.¹⁵

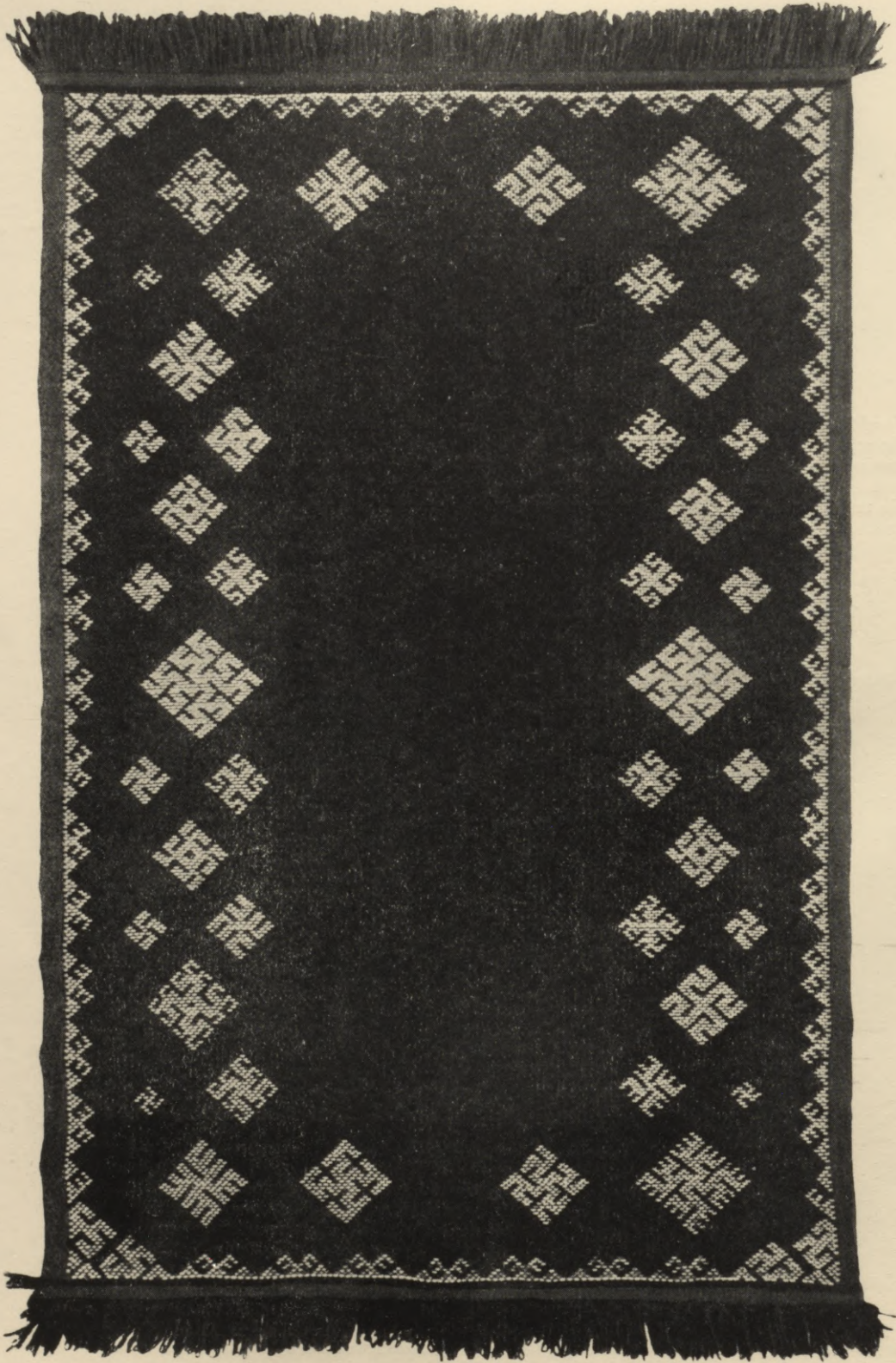
Such an enumeration, even without going into linguistic and juridical details, will compel the objective historian to refrain from rushing to conclusions. The close analysis not only of these terms but also of those used for qualifying their juridical meaning will induce us to examine with due attention the arguments of the *altera pars*, i.e. of the Latvian and Estonian historians as well, which may result in new historical conclusions. Just to touch upon one example of this type of argument, there is the problem of the Latvian castles. The Germans, in the early 13th century, had some 140, as has been pointed out in chapter I. But the total number of Latvian castle-hills, i.e. of castle sites so far recorded, is 321, of which 79 are in the Kur, 24 in the Semigallian, 32 in the Sel, 158 in the Letgallian and 28 in the Liv territory (the latest statistics being those of F. Balodis¹⁶). The distribution of these castle-hills formed a strong system of defence lines against outside enemies such as the Vikings, Russians, Estonians, and Lithuanians, and also possible enemies from within the country: "strong and well-organized state-authority must have existed to govern and guide the masses of people needed for building castle-hills of such numbers and dimensions."¹⁷ It may not be out of place to mention



"Warriors'" bracelets of the 10th and 11th centuries. These bracelets are characteristic of Letgallia and are to be found exclusively in male graves of the period from the 10th to the 12th century in Letgallian districts. The massive and heavy-shaped forms of these bracelets developed from those with club-shaped ends which appeared in the 8th century A.D. and in Letgallia underwent some change of form, their sides became flatter and the inner, and later also the outer, rim broadened and became sharp-edged, which produced a I-shaped section, characteristic of this particular kind of bracelet.



Centre part of the warriors' bracelet (enlarged approx. 2:1). The surface of the bracelet is decorated with a very fine and elaborate geometrical ornament, worked by means of a small toothed wheel on the wax mould of the bracelet and left unretouched on the bronze cast and without any further enchaing. Only the triple concentric circles at the tops of the triangular ornaments were stamped afterwards.



Replica of an ancient Latvian woman's woollen shawl of the 11th/12th centuries. The dark indigo-blue woven shawl is decorated, similarly to that shown on page 67, with a pattern of small bronze rings twisted into the fabric. The edges of the shawl are ornamented with a row of simple and ornamental triangular motifs. The main ornaments, which

are strewn along the borders of the shawl, consist of a variety of loosely grouped swastika-patterns which were the favourite motif in the ornamentation of that period. The shawl was worn round the shoulders and fastened on the breast with a brooch (see p. 110).

in this connection the recent book¹⁸ by F. Lot, especially the passage¹⁹ from it dealing with the formation of the system of strongholds in the border-lands. Henricus the Chronicler uses the term *castra* for the major castle-hills. Finally, let us cite some of the conclusions arrived at by A. Švābe who, jointly with archaeologists, has delimited politically and culturally the four principal Latvian state units which were doomed to succumb under the blows of the Teutonic Order. From among his numerous books and treatises we shall choose the most recent one,²⁰ but as the compass of this chapter does not permit the citation of the whole of his argument, only a few of his conclusions will be given here, leaving to the reader an opportunity to compare the different theses of the various schools of historians.

After a minute analysis of the numerous chronicles and other sources, Švābe's conclusions with regard to Tālava, the northwestern district of present day Latvia, are summed up in the statement that the tribute paid to Pskov and Novgorod mentioned in the Chronicle of Henricus was the more or less transient result of the lost war of 1180, or, in other words, was a matter of recent origin. According to Švābe, it might be accounted for by the shifting of the Russian political centre of gravity from the south-west to the north-east: "If from 1054 till 1169 it is Kiev which can be regarded as the metropolis of Russia, then in the following Suzdal-period (1169—1242) when the Germans began occupying Livonia there were three such capital centres: Volhynia in the south-west, Novgorod in the north-west, and Suzdal in the east."

More complex is the situation along the Daugava waterway, or, using the vocabulary of the Baltic German school of historians, "in the Russian-dominated principalities", *i.e.* in Koknese and Jersika. During recent years a controversy has started among historians about the Latvian principality of Jersika (Gerzeke, Gercike). The Latvian historians doubt the Russian and German theses which suggest its having been a Russian principality either by dynasty or in a political-military sense. Brief mention has already been made of the outcome of recent archaeological excavations which proved detrimental to the Russian and German theories. Another proof is that the Russian sources—the very rich and explicit Russian chronography—never mention this principality when enumerating the rest of the Russian states. Lastly, the well-known passage²¹ from the Chronicle of Henricus about the land of Visvalds ("Vissewalde" in the original spelling), *terram Ruthenorum tuorum Christianorum*, is interpreted by Švābe not in the sense of an ethnic but of a confessional designation, in contrast to Latvian Christendom. Moreover, the analysis of the Russian sources leaves with the investigating scholars the impression of a prolonged internal crisis in the principality of Polotsk; a crisis,

broadly speaking, in the democratic administration of that principality, and caused by the unending wars between the heterogeneous Russian princes fighting for supremacy. These wars increasingly weakened this notable centre of expansive trade to a point which eventually forced it to yield to the unremitting attacks of the Lithuanian rulers (it was incorporated in 1303 in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). It is evident that the princes of Polotsk who once regarded even Bishop Albert as their vassal—according to the Russian manner of interpretation—had to curb their aspirations towards fashioning the political conditions in the whole area of the Daugava waterway. Visvalds, king of Jersika, is characterized by Henricus himself as a friend (*amicus*) of Vladimir of Polotsk, implying a sense of understanding rather than of subordination. We do not know what their arrangements were like, but “a union was necessary to both principalities in order to regulate the conveyance of goods and people on the Daugava water-route, the key to which nature itself had placed in the hands of the lords of the Jersika and Dignaja castles”.

As we see it, the earlier theories of historians, based in part upon certain prejudices formed in past centuries, regarding a more or less complete absence among the Latvians of political organization about the time of the arrival of the Teutons, are not sufficiently well-founded to explain the course of many of the events in those remote centuries. Nor is it quite clear why the beginnings of Latvian history have necessarily to be quite so obscure and so devoid of organization, whilst that at the early dawn of history of the other Baltic peoples, the Old Prussians and the Lithuanians, had not; the early history of so many other peoples has been elucidated with the aid of an equally scanty and confused historical documentation.

In concluding this chapter let us recall one of Švābe's conceptions in order to mould the local affairs into the framework of the great historical events occurring in this area: “By the end of the 12th century Mongolia had grown up into a great power and, led by Jenghiz-Khan, advanced towards the west. After conquering the Caucasian states in 1220—21 and after the battle of Kalka in 1223, the Tartars gradually occupied Russia, seizing Kiev, the ancient capital, in 1240, which event marks the beginning of the era of the Tartaro-Mongolian yoke. For a long time to come Russia was compelled to orient herself towards the east, while in the west, alongside the Teutonic Order, developed the kingdom of Lithuania under the leadership of Mindaugas who, after 1240, took over the political heritage of western Russia. Under such conditions, there could, in the early 13th century, no longer be any question of a Russian danger in the Baltic which was then exposed only to the menace of the Teutons and Lithuanians. Therefore, there are no grounds for maintaining, as is frequently done in literary works, that the Teutonic

occupation saved our people from the fate of russification. As to any conjectures regarding the course of development the Baltic peoples might have taken without the interference of the Brethren of the Sword and of the Teutonic Order, the only assertion possible would be that, beginning with the forties of the 13th century, the Lithuanian military and political pressure on the Baltic would have increased, and Russia's influence would have diminished becoming even less marked than it had been in the 12th century."



*

* Ornamental pin-head of the 13th century A.D. A late mediaeval variation of the usual 8th century cross-pin from Semigallia and Kursa. An ornamental combination of the so-called loopcross and a central sun motif. The pin-head is of iron with the ornament in bronze plate soldered on to it.



VI

THE KNIGHTS IN LIVONIA

The partial infiltration of the Russians on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea in the 11th and 12th centuries stopped when this littoral was occupied by the Germans. The wrangling Russian rulers were thrown back into their own territories and were compelled to renounce the idea of attacking the population of this coastland. Thus their attempts to unsettle the balance, which finally took a favourable trend towards the west, were frustrated for a long time to come. But if it had not been for the Germans who halted their advance how far would the ambitions of the princes of Novgorod and Polotsk have been realized? Was there any reason to suppose that the blows of such a destructive and terrible impact as those dealt by Ivan IV and Peter the Great, respectively, might have been struck earlier? Certainly not, considering the weakness of the Russians at home, the rivalry, and the interminable wars among themselves, as well as their constant fears that they might be invaded from the south by the wandering nomadic hordes hailing from the highlands of Asia. Further, the forces in the Baltic lands of a military-political character, mentioned in the previous chapter, must also be taken into due consideration.

The German incursion shattered many local aspirations in the eastern Baltic and created a wall of defence there which held out firmly and obstinately for centuries against incursions from the east. All chances for the indigenous population to develop were paralysed at the roots. And when the time was ripe for a first critical survey of the events, it was G. Merkel who, with vigour and emotion, raised his voice in 1798:¹ "You

* Fighting scene between the Old Prussians and the knights of the Teutonic Order. Relief from a column capital in Marienburg Castle. The form and bad state of preservation of the relief make details undistinguishable. Among the arms carried by the Prussians we see a battle-axe, a sword and a bow.

historians of a civilised Europe, how very much your career differs from mine: the history of your nations, in one brilliant period at least, is like the life of a man in the prime of his vigour and activity. I am standing at the hearse of a youth, murdered by blood-thirsty robbers ere he could half develop. You have deeds to record: I have nothing but talents to point to. You are offering wreaths of laurel: I am planting a solitary cypress sapling. You are claiming the respect of posterity for the bygone days of your nation: I am only soliciting sympathy for mine, deeming myself happy, if the pity which the gruesome crimes of past centuries must arouse, would but stir the present century to righteousness. Deprive me of the hope even so much as in a remote way to bring about the restitution of my country's forgotten rights by unmasking its oppressors; deprive me of the hope of inducing the cosmopolitan to take an interest in it—and the pen will drop from my hand.

Yet, not only to the soft heart of the cosmopolitan, but also to the sober mind of the historiographer must the time of youth of the Latvian nation be of importance. The nation (here the Aists are meant) which now, morally and politically, has been annihilated, once seemed destined to play a brilliant part in the north of Europe. Nations which now hardly deign to remember its existence were once painfully aware of its power and feared it; nations which now tread on it once shrank with fear from the sword it wielded, or bent under it. Sweden and Denmark could hardly save themselves from the joint Latvian-Estonian fleets, and their territories extended from the borders of Germany almost to the Dnieper. Numerous Russian provinces were once bound in allegiance to Latvian princes. More important, however, than their power were the qualities of their spirit. Added to an Asiatic-exuberant imagination were firmness and courage, flexibility and remarkable talents for all kinds of improvement; Nordic vigour was coupled with Indian gentleness. Though the annalists of their oppressors slandered them, hundreds of charming traits, which slipped out, give them the lie. Even the tyrants who ruled over these peoples tried their utmost to disfigure them; however, numerous indications to the contrary even now betray that high character which nature had once bestowed on the Latvian people. I am looking back on what this nation promised to become, and grief forbids me to draw a comparison."

The movement of the Germans or, more correctly, of the Saxons, before reaching the gates of Old Prussia and the Livonian and Latvian ports, is transferred to numerous geographical points between the Elbe and the Vistula and the Dvina (Daugava); it shows several phases of development, at least during the three centuries of the Saxon expansion which may be

tersely expressed in the formula "Drang nach Osten", or, in the words of a popular song of those times:

Naer ostland willen wij rijden
 Naer ostland willen wij mee
 Al over de groene Heiden
 Al over de Heiden
 Daer isser en betere stee —.

The foundation for future expansion was laid by Charlemagne, that great "assailant of the world" (*Weltenstürmer*)—a name given him by Schlötzer—and a large-style organizer of western Europe which was then suffering from the miseries of disorganization. Charlemagne exterminated, subjugated, and christened the Saxons, the future agents of the expansion (782—785), and blotted out the Avars from the inventory of peoples. The Saxon kings (Henry I, Otto I, and others, until the death of Henry II in 1024) had two irreconcilable enemies in the east: the Hungarians and the Slavs. Their conflicts with the latter account for many things concerning our country's affairs; these conflicts delayed the Saxon invasion into the Baltic countries.

Those of the Western Slavs, who happened to get into the double grip of the Germans, resisted for a long time when pressed by the Northmen and the Saxons, showing, occasionally, admirable energy. The Rugians, for instance, braved the Northmen, and the Viltians fought against the Saxons. A chronological survey, providing an insight into this drama which lasted for centuries, unfolds the following picture of events: the advancing Saxons began by creating a zone of bishoprics and marches (*Marken*) in the plains east of the Elbe. By 948 there already existed the bishoprics of Havelberg, Brandenburg, Oldenburg, Schleswig, Ribe, and Aarhus, and by 965 there existed, in addition, the great marches of Nordmark, Ostmark, Lausitz, and Meissen, to which, ten years later, were added the marches of Nordgau and Austria.

The great revolt of the Danes and the Slavs, in 983, laid waste Hamburg and several towns and bishoprics, among them Brandenburg; thus the work of one dynasty was almost completely wrecked.

The Frankish dynasty (1024—1125), much engaged in Italian affairs, was unable to implement its plans of expansion towards the neighbouring Slavs; this was left to the Stauffens (1125—1254).

Now that we know *when* these events occurred, we can say *how* it all came to pass. The vast Teutonic expansion to the east was, as it were, the subsiding wave of the Great Migration of Peoples, which, between "the end of Roman Empire and the Ottonic period, pushed the Germanic tribes back beyond the banks of the rivers Rhine and Danube", and

"this country being an uninterrupted expanse of plains, where it is impossible to find any natural obstacles which might be used for its defence, they (*i.e.* the Germanic kings and dukes) could use but one method, namely, that of protecting their native land with the help of vast territories, occupied by them in foreign countries. However, as soon as these new regions were colonized and gradually converted into German territories, new annexations became necessary to cover the extended German lands". This very lucid formula by Barbagallo² is quite instructive, as it represents the military process and the methods of creating new "marches"; methods which were rather clumsily employed by the National-Socialists. Also, considerations of an economic and social nature are evident in the appetite of the German peasant, worn down by the feudal system and the crises, for new territories, and in his aspirations to improve the conditions of his existence. Here is another quotation from the historian just mentioned: "The demand for land on the part of the new arrivals was favoured by the masters . . . who had first conquered the new regions with their arms and were in need of people to defend them, till the soil, and found new settlements and towns . . . ; if, occasionally, the new settlers were slow in arriving, the local lords provided other means of attracting immigrants to those half-deserted countries. They first of all chose some influential clergyman to recruit these immigrants, but later, with a more practical approach, they appointed a veritable immigration agent, the 'locator' . . ."

The new settlements were populated by three social elements: aristocracy, citizenry and peasantry. The Saxon peasants were "accompanied" by town citizens and pauperized feudal lords. The conquerors had done their work, the farmers were to do theirs, and in addition there was the task of founding and organizing the town centres. It was there in those towns that the blood circulated, as the political economists of the 18th century remarked. King Stephen of Poland said, "If the nobility may be called the ring on the nation's finger, then the towns are the pearls of this ring." The Teutonic invasion into present-day Germany and East Prussia was provided with all these three indispensable elements and that accounts for its endurance and longevity: aristocracy, citizenry, peasantry—blessed with a monastic blessing. In Livonia, however, they had only "the ring and the pearls", which, as we shall see, the "aborigines" did not hesitate in due time to pull off and throw away. But let us be fair and hear what T. Schieman³ says: "Livonia is a creation which shows what could be achieved by the German citizenry and nobility without the national base of peasantry." The result of this very extensive and active expansion of "land-taking" (*Landnahme*)—expressed in a modernised Viking term—was that in the second half of the 12th century vast

Western Slav territories became in the end either subjugated or germanized. In addition, strong German vanguards (merchants, artists, scholars) were to be found in Polish towns like Poznan, Cracow, and Lwow. There remained but a strip of land between the Slavs and the Germans, populated by peoples which were "neither Germans nor Slavs nor Christians". Their turn, too, was to come in due course, though their position was a defensive one covered by rivers, forest, and marsh. Theirs is a very significant situation in this intermediate zone between the more or less established and organized countries of western Europe and the east which was still in a state of fermentation (E. Lavisse).⁴ Apart from the local interests involved in the economic expansion, this motif was one of the features of the papal world policy which, thanks to Pope Innocent III's strong personality, reached in the late 12th century the peak of its worldly power which it retained for almost a hundred years. It is clear that, wedged in as they were between two powerful Churches which were both, to a certain degree, the spiritual manifestation of political aspirations, the fate of the Balts (*i.e.* the Latvians, the Lithuanians and the Old Prussians), which for so long had remained outside the direct influence of those Churches, was decided *a priori*.

It will be appropriate to give here an epitomised chronological outline of the events connected with the Christianisation of the region east of the Elbe, in the vast plains of Lithuania on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, as well as in the immense open spaces of Russia and in Scandinavia. Not only will such a summary enable us to state *when*, but also help to elucidate *why* it all happened as it did. Here are the principal facts. Poland and Russia adopt the Christian faith, from different sources, towards the end of the 10th century (Mieszko, 967; Vladimir, 988), the Southern Slavs—at a yet earlier date: the Slovenes and the Serbo-Croats—at the end of the 8th century, the Bulgarians and Czechs—in the 9th century. In Scandinavia this process suffered some delay, as local circumstances retarded it. For instance, in Norway the efforts begun by King Harald Fairhair, who died in 934, were not successful until the reign of Olof the Saint (1014—1030). At the same time Christianity became firmly rooted in Denmark where Knut the Great reigned. In Sweden the Christian faith began to spread during the activity of St. Ansgar (801—864); though a temporary reversion to paganism failed to stop the process of Christianisation, heathenism survived as long as the second half of the 12th century, up to the time of Eric the Saint who died in 1160. In the outlying provinces, far from the central regions, such as in Lapland and in Finland, people were christened at a still later period.

The circle was thus narrowed slowly but irresistibly, and the fate of the Old Prussians and the Latvians was to be decided from the west.



Ornaments and costume worn by a Latvian girl of the 12th century. The head-tillet is of threaded bronze spirals with, at the back, a chain-pendant, whose ornamental ends are seen thrown over the left shoulder. The massive necklace is the Letgallian flattened neck-ring, with a row of dangling trapezoid bronze pendants. The arms are adorned with both spiral and common flat bracelets, two worn on each wrist. On the fingers are spiral and plaited rings. A large horseshoe-brooch on the breast keeps the woollen shawl in place, which, with its rich pattern of bronze ornaments, is the most sumptuous part of the Letgallian woman's dress of that period. The dark bluish purple tint of the shawl beautifully sets off the shining pattern on it, which consists of small flattened bronze rings plaited into the fabric, and the rest of the glittering metal ornaments.



Old Prussian warriors meeting the Bishop of Prague, later Archbishop of Gniezno, St. Adalbert. On the cast bronze door-wings (12th century) of Gniezno Cathedral is depicted the missionary work of Bishop Adalbert and his martyr's death in the land of the Old Prussians (probably Samland). The Prussian warriors are armed with lances and long two-edged swords of the Viking type. Their shields are oval, having a rather flat top and pointed bottom. The Prussians stand bare-headed and wear long moustaches with ends pointing downwards, which conveys rather a Slavic impression, but may be accounted for by the Slavic surroundings, in which these reliefs were created. Bishop Adalbert, clad in his bishop's robes and holding the crozier, is seen disembarking. The ship, on which he went on board at Danzig, is shaped like a Viking boat, with dragon-heads adorning bow and stern, and four pairs of oars, i.e. eight oarsmen. Only one rower, however, is represented and three empty oar-holes are to be seen. The mast and sail are lacking, being probably omitted with a view of better representing and putting into relief the principal figures.



The martyr's death of St. Adalbert among the Old Prussians in 997 A.D. Adalbert is represented praying, in a kneeling position. While someone is about to cut off his head with an axe, another (who in the legend of St. Adalbert is called Siggo) lances him in the back. The axe, which is particularly elaborate, shows a detail on the inner side of the blade, a sort of barbed spur. Axes with a similar additional detail or ornament were only used between the 10th and 12th centuries in East Prussia and in Gotland. It is evident that the artist has been familiar with the characteristic contemporary peculiarities of the Old Prussians, and that he has tried to depict them as far as the conventional manner and style of that period allowed him to do so.

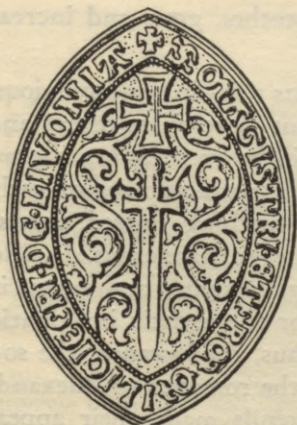
The Western Slavs, who were still pagans, resisted the joint pressure of the Saxons and the Catholic Church. And even as late as about 1120 the entire territory between the Baltic Sea and Czechoslovakia, between the Elbe and the Saale and Christian Poland, was on the whole still pagan. Retra, the famous centre of a heathen cult, was subdued in 1068, so was Arcona in 1168, and thus, one by one, the regions of the Obotrites and the Pomeranians surrendered. The new marches—the Ostmark, the Nordmark and Brandenburg—met their inevitable fate and, in the second half of the 12th century, the whole of this territory was already subjected to the power of the Latin Church and the Teutons.

After the renewal of the German pressure in the east, especially after the Christianisation of Pomerania in about 1139, and after the conquest of the Wends in 1160—1162 and the incorporation of Mecklenburg in 1171, which year also marks the beginning of an extensive occupation of eastern Germany by Poland, the circle is closed. Outside it remained the Lithuanians who shrank from being christened forcibly by the Order and who did not adopt Christianity until they formed a union with Poland in 1386, if we disregard the unsuccessful, or more correctly, for sheer political reasons, feigned baptism of King Mindaugas in the middle of the 12th century.

We must say a few more words here about other and smaller efforts to christianise the Baltic peoples prior to the big scheme. Mention has already been made in the last chapter of the intrusion among the Eastern Letgallians of the Eastern Church and its results. Apart from this, several ineffective attempts were made among the Kurs (see chapter II) and the Old Prussians, during which the Czech apostle St. Adalbert suffered martyrdom. It is known that both the Old Prussians and the Kurs had large centres of a religious cult of their own; they adhered strictly to the faith of their ancestors and did not care in the least about the new religious doctrine which had become prevalent among the communities of the peoples of western Europe. This is what Adam of Bremen says about it: "Much good might be said of the habits of these peoples, if they had but accepted the Christian faith, whose preachers they ruthlessly persecute. It is among these people that Adalbert, the renowned Bohemian bishop, gained his crown of martyrdom. Up to the present day they (the Old Prussians) deny access to the springs in the groves, though everything else is exactly as in our country, since in their opinion these springs become polluted when approached by Christian people (*quos autumant pollui christianorum accessu*)." The second half of the 12th and the first half of the 13th century mark an era of great material and spiritual tension in western civilisation; an era whose importance is long remembered. The solidarity of Christendom enabled western Europe, as

early as at the end of the 11th century, to take part in wars as one unit: the First Crusade (1096—1099), the Second Crusade (1147—1149), inspired and perfectly organized by Bernard of Clairvaux, the Third Crusade (1189—1192), and the Fourth Crusade (1202—1204) inspired by Pope Innocent III, as well as expeditions to Spain and to the Baltic countries. "Feudal Europe marched", to use an expression of Bédier,⁵ and advanced again towards the Near East, and after the conclusion of the Fourth Crusade, which resulted in the capture of Constantinople (1204), a Latin Empire was founded (1204—1261). Innocent III (1198—1216) established Papal supremacy over the German Empire and during his Papacy the Holy See reached the apex of its power and influence which stretched even to Bulgaria, Armenia and elsewhere. The Church succeeded in obtaining so great a control over human minds that world-plans of such romantic dreamers as Frederic II (1212—1250) failed.

By these and similar facts we may gather that there existed in those times a tense spiritual atmosphere. Indeed, the 12th and early 13th centuries are, in the history of mankind, exceptionally prolific in the fields of religious art and literature. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091—1153) was a typical product of the age. He was a marvellous organizer of masses, an incomparable orator, "doctor mellifluus", and a charmer of souls. He formulated the spiritual ideas of that time. It was from the movement of the Cistercian and, in part, also of the Premonstratensian Order that the religious manifestations of that time issued and expanded. During St. Bernard's lifetime there existed 50 abbeys, while in the 13th century there were as many as 1,700. His treatise *De Laude Novae Militiae*, written for the Order of the Templars, is a veritable verbal crusade, a battle-torch: "Not being allowed to wield a sword, I am wielding my pen," he wrote. It is he who coins the well-known symbolic saying about the two swords, and it is he who rouses the friar-knights "to go to war against the adversaries and to consider them as enemies or as being like animals". Many centuries later, Treitschke⁶ gives vent to his enthusiasm over the defeat of the Old Prussians by the Teutonic Order saying that the victory gained was due to a threefold hatred: the knight's, the Christian, and the German hatred, which according to his notion means "the play both of the material and the mental swords of the faithful on the enemies' backs with a view to crushing once for all any arrogant thought of revolting against God's knowledge". After all, it is but St. Augustine's programme *compelle intrare*, extensively developed and enlarged in the century of the crusades. The results were soon evident: we see indeed the cross carried on the tip of the sword into the Near East, into Spain and into France; and the organizations of the friar-knights, the Fighters of God, though not devoid of worldly defects, which were condemned by



Seal of the Order of the
Brethren of the Sword
(1221—1232).

+ S MAGISTRI.
ET FRM MILICIE CRI.
DE . LIVONIA



Seal of Bishop Nikolaus
of Riga (1229—1253).

+ NICOLAUS DEI
GRATIA RIGENSIS
EPISCOPUS.



Seal of the Town of Riga.
(1226)

+ SIGILLUM BURGENSIV I RIGA
MANECIV.



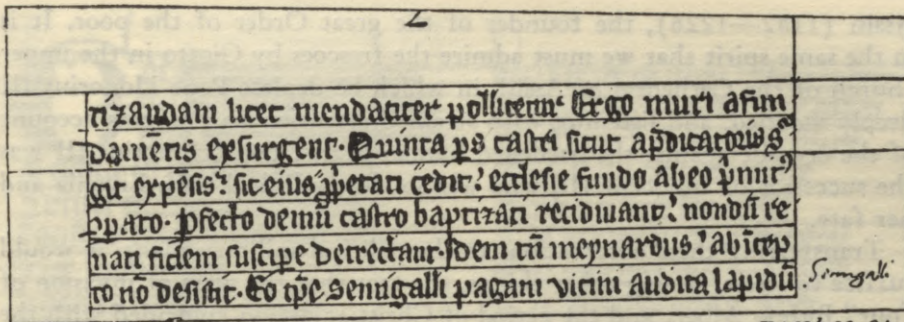
Main seal of the Riga Cathedral
Chapter (1234—1269).

+ SIGILLUM : CAPITULI : RI-
GENSIS : ECCLESIE :

the same St. Bernard in his treatises and speeches, grew and increased in number.

Parallel to the mighty unfolding of religious thinking and religious exaltation, we also become aware of the luxuriant floescence of art and literature during the 13th century. Let us begin by mentioning the marvelous development of Gothic art which gave a great number of cathedrals to the happy countries of western Europe, something, indeed, that seemed to the austere St. Bernard unnecessary and even dangerous. In addition, mention must also be made of the beginnings of many new forms in literature, which reflected as in a magic mirror the artistic imagination incited by contacts with the fabulous east. Thus, for instance, the so-called classical cycle, created after the manner of the romance of Alexander the Great, took shape. Simultaneously other trends made their appearance, tending towards the enticing realms of rich exotic fantasy (novels of adventure, and the Breton cycle) which marked the unfolding, or the so-called second renaissance of aestheticism and individualistic lyricism—if we class the period of Charlemagne as the first, and the well-known Italian Renaissance as the third. However, all these tendencies, too beautiful, too delicate, too much pervaded with sinful thoughts, were destined to perish under the heavy tread of two forms of universalism, *viz.* the secular and spiritual sword-bearers of St. Bernard. Indeed, after committing his literary sin of *Le roman de la charrette*, Chrétien de Troyes ends by writing about Percevale, the seeker of the Grail, in which task he is joined by his numerous friends of the Round Table. In the end, however, only those few elect remained who had been acquitted and purified. Arthur, King of the Bretons, the main culprit in this wicked romanticism, finished by disappearing into his mysterious lake. Provence, the home of the troubadours and the seat of the Albigenses and the Cathari, became a vast arena in which heretics were put to the sword by the crusading faithful. Folquette, the well-known troubadour of Marseilles, became a Cistercian monk and, later, as Bishop of Toulouse, assisted in blotting out the sectarians with such a fervour that the Pope was obliged to interfere. And St. Dominic (1170—1221), whose task was to lead back the heretics into the bosom of the Church, founded his large project of *Ordo Veritatis* on the observations gained in this field. When, in 1208, a crusade against Provence was proclaimed, the crusaders were told that, "The way is neither long nor hard, and the remuneration will be generous." Similar promises were probably made to attract men to join the crusade against the Baltic countries.

Thus, with heavy and solemn steps, the great forces of the religious and political world advanced with their grandiose plans for creating a kingdom on earth as in heaven. Whatever opposition of local character

Fol 22^b, 22-24.

Reproduction of a passage from Henricus' Chronicle (*Henrici Chronicon Livoniae*). This chronicle deals with the events in Latvia between 1180 and 1227. The author is not mentioned in the chronicle, but it may be deduced from the context that these annals were written between 1225 and 1227, by request of Bishop Albert and of the Order of the Sword, by a Latvian priest from Ymera, ordained in 1208. The chronicler gives a history of the Christian mission in Livonia, depicting mainly the progress of the conquest of Livonia. We also find in the chronicle some valuable information about Latvian economy, Latvian beliefs and Latvian political organization. The chronicle has survived in several manuscripts, of which the *Codex Zamoscianus* of Warsaw is nearest to the original.

happened to be in their way was crushed by the iron-clad knights exhorted by the holy summons of the monk of Clairvaux: "March on without fear and strike unhesitatingly the enemies of the Holy Cross and of Christ." The troubadours took refuge in the neighbouring countries. Many castles, renowned for their refined poetic culture, fell victims to the flames, and magnificent cathedrals rose one after the other, and the townspeople clustered in their narrow abodes around these incomparable symbols of an ardent faith. It was a world which obliterated its past.

However, in order to be fair and conscientious observers, it is our duty to view the other side of the coin. We must first examine the most important figures in the drama of this epoch. When reading, for instance, the biographies of Innocent III and Frederic II, we are immediately aware of the dilemmas under which these powerful spirits writhed, of the human sufferings which we see side by side with an indomitable ambition and lust for power, of the decay which lay hidden behind the shining façades of their fancies, of the passions which raged in their poor human hearts! Let us not forget that it is this mighty Pope who is the author of the treatise entitled *De contemptu mundi sive de miseria humanae conditionis*, which mirrors so many reflections and thoughts like the classical *vanitas vanitatum* of Ecclesiastes. Likewise, let us not forget that this era of fame of the Church confers a nimbus of heroism to the practice of humility, so conspicuous in the life of the poor "bridegroom", Francis of

Assisi (1182—1226), the founder of the great Order of the poor. It is in the same spirit that we must admire the frescoes by Giotto in the upper church of the Cathedral of Assisi, in which he depicts Pope Honorius III deeply worried, and listening with strained attention to Francis's account of the crusade against the hardened human hearts. Pope Honorius III was the successor of Innocent III, who was so closely linked with Livonia and her fate.

Transferring these observations to the political-military plane, it would suffice to stress, among other things, the fact that the wars of invasion of "our" Bishop Albert and the period of Christianization coincided with the Fourth Crusade which revealed the "imperialism" of the crusades in all its nakedness and which evoked Pope Innocent's most profound indignation: "Instead of reaching the Promised Land, you have been shedding the blood of your Christian brethren. The inhabitants of Zara, crucified, are hanging on the walls of the city . . ." Indeed, Zara was captured and devastated (the will of the Venetians!) in November 1202. In April 1204 followed the terrible drama of Constantinople and the foundation of the Latin Empire. Our town of Rīga was founded in 1201.

Similarly, Frederic II, one of the most impressive personalities of the Middle Ages, had light and dark sides to his character: whims without number, respect and hatred—according to circumstances—for the higher ecclesiastical authorities, a fondness for philosophy and for the sciences of the condemned (Jews) and the infidels (Arabs), a court of an oriental style, and an interest in the beginnings of Italian literature based on Provençal tradition (the Sicilian school). A true synthesis of the contrasting trends of that epoch, and a true bearer of the "second sword" of the Church Militant!

The inhabitants of the sandy and wooded shores of the Baltic Sea, now included in the circle of the most extensive plans of domination, saw and felt the approach of the decisive and fateful hour which was to fetter them for many centuries to come. The tension exploded, as we have seen, in many directions: towards the east, the west, and the north. The Mohammedans, also proud of their civilization and no less uncompromising and fanatical than their adversaries, responded with heroic feats, as, for instance, in Spain. This gave rise to the famous epic *El Cantar del mio Cid* and to the most dramatic *Leyenda de los Infantes de Lara*. The history of the crusades to the Near East fills impressive volumes, but it will be sufficient to mention here one episode told by Ibn Gubair, a Spanish-Arab traveller of the 12th century. He tells how the Mohammedans, on establishing themselves in a Christian church at Damascus, wished to convert it into a mosque; Al-Walid himself was the first to begin. In answer to the Christians who warned that whoever destroyed their church would go

G ot der huneſ vnd erden	Die künſt in nicht wollen loben
Sin dem erſten lies gewide	Da wir ſolden vnſer litzē coten
vnd alles das darinnet	Ach ſiner lide zu aller ſtunc
ſediuſ in vil kurtzer vult	Erde wille zunge munt
z vnnē maſſe ſterue ſchin	Solde un ſtete ſin bereit
Touſent nach dem willen ſin	Das got legan der criſteuren
Tier vnd vilde	Vnd vns von code hac irloſt
vogel in lebender vilde	Das iſt ein ſchidder twiſt
Die hat er vnderſcheiden	A neu den die criſten ſinc
An iuden vnd an heiden	Wen wir heſen gotes künē
hat er heuor in alden tagen	Ob wir den namen eren
Als manich buch kan von im lage	Vnd vns von ſuden ſeren
ſegange manich wunder gros	So wil er vns zu lone geben
Des ſiner gute iude verdoſ	Dort bie im eul ewig leben
Allen zungen iſt zu ſmal	W ir ſullen ein rede leben an
zu ſpreche von des wunders zal	Do got d criſten heic legan
Das got die meldet an ſich na	mit ſin ſelbes meuldereic
was ſelden vns da von bequain	Vnd die martere gelet
Das kan uch niemac wolle lage	Do iſt iſt er an dem dunde tage
Da wir muſ ich der rede dagen	Vnd loſte maude ſele us dage
Allen menſchen was der iſt	mit den er von himen vur
Edom von adamos vult	Zu hunele von d werlde vlur
vnd noch zu dem leſten zu	Do ſante er ſinen heilige geiſt
Das got ein ende maden vil	Zu des gelouben wolleiſt
D ierde an der leſten ſtunc	D an uoch was vil manich lant
künē ſpreche was ic munt	Da ſin lob was vntekant
In liſt in erte ic gewan	Do ſante er ſine boten hui
vnd heren wiſe als d man	ſine guade was mit in
D ſalomon geuener was	Wa ſie quamen in die lant
künē ſant loup vnd gras	Da er ſie hadde hin gelant
lotlich ſprachen von der ſac	Das ſie das volc leſeren
Die got an vns ſegange hat	Vnd den gelouben leiten

Reproduction of text of the oldest Latvian rhymed chronicle (the Bergmann Codex, 14th century A.D.). The 12,017 verses of the chronicle are written in Middle High German and describe the historical events in Livonia between 1243 and 1290. The chronicle is a work of the Teutonic Order in Livonia and was written by one of its members who accompanied the Master of the Order on his journeys and knew Kurland and Semigallia particularly well.

mad, Al-Walid answered, "May I, for the love of God, be the first to go mad," whereupon he began his work of destruction, and the other Mohammedans joined him. This reminds us of similar acts committed by the Christian champions; they too devastated the places of worship of the Nordic peoples, the Slavs and the Balts.

The crusades, as we have seen, were more or less simultaneously directed towards the west, the east, and the north. The Orders of the Knights were founded, grew and developed and formed the vanguard of an expanding church. Thus in Spain the Orders of Calatrava, of St. James, were well-known, and in the Near East, the Orders of St. John, of the Templars and, later, the Teutonic Order (1198) which developed fast and vigorously under the guidance of its fourth Grand Master, Hermann von Salza (1210—1239), the friend and counsellor of the Emperor Frederic II. The local Order of the Brethren of the Sword, created by Bishop Albert in 1202—3 for the conquest of Livonia, after its crushing defeat by the Lithuanians and Semigallians in the battle of Saule (1236), was absorbed by the Teutonic Order according to the well-known decision of Viterbo (1237). After the fall of Acre (1291), the central seat of the Order was transferred for a short time to Venice, but then, in 1309, finally to Marienburg in Old Prussia, where "a seignorial castle was erected and wonderfully furnished with great artistic mastery. While the Templars degenerated and the Knights of St. John continued their glorious fighting, though with mixed success, against the Turks on the islands of Rhodes and Malta, the Teutonic Order entered its period of florescence." The aim was attained: what no other Order had succeeded in doing, the Teutonic Order brought about—the creation of a State of its own. Having lost its land in the east, it finally settled here.⁷ We can well imagine what its spiritual father, St. Bernard, may have thought and written! What people in general thought about their Order, is conveyed to us through Cesarius de Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*, a popular book of that time. The 48th sermon,⁸ in which Bernhard II (von Lippe), Bishop of Sēlpils (1218—1224), speaks of the rivalry and the struggle for power in Livonia between the Order and the Danish government, has a very strong political tinge. Of historical interest is an account⁹ which gives touching details about the Christianized king of the Livs, Kaupo. At any rate, according to contemporary documents, the papal court had a lot to do with the new secular power under the guise of an order of monastic knights which had sealed the fate of the Old Prussians and the Latvians.

In the 13th century the beginnings of local historiography took shape, local in a geographical, but not in an ethnical sense; yet some information may also be had from the descriptions of local events. Perusing the Old Prussian Chronicles¹⁰ and the similar Livonian chronicles,¹¹ we breathe

a kind of home atmosphere when reading about matters dealing with our country. But there is always the danger of becoming too deeply absorbed by the local problems, since we are then apt to overlook what is happening on the other side of the fence which has so often screened us off from the outside world and which has given the history of Latvia an appearance of remoteness, the story of a country away from all the great problems of European evolution, making it a veritable "Gotham", as an indignant and shocked Russian government official of the 19th century exclaimed when addressing a delegation of representatives of the Livonian nobility. Therefore, before beginning an analysis, our task will be to ascertain which and of what kind the sources are that deal with this period of our history. There are to be found chronicles, some mostly the work of contemporaries, and others written in subsequent centuries;¹² there also exist numerous copies of official documents and deeds in the secret archives of the Vatican, and, likewise, privileges issued by the imperial court. By a patient and critical analysis, and by checking and comparing them it has been possible to extract an amount of material which throws some light not only on the official milieu of the "new vineyard", but also on the life of the conquered and subdued peoples.

The conquest and subjugation of Old Prussia seems to have been completed in the following manner: as early as in 1215 mention was made of a Cistercian monk, Christianus, as the first Bishop of Old Prussia; the first Livonian bishop came from that Order too. Christianus seems to have booked some success among the Old Prussian aristocracy. However, when he called upon them to join him in a crusade together with the Poles, the whole nation, remembering the previous fights with the Poles, revolted, expelled him in 1224 and, assaulting the neighbouring provinces, conquered Kulm. It was then that Conrad, Duke of Masovia, applied for help to the Teutonic Order which had just been driven from Hungary. This step which at a later time was profoundly deplored by Polish historians, was a signal for the ensuing fights which lasted for centuries. Hermann von Salza, Grand Master of the Order, who cherished far-reaching plans, secured for himself the "Golden Charter" (Rimini, 1226) which granted him the right to annex not only Masovia but the whole of Old Prussia. Thus, owing to this rash political action, the Poles deprived themselves for centuries to come of all chance of gaining access to the Baltic Sea. Not until 1230, after sufficient preparations had been made, and an order obtained from Pope Gregory IX, did the Order begin the attack on the Old Prussians who were thus exposed to the double pressure from the Pope and the Empire. It was a life and death struggle for these people, one of the most bloody wars ever fought, becoming at times terrible in its ferocity; a war whose issue could on general

lines be predicted. In 1233 Kulm was taken, in 1237 the Old Prussian ports near Truso, and Elbing, fell to the enemy. In the course of the next ten years, out of ten Old Prussian districts six fell into the hands of the invaders who numbered in their ranks not a few ecclesiastical and secular princes of Europe. Alexander Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod, dealt the Order a heavy blow on the frozen Lake Peipus and thus obviated all future threats from the Order in Livonia. The same year, Svantopolk, the Slav ruler of Pomerania, making the best of the general confusion, closed the water-way of the Vistula. For the occupied Old Prussian territories this was the signal to rise in arms, and war flamed up again in vast areas.

Then for a time fighting subsided thanks to the direct interference of the papal legate, and after the pact of Christburg had been concluded on 2 February 1249. This pact, speaking generally, meant for the Old Prussians the loss of their cause and submission to all the conditions put by the Church (the duty of erecting a stipulated number of churches, facilities for monks and clerics; but the noblemen, and knights, were obliged to go to war against the heathen and to pay tithes, etc.). Then followed the conquest of the countries not yet subdued and politicians within the ranks of the Teutonic Order began to play a notable part. In 1242 Klaipėda (Memel), one of the most restless and sensitive places on the borderland of the country, was founded, in 1255—Karalauči (Königsberg) and, shortly afterwards, the last of the remaining Old Prussian territories was occupied. In 1260, after the heavy defeat of the Livonian Order near Durbe in Kurland (Kurzeme), a general insurrection of Old Prussians began which was not suppressed for 23 years. Dusburg, whose sympathies towards his Order cannot be questioned, blamed the treacherous governor of Natanger and Varmier¹³ for the rising. He had invited to a feast all the Old Prussian nobility of the region and then set fire to the castle and burnt them all alive. These 23 years of war, whose first phase lasted until 1274, and the ensuing agony, followed by a succession of convulsions—the result of ruthless cruelty—ferocious and desperate resistance, martyrdom, and conflagrations up to the year 1295, are among the most tragic pages of world history. The Old Prussian leaders, among them Munthe, who has been glorified in novels of recent origin, were killed one after the other (Glape, Linke, Divan). Then peace came—the peace of a graveyard. The entire population of five Old Prussian provinces was exterminated; this region ceased to be inhabited and the woods began to grow again. *Ex tunc terra prussiae quievit in pace*, concludes the chronicler.

Though the process of the conquest of Livonia, *i.e.* of the Latvian and Estonian territories, produced much the same results it was more complicated. It is true that there, too, the lack of political union considerably helped the invaders to carry out their policy of dividing and ruling,

but to complicate matters still further there were the Russian princes, who wanted to take a much more lively part in the game than did the Poles, and on top of it all Lithuania had recently acquired power and ambition—all these things made the situation much more intricate. And, lastly, one must not forget that there were two aggressors: the Saxons and the Danes. This very often created a mass of complicated intrigues, successes, losses, and temporary combinations. Looking at the picture with an objective eye we must place Bishop Albert next to H. von Salza as an outstanding politician.

In the second half of the 12th century Meinhard,¹⁴ a Cistercian monk, set foot ashore on the banks of the Daugava (Dvina) near its estuary, accompanied by German traders who had for some time already been in touch, from Visby and later from Lübeck, with the Livs of the littoral. Meinhard settled down among the population at Ikšķile (Uexküll) and tried to christianize them in a peaceful way. He arrived in 1186 and died, as Bishop, in 1196. His successor, Berthold, however, believed that by using armed force he would gain his ends faster and, therefore, with the sanction of the Pope, brought the first crusaders to the Daugava. His enterprise proved a failure, and he had to pay for it with his life in 1198. When a successor was appointed, the Archbishop of Bremen chose his relative Albert (1199—1229), who possessed extraordinary organizing talents and was a man of great political ambition. About 1201, on the site of an existing Liv harbour (so Latvian historians have established), Rīga was founded; in 1202 the "Brotherhood of the Brethren of Christ", usually called the Order of the Sword, came into being. In the encounters which followed these events, one Liv unit already fought side by side with the Germans, and Kaupo, the Liv king, after being converted, set out for Rome where the Pope gave him a huge reception.

The German attacks against the four Latvian centres were launched from all directions; they were attacks that were sometimes cautious, sometimes impetuous, and occasionally overwhelming. They were often implemented with the help of the most varied combinations of pacts and understandings, and undertaken in joint action with one or another of the local ethnical groups against the rest, and not infrequently these attacks were complicated by Lithuanian and Russian raids.

The first was the long march of the Germans up the Daugava from Ikšķile (Uexküll) to Koknese, Jersika, and even as far as the frontier where so often encounters with the princes of Polotsk took place. In their time these princes had tried to expand their sphere of influence as far as the regions on the lower Daugava. In short, the idea behind German strategy was to shut off the waterway of the Daugava and to take possession of the castles of Koknese and Jersika, in order to compel the Russian



Map 14. The Latvian territories in the 12th century.

princes to open to the German traders the way to Russia.¹⁵ Thus the Finnish-Ugrian Livs and the Sels, a Latvian tribe on the left bank of the Daugava, were subdued (1208). Koknese was captured in 1208, and Jersika, which was the strongest castle in that district, in 1209. The fall of Jersika provided the subject for an epic description in Henricus de Lettis's Chronicle.¹⁶

The second group of attacks was directed against the Eastern Latvians, *i.e.* the Letgallians, along the ancient and important traffic route to the northeast, towards the districts round Tartu (Dorpat) and Pskov. In a short time the Order gained many successes here which we may assume to have been due to the dangerous position of the Letgallian community headed by Tälivaldis, the ruler of Tälava (*Talivaldus de Beverin*), who submitted after being given special promises of help against unremitting assaults from three other directions: from the Estonians in the north, the Russians in the east, and the Lithuanians in the south. Some significant allusions are to be found in Henricus's Chronicle with regard to the first conflict in Livonia between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. This collision reveals the great political importance of the territories controlled by the two Churches and governed by German

and Russian political-military rulers. The Talavians are said to have seen their salvation in the Roman Church. However, this does not seem to be quite in keeping with the fact that they asked the divine oracle which of the two creeds to adopt. In any case, fate decided in favour of the Latin Church (*cecidit sors ad Latinos*).¹⁷ Another passage of Henricus's Chronicle (XVI, 2), much discussed and commented upon, deals with the quarrel, interspersed with serious threats, between the representatives of these two Christian confessional churches, as to which of them, properly, was entitled to christen the Latvians. According to Henricus, in one of his more unequivocal statements, "the habit of the Russians is allegedly not to convert to Christianity the peoples conquered by them, but solely to make them pay tribute and taxes." The attitude of the Latin Church, however, was exemplified by Bishop Albert's quoting, in the spirit of St. Augustine, the words from the Scriptures: "Go out and teach all peoples by christening them." The picture is clear if we visualize, on the one hand, the Russian who contemplates political expansion according to his understanding, and, on the other hand, the distinct and brightly outlined figure of the crusader.

In spite of many complications in connection with the Estonian war, and also with the rising of the Letgallians in 1212, the matter ended with the partition of Tālava in 1224 between the Bishop of Rīga and the Order of the Sword. In order to settle the continuing quarrels among the German invaders themselves and the conflicts with the Danes in northern Livonia, the Pope sent his legate, William of Modena, to Livonia. It was the same William who had played so prominent a part in the events in Old Prussia. The destruction of the numerous writings of this learned prelate, among which there was evidently a grammar of the Old Prussian language, is a heavy loss. This grammar of the Old Prussian language might have proved to be one of the most interesting philological texts of the Middle Ages.

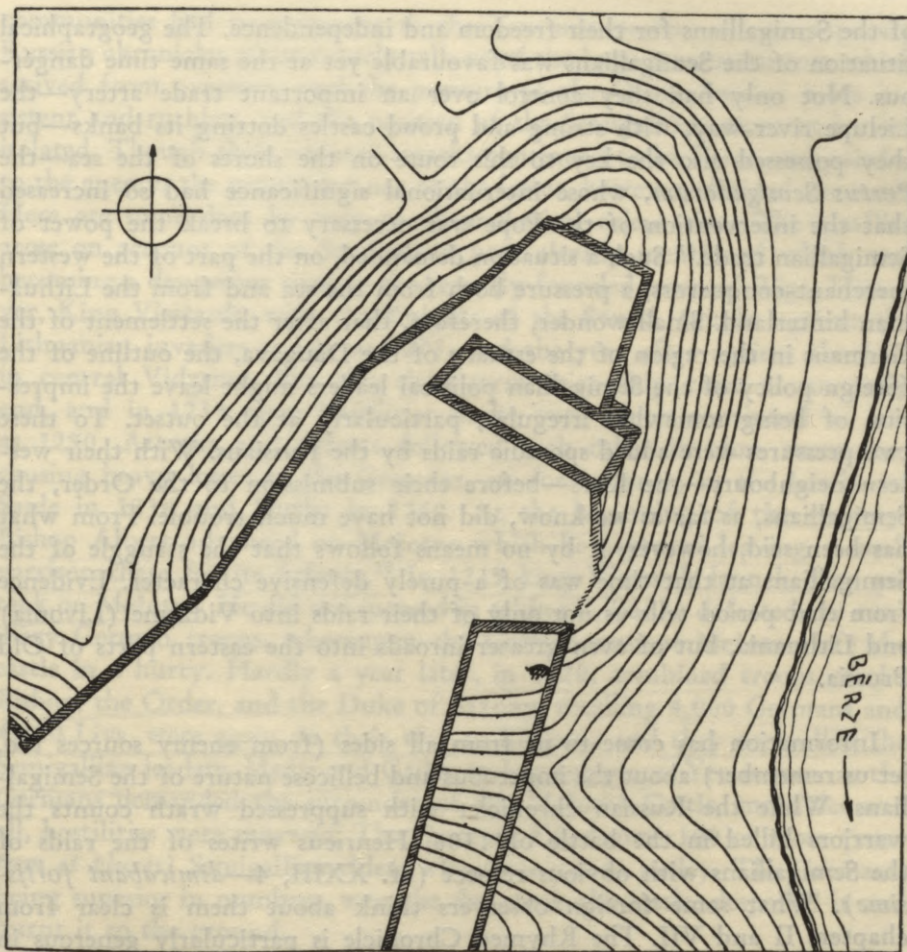
The third direction of the attacks was towards the Kurs. This western Latvian tribe has been mentioned before on different occasions; there are to be found some indications which enable us to form some idea of the outline of territory as it is described in the pact of 12 December 1230, concluded between King Lammehinus and Baldwin, the Pope's vice-legate. As late as in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the 12th century, the Kurs and also the Estonians were known to have caused much trouble to their Scandinavian neighbours on the opposite shore of the Baltic Sea. From the start their relations with the Knights of the Sword were very hostile. The Kurs attacked their ships and set out, in 1210, to assault Rīga; they repeated the attack in 1228. However, as early as 1229 and 1230 they had to conclude covenants with the Holy See through the

mediation of Baldwin of Aulnes, the clever papal diplomat, and to submit to the authority of the Pope—the members of the Order were compelled to do the same. The reasons which induced King Lammechinus to surrender so quickly have not yet been fully ascertained, but it may be assumed that it was the collapse of the Estonian resistance which urged him to take this decision. Yet it may have been his wish to choose the lesser of the two evils: to yield to the Pope rather than to the Order.

Thus, western Lithuania, as well, became fenced in between two strategic units in Old Prussia and Kurland, and it was through her territories that the two Orders of knights wished to open a safe and permanent traffic route by land. This attempt definitely failed in 1236, after the battle of Saule was lost. It has not been possible to locate this place, but it must be somewhere either in southern Kurland or in northern Lithuania. Here Semigallian and Lithuanian forces annihilated the entire army of the Knights of the Cross. Volquinus, the Master of the Order of the Sword, was killed in action. This event shook the new German colony to its very foundations, and in order to save it, it was decided in 1237 to consolidate their position by combining the Order of the Sword with the Teutonic Order. Availing themselves of the situation, the Kurs revolted, but a new batch of Knights of the Cross arriving from Germany settled the position of Livonia and choked the insurrection. In 1244 and 1260 the same happened again, after the Order was defeated by the Lithuanians and the Kurs at Durbe. Gradually order was restored in Livonia, while in Old Prussia the result of this battle was the signal for a general insurrection under the leadership of Munthe and other noblemen.

The fourth and last thrust of German expansion was directed towards the south, along the river Lielupe (the Semigallian Aa) and into the Semigallian country. This was the hardest nut for the Order to crack, and the heroic struggle of this vigorous people, dragged into conflicts between the Order and the Lithuanians who were sometimes their enemies and sometimes their allies, has called forth admiration even from the conquerors. It was a piece of fatal ill-luck which prevented the Latvians and the Old Prussians, too, from consolidating into one single political unit, and Schiemann was right to a certain degree when he reproached the Latvian tribes after their great victory over the Russians in 1106: "the conquerors themselves did not gain a lasting benefit and that this victory did not give any advantages, particularly to the Semigallians, testifies to the political and constitutional immaturity of these peoples." The conflicts between the Semigallians and the Germans started over the question of the Port of Semigallia.

Because these wars are extremely well documented, because they are the longest and also the most blood-stained of all Latvian tribal and



Plan of the Semigallian castle-hill at Dobeles. On the ancient Semigallian castle-hill a massive stone castle of the Order was erected at a later time. For this purpose the original moat which separated the castle proper from the out-works was filled up and thus a more extensive area was created in front of the castle. The ancient fortified places of the various Latvian tribes were built, as a rule, in populated and strategically important places, on main roads or cross-roads, and the site chosen for the castle was by nature well suited for defence. Most frequently, therefore, the Order also made use of these ancient Latvian castle-sites when contemplating the erection of a fortified structure for its own purpose.

communal feuds of the 13th century, and because, viewing them from afar, we become aware of some marked and conspicuous fundamental features characteristic of the Latvian struggles for independence in general which reveal some significant traits underlying and connecting all these historical events, let us dwell a little longer on this tragic struggle.

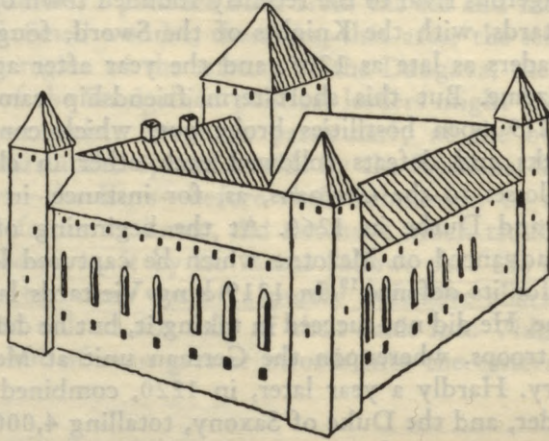
of the Semigallians for their freedom and independence. The geographical situation of the Semigallians was favourable yet at the same time dangerous. Not only had they control over an important trade artery—the Lielupe river-way, with strong and proud castles dotting its banks—but they possessed also the key to this route on the shores of the sea—the *Portus Semigallorum*, whose international significance had so increased that the intervention of the Pope was necessary to break the power of Semigallian trade.¹⁸ Such a situation demanded, on the part of the western merchant-conquerors, a pressure both from the sea and from the Lithuanian hinterland. Small wonder, therefore, that after the settlement of the Germans in the region of the estuary of the Daugava, the outline of the foreign policy of the Semigallian political leaders might leave the impression of being somewhat irregular, particularly at the outset. To these two pressures were added sporadic raids by the Russians. With their western neighbours—the Kurs—before their submission to the Order, the Semigallians, as far as we know, did not have much trouble. From what has been said, however, it by no means follows that the struggle of the Semigallians at that time was of a purely defensive character. Evidence from that period tells us not only of their raids into Vidzeme (Livonia) and Lithuania, but of even greater inroads into the eastern parts of Old Prussia.

Information has come to us from all sides (from enemy sources too, let us remember) about the impetuous and bellicose nature of the Semigallians. While the Russian chronicler with suppressed wrath counts the warriors killed in the battle of 1106, Henricus writes of the raids of the Semigallians with obvious respect (cf. XXIII, 4—*dimicabant fortissime*). What some foreign observers think about them is clear from chapters II and VII. The Rhymed Chronicle is particularly generous in using all kinds of rich epithets (dauntless, brave, proud, heroes of an inflexible mind, etc.), because this chronicle, as is known, was written at a time when everybody's mind was filled with the fresh and stirring memories of their last desperate battles, and when the country may be presumed to have still been a vast stretch of ruins and wilderness, since "it was entirely devastated and nobody has heard of anything like this ever happening before" (11608 seq.). In a word: a picture of the working of the true methods of the Order. This is not the place for a detailed enumeration of events, all the more so, since the basic lines are easy to trace. At the beginning, when the power of the Germans was not properly established, the Semigallian leaders, notably Viestards (according to Henricus—*maior natu*), had numerous chances for all sorts of political-military combinations. But one after the other, the rest of the Latvian regional

communities had to surrender to the Teutonic power—a contemporary Russian chronicler picturesquely tells us of the huge reinforcements which arrived from overseas—and the pressure of the Order became more insistent and ruthless, and the position of the Semigallians more and more isolated. Though their counter-attacks continued to be fierce and painful to the enemy, the preponderance of the latter, however, decided the issue. Here are some data by way of chronological orientation. The conflict arose on account of the Semigallian port already mentioned which was becoming a dangerous rival to the recently founded town of Rīga. However, King Viestards, with the Knights of the Sword, fought against the Lithuanian invaders as late as 1205, and the year after against the Livs in central Vidzeme. But this short-term friendship came to an early end, and in 1219 open hostilities broke out, which continued as late as 1290. Attacks and defeats followed each other in close succession, causing heavy losses to the Germans, as, for instance, in the battles of Saule in 1236 and Durbe in 1260. At the beginning of the century, Bishop Albert advanced on Mežotne which he captured leaving a small garrison there for its defence.¹⁹ In 1219 king Viestards launched an attack on Mežotne. He did not succeed in taking it, but he defeated the auxiliary German troops, whereupon the German unit at Mežotne left the castle in a hurry. Hardly a year later, in 1220, combined troops of the Bishop, the Order, and the Duke of Saxony, totalling 4,000 Germans and 4,000 Livs, were again on their way to Mežotne and they compelled the Semigallian leaders, Madis and Gailis, to beg for peace. Yet as soon as the Germans demanded the surrender of the Mežotne Castle, movables and all, hostilities were renewed. The Germans killed some 100 or more (*centum et plures*) Semigallian elders who came out to parley. The Germans, being superior in numbers, won the day, took the castle, despoiled it and burnt it to the ground.

There is no further information until the middle of the century. About 1250 the Germans invaded Semigallia and, before completing the conquest, divided it up between the Bishop of Rīga and the Order. In 1259 the Semigallians rose up and cast off the German yoke. In 1261 the Germans again raided Semigallia. Their inroads continued without interruption for some years. In 1265 the Germans erected Jelgava Castle as a base for their future raids. In 1270 Tērvete and Rakte were captured by them, and in 1272 the Germans made a pact with the Semigallians and imposed taxes and servitude on them. In 1279 the Semigallians abandoned the Germans on the return of the latter from a raid into Lithuania, in which the former were compelled to take part, and jointly with the Lithuanians heavily defeated them near Aizkraukle. Using this opportunity the Semigallian king, Namejse (Nameisis), reconquered Tērvete which he

fortified. When the Germans attacked Dobeles, the Tērvete people pursued and routed them near Lake Babīte. In 1280 Nameisis tried to take Rīga by a sudden attack, but his plan was betrayed. In 1281 he made peace with the Germans. Under the terms of this peace the Semigallians retained their castles, but they had to pay tribute. The same year Nameisis joined the Lithuanians in a raid into Prussia from which he never returned. Soon



Rīga Castle in the days of Master Eberhard Manheim. In its ancient form, the castle had three rather slender staircase turrets at the corners of the building, while the north corner was occupied by a larger square tower.

afterwards the Germans asked the Semigallians of rank to be their guests and killed them all, hoping thus to deprive the Semigallians of their leaders. In 1286 the last phase of the struggle began. Opposite Tērvete the Germans erected their stronghold of Heiligenberg and began a systematic devastation of the Semigallian countryside, destroying everything—cornfields, cattle and people. In 1287 the Semigallians launched attacks on Rīga and Ikšķile. Though the Germans were defeated at Rīga, the Semigallians did not succeed in taking the town and, pursued by the Germans, gave battle near Garoza in a bloody and desperate fight. It was here that the Semigallians gained one of their most splendid victories over the Germans, though it was their last. Famine and the methodical ravaging of the fields by the Germans compelled the Semigallians to abandon one castle after another. In 1280 some 100,000 Semigallians moved to Samo-

gita, as three years later the remnants of the Old Prussians did. However, not all of them left their country: in 1299 in Rome two Semigallian *ambasciatores* complained to the Pope of the abuses and the wrong-doings of the Order.²⁰

The following description from the Rhymed Chronicle conveys some idea of how the ancient Balts fought in defence of their freedom and independence. The victory of the Semigallians just mentioned is depicted in such vivid colours that they remind us remotely of Bertrand de Born, the famous Provençal troubadour's *sirventes*.²¹ The passage in question tells us that: "The Brethren of the Order fought on foot, nor were the Semigallians on horseback. For both parties the fight was a hot one and blood was seen to ooze through the mail. Swords were heard to clash and helmets seen to crush. On both sides the dead covered the battlefield. Many of the fighters lost their senses and dropped to the ground... The battlefield was red with blood. Those (of the Germans) who succeeded in escaping from the fight, fled to Rīga in haste and the Semigallians hunted after them..."

Verses 8615—8762 relate how the Semigallians conquered Tērvete Castle, and made a rich booty of weapons brought from Germany; verses 8035 *et seq.* tell of the German expedition against Mežotne Castle, how they proceeded in vessels on the river Lielupe which at that time must indeed have been a "large river" (the Latvian meaning of the name). Finally verses 7997—7390 describe the battle which Conrad von Mandern, Master of the Order, lost to the Semigallians, and it conveys a vivid picture of the fights in the woods: "When the (German) troops came into Semigallian land, he (the Master of the Order) robbed and struck down what he could lay hands on. Yet many a clever Semigallian who bore a bitter feeling against the Brethren of the Order and their army was seen to disappear, and then they began to defend themselves by blocking roads, great and small, carefully with felled trees, which they piled so high that many a Christian became annoyed. When the Master had laid waste the country and broken the resistance of the Semigallians, he prepared to return home with his people, but when he rode up to the barricade, which was made to harm him, he was strongly attacked by his enemies..."

A grim battle ensued, the big army of the Master was routed, 600 warriors and 20 knights were killed, the rest were scattered in all directions and tried to escape by flight along the forest tracks and paths. The last phase of this unequal struggle somehow reminds us of the fate of the eastern part of Old Prussia. The tactics of the Order, so vividly and picturesquely described in the Rhymed Chronicle, were to devastate the land and starve the people. One after the other the fine Semigallian castles were reduced to ashes, people died of starvation, those who survived

were seized with despair, and when Sidrabene was consumed by fire (verses 11462 *et seq.*): "The wailing of the Semigallians was heard, and also their mournful dirges, which are like those sung when Dobele and Rakte fell."

A great part of the Semigallian people would not hear of any compromise. They rose and, as was mentioned before, emigrated to Samogitia, much to the astonishment of the chronicler (verse 11502).

Thus the tragedy of this Latvian tribe came to an end in the 13th century. And the chronicler concludes by saying (verse 11647):

Wer mer gelebe, der schreibe nach.

Who has lived to see more may continue writing.

Some of the distant repercussions of the tragedy of the 13th century are to be found in the archives of the Vatican. In 1299 the arrival in Rome of two Semigallian envoys is recorded, who submit, as briefly mentioned above, complaints to the Holy See of the cruelty, wickedness, and tyranny of the Order (*severitas, saevitja, asperitas seu tyrannides*); they promise strict submission to the political power of the Church. This, as we see, is the last desperate diplomatic *démarche*. The different messages of the Popes Clement V (1310) and John XXII (1317, 1318, 1324, *et seq.*) from Avignon are pervaded with similar reverberations of that last tragedy of the Latvian people.

Indeed the Master of the Order established in 1351 that in the course of these battles there fell on the German side: six Masters of the Order, 28 dukes and counts, 49 other members of the high nobility, 11,000 knights and gentry and many warrior-servants, a total number of German dead that reaches 117,000.²²

In order to touch briefly on the information available about the immediate neighbours of the Latvians, let us recapitulate the principal chronological data about the Estonians. After the complicated troubles with the Danes and the Swedes in the previous century, the decisive attack of Valdemar II, King of Denmark, came in 1219. In 1220 Tallinn (castle of the Danes) was founded, but as early as in 1223 the first insurrection of the Estonians, involving the call for Russian help, is recorded. In 1243, after the defeat of the Order by Alexander Nevsky, a second rising took place which proved so dangerous to the Danes that they very nearly failed to hold Tallinn. It continued like this until 1346, when the Teutonic Order, at the acme of its power, bought Estonia from Valdemar IV, King of Denmark. In 1561, during the Livonian war, it was annexed by the Swedes.

We saw that the Lithuanians repeatedly undertook raids into Kurland and Livonia, and fought desperately against the Order. These raids very



The figures of the Virgin Mary and of Wolter Plettenberg, Master of the Teutonic Order, over the North Gate of Riga Castle. The Master of the Order had the figure of the Holy Virgin—the patroness of the Order—carved and put up in the above place on the occasion of the restoration of the castle in 1515. The inscription below the Madonna reads as follows: O MATER DEI MEMENTO MEI . WOLTER PLETTENBARCH MESTER TO LIFLADE DUSCHE ORDENS ANO DNI M CCCC XV. To the right, Master Wolter Plettenberg is to be seen clad in armour and in a mantle bearing the cross of the Order. The inscription below him reads: HER WOLTER VAN PLETTENBERCH MESTER TO LIFLAND DUTCHES ORDENS ANO 1515. This image was added at a later time, possibly soon after Plettenberg's death, in memory of his work for the Livonian State and the reconstruction of Riga Castle.



A Letgallian woman's costume of the 15th century. In an ancient grave in the village of Grevuli women's caps, adorned with ornamented small brass plates and tin fayence beads, have been found. Some narrow head-bands of the 15th and 16th centuries from Kursa are similarly ornamented. They were the prototypes of the 17th century broad and richly ornamented fillets of brass plate and of the present-day Kursa brass fillet.

perceptibly influenced the course of events during that period. Indeed, they had a lot of trouble with the Teutonic Order in Old Prussia, too, but they never experienced a direct invasion of their territory. This was due to the fact that they had developed an ethnical-political community (1226—1236), and so they were in a much better position to show an effective resistance, even though they were in an area most exposed to the dangers of invasion, and even though they lay across the traffic route through Samogitia which the two branches of the Order were trying to develop. Yet even King Mindaugas of Lithuania, after receiving some heavy blows from the Teutonic Order, was compelled to conclude peace, accepting the demand of Christianisation in order to forestall any possible motive for a crusade against his people. In 1253 Mindaugas was crowned first King of Lithuania by the papal legate. However, very shortly afterwards, in 1263, Mindaugas was killed; the country relapsed into paganism, casting off the outward shell of Christendom, and wars with the two Orders were renewed and lasted to the end of the century. The cruel methods of extermination of the hardened heathen were completed to such a degree that the papal curia considered it necessary to intervene. All this, however, did not change the political balance: the two branches of the Order remained more or less separated from each other, which was one of the reasons for their indisputable weakness. Indeed, Samogitia, though continually exposed to the assaults of the Order, fell under direct dependence for a very brief period only, from 1380 to 1411. This accounts partly for the fact, inconceivable at first sight, that the systematic Christianisation of this Lithuanian province was not completed until the 16th century.

Let us conclude this brief survey of the conquest of Livonia with an allusion to the difference which existed between the theory and practice of the two powers each claiming for itself the right to rule "in the new vineyard." When Bishop Albert "girt up his loins", as one historian puts it, to found the Livonian State, he very likely had before his eyes as models the existing German States, headed by archbishops, such as those of Cologne, Treves, Mayence; or perhaps Albert wished to apply in Livonia the far-reaching plans of the Bishop of Hamburg, who contemplated the creation of a more or less independent metropolis. It is obvious that a spiritual power alone was not sufficient, so the Emperor who could help by sending his Knights of the Sword had to be approached. And if the "Golden Bull" of Frederic II (1226) guaranteed to the knights of the Order and their successors all their property and rights, then a few years later (1232) the Emperor had to send out a new message to them, purporting to sponsor the neophytes and to ensure "full freedom and immunity" to them and to their descendants.



Map 15. The castles and fortified monasteries of the Livonian German Order, Bishop and vassals of the 13th—16th century. The mediaeval castles of Latvia and Estonia form a common indivisible group of architectural monuments (date and conditions of origin). In both countries the political power was divided among several rulers, the Livonian Order, however, being mainly responsible for the erection of the castles. The peculiar geographical situation of the countries and the character of this country of the Order account for the fact that ancient Livonia, between the late 12th and early 16th centuries, was the one country where most castles were to be found in the Baltic region.

While such were the plans of the Emperor, the intention of the Popes to keep the reins of government in their hands became manifest in the methods practised by two of the papal legates, notably by granting the exemption to the bishops, *i.e.* subordinating them directly to the Pope.

The archiepiscopal honour, therefore, was not conferred upon Albert, or his successors, until 1255 when the bishoprics had established their rights, though the episcopal power in the conquered countries, contrary to the original plans and hopes, was more of a spiritual than of a real character.²³ Simple as these statements may seem, they contain the essence of the whole constitutional tragedy of the Livonian Confederation; they tell us the real motives for the unceasing struggle and rivalry between the Archbishop and the Order, with the town of Riga as the third and the winning party. It is a tangle of inextricable egotism and lust for power, in a country covered with a mournful veil of suffering—as a Bavarian diplomat, Count de Bray, wrote in 1817. Viewed from a geographical standpoint, and considering the extremely advanced position of this conquered province, the predominance of the military power over all the inner discords was imperative in order to stabilize, once for all, the power of the Order. Towards the non-German population the Order behaved in a way only compatible with the solution of their own external and internal problems, or, expressed differently, it imposed upon these people a varied range of hard treatment for the sake of the so-called “higher culture”.

The wish and intentions of the Holy See, as we have seen, differed considerably from the final results, and its “Terra Mariana” remained but a day-dream, increasingly impaired by life’s realities. The controversy, started at the beginning of this period, is, for the matter, quite significant. “Like the colours of the spectrum, emanating from the sunbeam, the principle of freedom in its manifold shades will provide the solution of all the intentions of the Roman Church for the benefit of the neophytes.”²⁴ A marked stress is laid on the freedom of the new converts in the bull of Honorius III *Ecclesia Romana*, dated 3 January 1225, and addressed to the neophytes of Livonia and Old Prussia, in which the Pope proclaims freedom and evangelical peace (*ubi spiritus Dei est debet esse libertas*).

The mission of the Order, on the contrary, was a mission of domination (*dominium*) with serfdom (*servitus*) following like a shadow in its wake. Thus, according to the words of a Latvian historian (A. Tentelis), were transferred to Livonia the greatest contrasting factors of their time: the power of the Church and that of the Empire, and with it the dualism characteristic of it; for the bishops of Livonia were, on the one hand, princes of the Catholic Church and, on the other, princes of the Holy Roman Empire. That is why the Church proposed to create in these countries free states, solely dependent on the Vicar of Christ. The “Terra Mariana”, indeed, existed in name only, and only after many struggles was the idea

abandoned once for all. In addition the practice was not what was preached: the papal bulls and the writs from papal chancellery abound in terms and expressions indicative of brute force, dominance, and violence over the neophytes. The political map of the Livonian Confederation is and remains like a mosaic or a variegated chess-board, with its medley of so many religious and secular rulers all striving for predominance in the different spheres through political and military compromise. Viewed without sentimentality, it provides altogether a clear notion of the military strength of a resisting feudal organization which was able to survive, because Livonia was one among equals and could be compared to the principalities of Novgorod, Pskov, Polotsk, the Grand Duchies of Lithuania and Poland, and the State of the Order in Old Prussia. The struggle to maintain the balance of power was a complicated business. However, balance was recovered in the late 14th century, becoming quite obvious in the 15th century: the growth of Lithuania was accompanied by a simultaneous increase of power on the part of Muscovy, which foreshadowed the events to come; the feudal chequers were about to be replaced by large State organisms, and Livonia lived to see herself turning from a political subject into an object of a policy which would fundamentally change the aspect of eastern Europe.

The decline of the Latvian political units, briefly surveyed here, is, as a matter of course, followed by profound changes in the social and economic conditions of the people themselves, compared to those which existed here before the German invasion. The national aristocracy, its leading circles, were either annihilated or had degenerated to become assimilated, part of them being absorbed by the conquerors, while the people themselves, notably the peasantry, lost their political rights and slowly and gradually sank lower and lower in their social position, until, in the early 16th century, they reached the status of serfs (*glæbae adscripti*). How it all came about will be discussed in the next and subsequent chapters; here we will only mention the fate of the "*labieši*", i.e. "the best" (cf. the Greek *aristoi*). Not a few of them perished, as, for instance, the clan of the "rebellious" King Nameisis, many others surrendered and became vassals, receiving their fiefs. In proportion to the growing social suppression, and even in spite of the almost complete lack of historical information, one can observe how their traces are lost in the dim obscurity of the centuries, and in a very few cases only we are able to guess their further fate. In general, speaking with the words of Merkel, the whole population of Latvia was placed in one single social class.

The ancestors of some of the country's noblemen of a later period, whose genealogies are rather confused, came from the stock of the former

national rulers. The Baltic German historian, P. Johannsen, after careful investigations, arrives at the conclusion that about 4% of the vassals of the provinces of Harju and Viru were of Estonian descent, among them the family of Baron von Maydell. Von Taube believes that the Princes Lieven—a name well-known in Europe—may have derived their origin from the Liv Vesike's clan, the Ungern-Sternbergs from the daughter of the Liv Kaupo, and the Uexkülls and Meyendorffs from the King of Jersika and the Lithuanian Daugerut, respectively, while he supposes the Tiesenhausens to have descended from the female line of the Koknese lords.

Special mention must be made of the "*Kuršu koniņi*" (Kurish Kings) who as late as in 1795, when the Duchy of Kurland was annexed by the Russian Empire, took the oath of allegiance on separate and quite peculiar conditions. In 1320 the Master of the Order gave the Kurish nobleman, Tautgodis (Tontegode), two "ploughs" of land in fief "with all equipment and the right to keep and own it for time everlasting, in the like manner as the rest of the vassals of the Order are owners of their immovable property." The charter contains exactly the same formula as that granted to the German Albert von Helmwardeshusen.²⁵ From these and similar texts we may conclude that up to the early 14th century the indigenous vassals were invested with fiefs on much the same conditions as those imposed on the vassals of the Teutonic Order, and that the special formulas for the admission of "neophytes" did not develop until later. Among the small number of Kurish peasants, the so-called Kurish kings, whose special *privileges* survived through centuries, is the family of M. Peniķis, who was the general in command of the Latvian army from 1928 to 1934, and in whose possession are many deeds of the 15th and subsequent centuries, and also a family coat of arms.²⁷

The König and Gayle (von Hahn, the Prussian Gayll) families were also of Latvian origin.²⁸ Among other historical evidence which guides us along the paths of these family histories may be mentioned D. Fabricius's Chronicle, written at the beginning of the 17th century: "These peoples had in early times kings of their own, of whom one called himself King of the Livs, and the other King of the Kurs. Both of them have descendants of their own. The former who ruled over the Livs, had his residence between Ikšķile and Salaspils; there exist even to-day descendants of his family who are called kings.

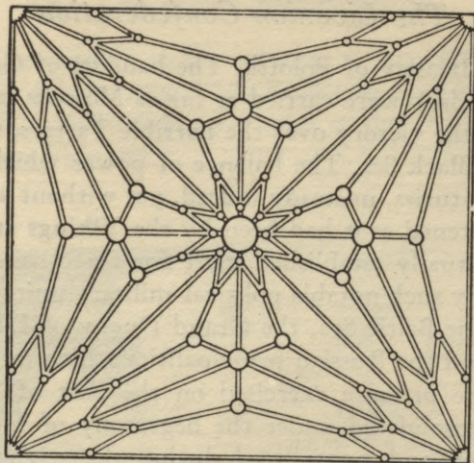
The king who once reigned in Kurzeme lived in the district of Grobiņa, where even now a village is to be found with his descendants who therefore enjoy freedom; they do not pay taxes to the Duke and their duty is only to keep a certain number of war horses for cases of emergency." Even if we eliminate from this narrative the legendary shell, a true histori-

cal kernel still remains which is attested by the Polish cadastral survey of 1599, where this entry is to be found: "To the King of Salaspils, as vassals, belong to P. König, five 'ploughs' of land, and to P. Wedmer four 'ploughs'."²⁹ In the year 1208 we find a certain Madeginte of Ydove receiving a grant of land near Nītaure; in 1316 his descendants exchanged this property for one near Sigulda (Segewold).³⁰



* Seal of the Cathedral Chapter of Semigallia, from a deed written in Riga on 17 September 1237.

+ S ECCL'IE SALVATORIS ... SCE MARIE I SEMIGALLIA.



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VII

THE LIVONIAN CONFEDERATION

In the 13th century two new factors of international significance make their appearance in eastern Europe: the German advance in the Baltic area and the Tartar invasion in southern and central Russia. These invasions are of considerable importance; effected in a violent and systematic manner, they eventually neutralise themselves—from our point of view—without causing any profound political changes in the neighbouring regions. Of a much more sweeping and far-reaching effect were the modifications brought about by Lithuania. After offering valiant resistance in the second half of the century to the attacks of the Teutonic Order against Samogitia, and after consolidating politically under the pressure of so many outward dangers, Lithuania enters, in the 14th century, a phase of development and vast expansion under the Grand Duke Gedimin (1316—1341). The Lithuanian nobility and warriors possessed themselves of one Russian province after the other until as late as the end of the 12th century; they “strew the blood-stained banks of the Nemunas with bones of Russian sons.” So the Russian epic poem about the “Campaign of Igor” tells us. The “bones of Russian sons” refers to the

* Vaulting in the Master's Hall, Cēsis Castle. The room was decorated in 1522.

soldiers of Prince Iziaslav of Polotsk. The banners of Gedimin and of his son Olgerd (Algirdas) were carried as far as Moscow in 1368 and 1372; and finally, after the victory over the horrible Tartars, they even reached the shores of the Black Sea. The balance of power which had been maintained through centuries, unsteady indeed, yet without ever being entirely overthrown, threatened as it had been by the Vikings and endangered by the Russians, eventually established itself for three consecutive centuries. It was supported by such notable political-military units as the two Orders on the shores of the Baltic Sea, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, united in 1386 to Poland, and the Russian principalities which in spite of, or rather on account of, the pressure exercised on the part of Kipchak's Golden Horde, became consolidated under the hegemony of Muscovy. This process was carried on and crystallized during the reigns of Ivan IV and Peter the Great. Meanwhile the western powers were developing as nations.

On seeing the close ties existing between the Prussian and the Livonian provinces of the Teutonic Order, we must examine more closely their common fate, their similar activities in subjugating the indigenous populations, and in organizing states of their own—it may not be out of place to view the conditions in Prussia, in order to illustrate the possibilities in Livonia. Further, it would be a serious omission not to mention the development of the Hanseatic League which is one of the stimulating factors in the advance of the Germans towards the east.

There may be observed three major phases in the development of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, which correspond roughly to the three centuries of its existence: the 13th century being that of conquest and consolidation, the 14th that of florescence and power, and the 15th that of decline. In spite of the little we know about the conquest of Livonia we may well imagine some of the horrors of the tragedy in the Prussian territory. Of that tragedy Herder exclaimed: "Humanity shudders at the thought of the blood shed in the savage wars, in which the Old Prussians were wiped off the face of the earth, and the Kurs and the Latvians reduced to slavery." To those inclined to disbelieve generalisations of such a kind as these without further evidence, we may point to further historical descriptions, such as the Dusburg Chronicle.

The veritable period of bloom of the Order is the 14th century, when the might of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order worked in efficacious co-operation with the Hanseatic League. The projects and power of the League were so great as to enable him to enforce his will upon neighbouring peoples, which aroused the admiration of western Europe whose mighty rulers would address him as their "dear brother." The Order entertained a very clever policy, particularly with its eastern neighbours like the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, stirring up or allaying discords in the

reigning dynasties, according to the interests it was pursuing at the given moment (cf. the double reigns of Keistutas-Algirdas and Vytautas-Jogaila). Not infrequently accounts were settled with the help of the Master of Marienburg himself.



Map 16. Lithuania in the 15th century (1460). At that time the Lithuanian State extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea.







The waves of Lithuanian expansion were directed towards the east, making, at times, common cause with the two Orders and the Hanse. This does not imply that from time to time there did not arise serious conflicts and complications, especially on account of Samogitia. We may judge of the strength of the Lithuanians when they turned against the

Order by considering the result of the battle of Tannenberg. On the eve of this event, the Master of the Order, being too sure of his victory, is said to have jeered at the two famous cousins, Vytautas and Jogaila, commanders of the variegated enemy army composed of Lithuanians, Poles, Tartars, Czechs, Russians and others.

The regulations demanded that the brethren of the Order were held in iron discipline, which was a necessity especially during times of crisis, since they were mustered into service not only from the ranks of worthies, but from adventurers of all kinds, from people with an obscure and even criminal past. The last observation is testified by a number of documents, *viz.* by several papal bulls.² In view of the heavy losses which the Order suffered in its fight against the heathen, permission was granted that "every convict could be remitted of his excommunication by entering the Teutonic Order; those who before enrolling had been guilty of rape, arson, or usury, could be admitted to the rank of monastic knight, but those convicted of simony had to atone for it by holding the lowest place among the members of the Order." What their attitude towards the indigenous population might have been becomes evident from the enumeration of the serious crimes which included desertion, intercourses with the pagans, and sodomy (Treitschke). From this there is but one step to such deplorable kinds of amusements as "man-chasing", practised especially in Samogitia: "across the fields, through the woods, with a cheerful mind, like hunting the fox or the hare", sings a chronicle of that time.

Let us hope that this pastime was not an everyday occurrence. On the other hand, the fact remains that the court of Marienburg was frequented by distinguished persons who came from the west, and that it was a very rich and select court, which was also visited by kings, as, for instance, those of Hungary and Bohemia, who came with the intention of "becoming knights in Prussia." Indications to this effect are to be found in some literary sources. Thus, for instance, Chaucer praises one of the pilgrim-knights, because "in Littowe hadde he rayseed and in Ruce". Even the Flemish knight Guillebert de Lannoy got as far as Livonia, and he has left us an interesting description of his journey. In a prose romance of chivalry (*Le petit Jehan de Saintré* by Antoine de la Sale), dating from the 15th century, the Old Prussians are depicted as being on a level with the Saracens; for example, in chapter 58, where a lady requests Saintré to go to Prussia against the Saracens, to which he agrees and becomes the commander of 500 lancers. Apparently this happens not only in honour of the Banner of the Cross, but for the sake of the smile of some belle who is the arbitress of this tournament. Treitschke boldly compares the guest-table of the Order to King Arthur's "round table"; the com-



Map 17. Livonia up to the middle of the 16th century.  territories of the Order,  territories of the Rīga Archbishopric,  territories of the Kurish Bishopric,  territories of the Dorpat Bishopric,  territories of the Bishopric of Oesel and Wiek,  the Rīga municipal patrimonial district.

pany is said to have been generously entertained to the sounds of zithers and fifes.

The periods of decline are, as a rule, rather complicated and trying. This may be assumed to have also been true with regard to the situation created by the policy of the Order and to the conditions inside the Order itself. It is hardly surprising considering the many influences and dangers

it had to face. Although after the lost battle of Tannenberg the Livonian Order did everything in its power to help the Teutonic Order, and a temporary state of re-adjustment was even attained, nonetheless some threatened changes took place. The roots of the organization were not anchored in the alien ground firmly enough to uphold the trunk erect for any length of time, and to the outward troubles were added complications of an internal character. Frightful risings, such as that of 1457, furnish grim evidence of the state of affairs, and another German historian, E. Caspar, is justified in stating that the tragedy of the Order finally turns into a farce. If we compare this to the description given by N. Radziwill of the end of the Livonian Order, we become aware of the curtain going down on a greatly agitated and impressive drama.

The period of florescence of the Hanseatic League, too, lasted from the 12th to the 14th century. At the outset it was a free league of sea-ports. But this peculiar organization contrived, within the setting of the intricate conditions of northern Europe, to extend its commercial sway over both the Baltic and the northern seas. The Hanseatic League came to dominate a wide area: from the shores of Norway and Iceland it extended to the Dutch coast, turning inland towards Liège, Goettingen, Halle, Breslau and Cracow, reaching Kalmar in the north and Reval in the east, with a strong economic branch spreading as far as Novgorod. Its geographical and historical centre was Lübeck. Apart from its economic predominance on the sea, the Hanse could reckon upon vast inland markets in Central and eastern Europe, along the great river-routes of those regions. Speaking in terms of modern economics, we may perhaps regard this league as a kind of trade monopoly, one of the most extensive that ever existed. Despite the small population of the towns, the profits gained must have been considerable; the rich buildings and magnificent churches in the Hanseatic towns of the eastern Baltic, as, for example, at Riga and Reval, furnish ample evidence of it. It could not have been otherwise, either, because on examining the kinds of merchandise turned over in their outlying warehouses in Bruges, London, Bergen and Novgorod, we find that all the principal commodities indispensable to life passed through the channels of the Hanse, *viz.* raw materials and articles of consumption which came from the east and the north (salted fish, timber, wax, hides and furs, etc.) and manufactured goods, except salt, from the west and the south (wool, textiles, metal ware, wine, etc.).

The late 15th century marks the beginning of the decline of the Hanseatic League. Scandinavia increased in power and importance, first, under the rule of Denmark, a sworn enemy of the Hanse (the Union of Kalmar, 1397), and then, in particular, with the consolidation of the Vasa dynasty in Sweden. On the continent the German rulers enlarged their power,

Holland and Britain became active factors in European trade, and, owing to their colonies, rivals as well. Novgorod had fallen into decay under the blows of Ivan III. And lastly, one of the principal reasons: the "historic person"—according to the felicitous definition made by E. Lavisse—the herring, one of the most lucrative commodities of the Hanseatic trade, changed its route during the spawning season, and turned towards the coastal waters of Holland. The *coup de grâce*, after the crushing by the Danes of the Hanseatic power on the seas, is dealt when the Atlantic is opened to world traffic. The desperate efforts to find access to the East by land, through Muscovy, the maritime routes to those parts being barred by the Turks (cf. the theoretical investigation of Bambo and Ramusio), are nothing but reverberations of epigonism. The Baltic Sea more and more turns into a regional inland-sea, exposed to the aspirations of rivals striving to get control of it (*dominium Maris Baltici*).

With the rise of local historiography information from without gradually loses the significance possessed by the fragmentary knowledge of the period before the 13th century. However, from a methodological point of view, it would be a complete mistake to ignore these earlier odd and sporadic pieces of news which, since the beginning of that century, kept arriving from other lands. The historical literature about Livonia is comparatively scanty and generally deals only with local matters; such is usually the case in frontier regions of military expansion. It is more incomplete than information about Prussia—for Prussia it must be remembered soon fell behind the "fighting line" (cf. the conclusions by Ziesemer and by L. Mackensen respectively). Besides, the tone of this kind of literature is exaggeratedly partial, which is particularly true of Dusburg. Further, the chances of obtaining information through the Hanseatic League with its wide trade and cultural relations were meagre. Indeed its monopoly of interests, and the desire to keep it under jealous control, forbade the publication of any such information or descriptions as, for instance, those which were instrumental in creating so colourful a picture of the Mediterranean peoples and countries. Nordenskjöld and T. Fischer, and many others after them, have collected rich material in confirmation of this thesis, which, further, points out that the cartographic aspect of the Baltic Sea remained unreal and vague up to the 16th century. We may say the same of mediaeval theoretical geography, as far as the Baltic territories are concerned. The geographical writers of those times, not being able to get away from the ancient theoreticians, such as M. Capella, Isidore of Seville, Orosius, and others must be regarded, as Kimble puts it, "more as works of art than of information, and as such are to be classed in the literary section."³ Mediaeval cartography, on the other hand, as judged from a few of its best and finest

samples, such as the atlases of Hereford and of Ebstorf compiled during the second half of the 13th century, are still under the spell of legends, or, to quote L. Olschki, "the blanks on the maps stimulated imagination to fill them with what knowledge failed to provide." Likewise, the *horror vacui* of those centuries still filled the world with tales and legends.⁴ It was due to the information gathered, for the most part in a direct way, by Marin Sanudo il Vecchio and, later, by Fra Mauro, that the image of our coasts on the "Unknown Ocean" gradually appeared, on the eve of the 16th century, to gain a more real shape.⁵

Thus, during the classic centuries of the Middle Ages, we become aware, in regard to Livonia, of a peculiar symbiosis of various currents of opinion. Let us mention a few of them and begin with some western information about our country during the first period of the German invasion. There are two outstanding historical and geographical sources of the early 13th century. A brief remark is to be found in chapter 114 of the annals *Historia regum terre sancte*,⁶ written by the bishop Oliverus, born in Cologne, and made Cardinal of S. Sabina after his return from a long journey in the East in 1222. It deals with the Northern peoples (Livonians, Estonians, Prussians) who were converted during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III, and—what is very important for us—mention is made of holy woods which had never been violated by the touch of an axe. The other source of information is of much greater value and importance for our historiography. It is the large mediaeval encyclopaedia *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, an English monk of the Order of the Minorites. In book 15, which deals with the provinces, there are 145 descriptions of various countries in different parts of the world. Six chapters, or 3.5% of the Book, refer to Livonia, Lithuania, and Prussia. The author is one of the most educated men of his time and possesses a relatively wide personal knowledge of the countries described (England, France, Holland, and a large part of Germany). This is hardly surprising as, after his studies at Oxford, he became a lecturer at the Sorbonne, and, about 1230, a professor in Marburg where he was able to collect the most recent information from the monks of his Order which must be considered not only as well founded and extremely valuable, but as initiating, in some points, the diffusion of certain new motifs which, as far as the Balts were concerned, became standardized for centuries. There is something in his information which seems to have been borrowed from Adam of Bremen. On the other hand, there are to be found observations which he had passed on, for instance, to Aeneas S. Piccolomini⁷ whose data are in part represented on the famous geographical maps of Livonia and Lithuania in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Along with very precise geographical descriptions of Lithuania and other

countries, the author gives particulars, in chapter 88 (*de Livonia*), about the cremation of the dead in Livonia, which reminds us of similar details recorded in earlier times by Wulfstan, and of later Prussian and Kurish descriptions. We can, in addition, cite some characteristics of the Baltic peoples from the encyclopaedia of this English Minorite monk: the Lithuanians are described as strong and brave, warlike and fierce; the Old Prussians from Samland are mentally well developed, of handsome appearance, and altogether more talented than the rest of their neighbours, in a word, a "master race" of a kind (*gens inter ceteras barbaras gentes corpore elegans, mente audax, ingenio, arte et artificio alias nationes in circuitu preexcellens*). The Semigallians, however, are called a barbaric, uncivilised, savage and severe people. Let us emphasize that this information is of considerable value, being reliable and coming, apparently, from an observer who was more or less impartial at the beginning of the conquest of the Baltic countries. Such general information gradually disappears during later centuries, except for some cases as, for instance, the Rhymed Chronicle and the accounts by Lannoy; what remains are but scanty notes of a juridical or economic nature, hardly adequate to enrich our knowledge of the normal life and attitude of the local population.

The first outline of the development of Baltic cartography was given by A. E. Nordenskjöld in his works *Facsimile Atlas* (1899) and *Periplus* (1897), which contain early maps of the coasts and islands of the North Sea, of the Baltic coast and of the Arctic Ocean. He distinguishes several groups of maps, of which the following deserve to be mentioned: (1) The Ptolemaic type, with the Baltic Sea forming part of the outer ocean and Scandinavia shown as an island; (2) the atopic group of northern maps; and (3) the northern maps of the *portolano* group, up to the time of Olaus Magnus.

After prolonged attempts to give a survey of the development of the Baltic, or more accurately, of Livonian cartography, L. Arbusow jun. some years ago published in the *Annals of the University of Latvia* a research paper.⁸ In that paper he suggests that the cartographic material about Latvia can be divided into three groups: (1) Atlases which are based on Roman traditions, modified in some ways, one "school" from the south of Europe is based on accurate observations and on the use of the compass (Marin Sanudo), it dates from the beginning of the 14th century; (2) the revival, under the influence of humanism, of mapping of the Ptolemaic type, 15th century; (3) the emancipation from the Ptolemaic tradition and the formation of independent types of cartography.

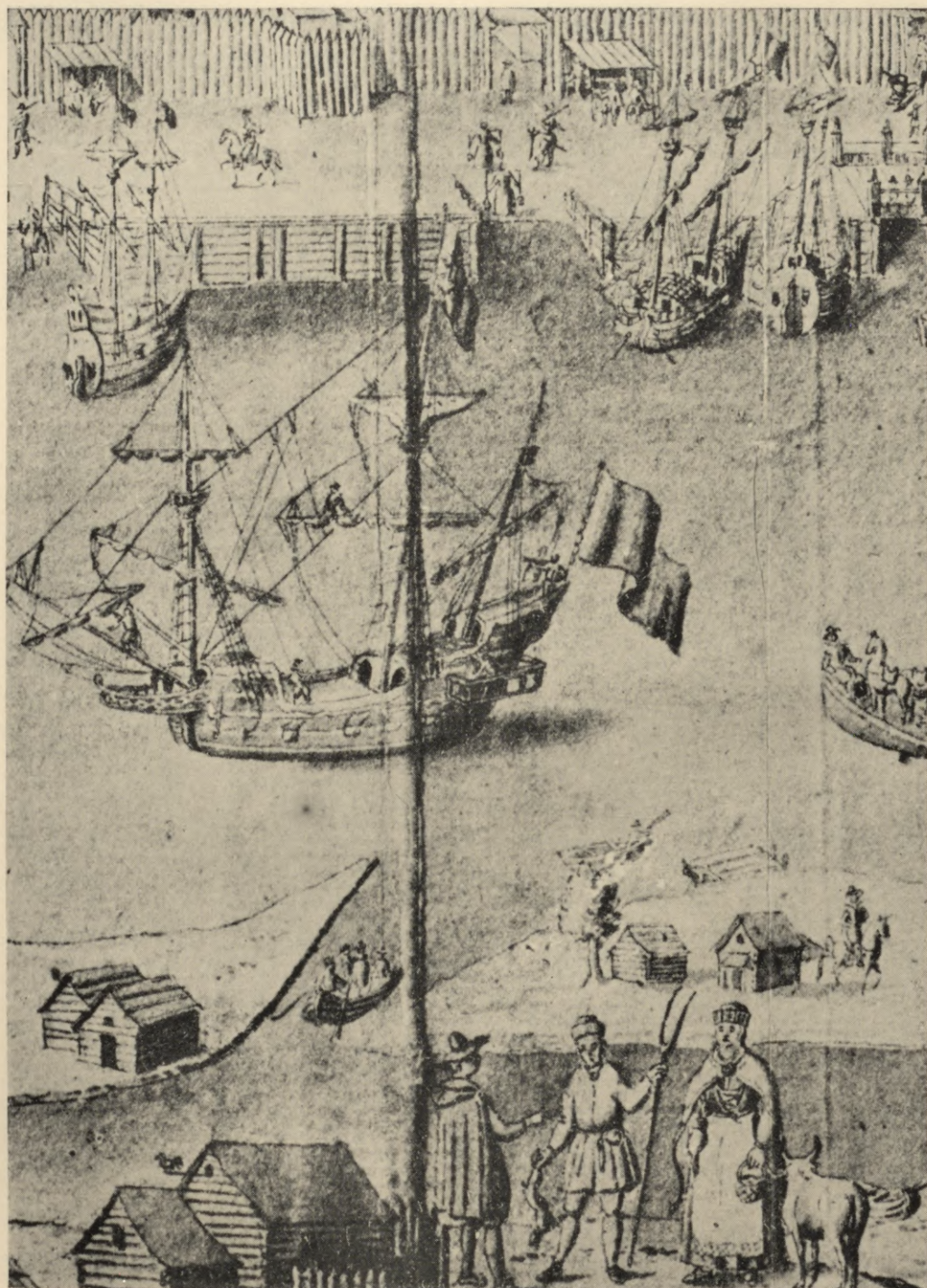
The most important events during the conquest of Livonia have been mentioned in the previous chapter. The later occurrences in the military-political life of the Order provide hardly any information about the



Part of Olaus Magnus' map of Northern Europe: *Carta marina*, published in Venice in 1539. This map for the first time shows a comparatively true image of the coast-line of the Baltic countries. The Kurs are called Curetes.



Map of Livonia of 1582, oriented towards the west. The Jesuit Antonio Possevino, who was mediator of peace between Poland and Muscovy, sent this map, immediately after the conclusion of peace, to Rome where it was kept in the Vatican archives among Possevino's papers.



View of Riga harbour in 1612. In the foreground, Latvian peasant people are to be seen (one of the earliest known drawings of them). On the opposite bank, a timber embankment and palisades outside the city wall, and, on either side of the gate, two sentry boxes are to be observed.

Latvians. So we shall briefly mention here only the most conspicuous events, always keeping in mind the struggle for supremacy between the Order, the Archbishop of Rīga and the Town; a struggle which reduced the country to intense sufferings and which continued until the end of the Livonian Confederation; it bears, as Schiemann puts it, the stamp of the sorrowful doom of the Middle Ages. These bloody contests started immediately after the conquest of the Semigallian territory by the Order and did not abate before 1330, coming to an end only with the surrender of the town of Rīga to the Order. Yet the dissension did not become less acute in the following years, because "to imagine the Archbishop remaining faithful to the Order would be like conceiving the Pope being loyal to the Ghibellines". Repeatedly the threatened town of Rīga concludes pacts with the Lithuanians, whose raids in the territories of the Order earned them the name of *gens atrocissima, omni ferarum immanitate truculentior*; their incursions became more frequent during the reigns of the Lithuanian dukes and Grand Dukes. In addition to the inner feuds came the terrible rising of the Estonians which shook the new order to its very foundations and ended in a bloody suppression, and an enforced and closer union of this province with the Livonian Confederation (1346). This revolt, coinciding in time and character with the famous rising of the *Jacquerie* in France in 1358, carried the slogan "down with the foreigners!" and cost the lives of a great many Germans and their wives and children. A characteristic feature of the Estonian insurrection was that they chose from their midst four peasants as leaders, gave each the title of king, insignia being spurs of gold and a gorgeous mantle. When the revolt was suppressed, they were made prisoners and, naturally enough, put to death. The external position of the Order was greatly complicated by this rising. Further the incursion of the Lithuanians under Algirdas entailed the devastation of both Semigallia and Livonia, from whence the Lithuanians returned to their country with a rich booty. The Master of the Order asked the Grand Master for help, but in vain, as the Lithuanians were at that time also raiding Prussian territory.

These events, so fateful for the Order, set the limits to the Teutonic expansion in the eastern Baltic. It was by no means an easy matter to maintain an equilibrium between the outward group of factors, represented by the ambitious princes of Novgorod and Pskov, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the underhand aspirations of the Danes and the Swedes, on the one hand; and on the other hand the dangerous centrifugal powers and impulses, embodied by the Order, the Archbishop of Rīga, the Bishop of Tartu (Dorpat), and the free towns of Rīga and Reval. Nor were the threats of the discontented local population to be made light of, since they had not yet forgotten the time of their independence, nor did they wish

to forget it. Always during moments of crisis these threats would manifest themselves. The German colony was strong enough to rule under such circumstances and gave evidence of their power and skill. To deny it would be to show an unwillingness to understand the significance of this historical process. States of a similar political instability and fundamental insecurity are to be found elsewhere during the same period.



A thaler of Walter von Plettenberg, Master of the Livonian Order. It was coined at Cēsis and shows his figure and the image of the Holy Virgin. The legend runs as follows:
MONE. NOVA · MAGRI : LIVONI:
S. MARIA SERVA · POPVLV : TVV. 25

Though possessing quite different geographical and ethnical qualities, Italy might serve as an example—the German emperors, the Popes in Rome and Avignon, after 1309, and the Italian towns.

The second half of the 14th century is characterized by a tension in the diplomatic struggle between Russians in the east and the Lithuanians in the south, and by the efforts of the powers ruling within to reach agreement. On top of this the most terrible scourge of the Middle Ages, the Black Death, was a constant danger to human life particularly during the plague of 1379. There is, however, one bright feature in this sombre and chaotic picture: the towns.

By defending their vital interests and by retaining in their hands sufficient means for autonomous administration, they kept in close touch with one another and were able to attain a remarkable level of material and cultural development, of which the ecclesiastical architecture and sculpture of Rīga, Reval and Tartu give ample evidence; the magnificent monuments of 14th century art are still an embellishment to these towns. However, the flourishing trade in Livonia was greatly injured by the Swedish-Danish war (1361—1370), which created a state of insecurity

and gave the pirates (*Vitalienbrüder*) free scope and power for several decades to come. The same thing happened later in the 16th century to their fellow traders in the Mediterranean.

The 15th century opened for the German colony on the shores of the Baltic with a fatal blow which could have easily led, politically, to a collapse of the whole enterprise. The great struggle between the Teutonic Order and the united Lithuanian-Polish forces reached its climax in the



A Riga thaler, coined in 1557 by Henricus de Galen, Master of the Order. It shows the Master's and the coat-of-arms of Riga. The legend is: HENRICUS · DE GALEN · D · G · M · LIVONIE · 1557 · + MONETA · NOVA · RIGENSIS.

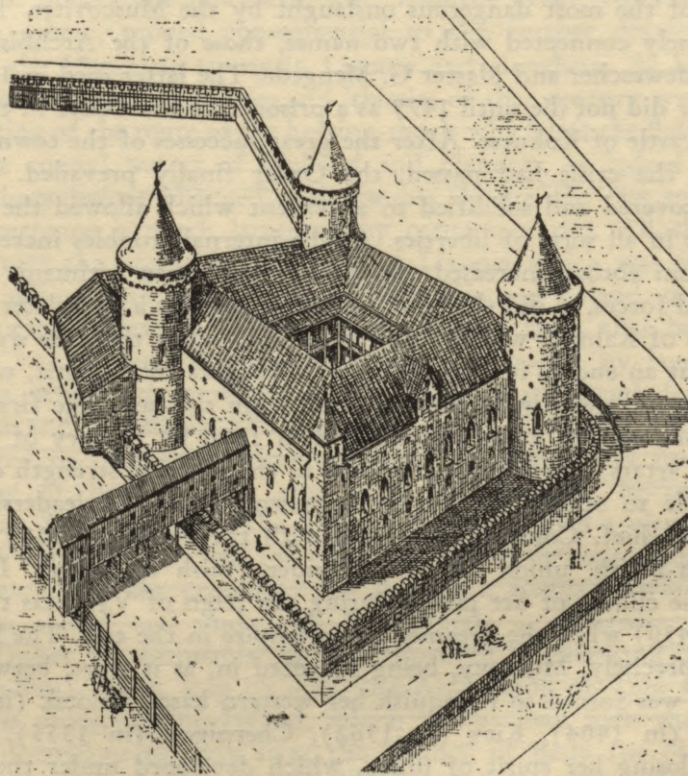
defeat of the Order at Tannenberg. These momentous events in eastern Europe have repeatedly been discussed and described, and, though they are for us only of passing interest, they can teach us one lesson: while the chronicles mention the haughty and provoking manner of the Master of the Order towards his enemies at the beginning of the battle, they also note that the consolidated forces of eastern Europe (Treitschke shows much contempt in calling them *ein Gewirr von Völkertrümmern*), after gaining a decisive victory, disintegrated and neutralized each other, thus forfeiting the fruits of their success and power. Though the Master of the Livonian Order did not arrive in time to give his military aid to his major brother, the Grand Master, he did everything in his power to save the situation. Indeed, a certain state of balance was restored, though the position of the Order in Livonia became increasingly delicate on account of the political changes which were taking place in the vicinity. Another victory, won in 1502 by Master Plettenberg who had been left alone and isolated in front of the Muscovite armies, testified to the military power of these iron-clad knights who by some historians are called "the tanks of the Middle Ages".

The most important events of the 15th century are as follows: Immediately after the battle of Tannenberg in 1420, Livonia was again visited by the plague. On reading contemporary accounts, we learn that the country had been devastated and empty, just as in the 17th century or during the Northern War. Another event, from an entirely different sphere, proved consequential to the further development of trade of the Hanseatic towns in Livonia and elsewhere. As has already been pointed out, the 'twenties and 'thirties of that century were marked by a shifting of the route of the herring-shoals which left the Baltic Sea and chose the coastal waters of Holland and Flanders, as indeed they had several times before changed their haunts during the last millennium. This occurrence is much lamented by contemporaries. All this tended to aggravate the precarious situation of Livonia which was endangered by growing pressure on the part of Lithuania and Poland, united after the "Cracow marriage" in 1386. Small wonder, then, that before very long the two Orders forfeited their rights of transit by land through Samogitia, which were granted by the peace treaty concluded between Lithuania and Prussia in 1422, and by which Samogitia and Samland were ceded to Lithuania. After the battle on the Svēta in 1435 and the peace of Brest in the same year, the Livonians, by backing the Lithuanian dissidents, after the death of Vytautas with a view to restoring their lost positions, lost for ever not only their connection by land with Prussia, but the possibility "of driving a wedge between the two Sarmatian states" and undertook "henceforth to recognize only such Grand Dukes of Lithuania as are approved by the king of Poland" (E. Seraphim). Thus, step by step, the Archbishop of Riga was placed under the protection of Poland, which in fact had been the topic of lengthy discussions as early as at the Council of Basle (in 1431 and in later years), and which one and a half centuries later was to become an effective spiritual weapon in the hand of Stephen Bathory. A wise policy is revealed in the decision taken by the Provincial Diet (*Landtag*) of Valka in 1435 where for the first time all five members of the Livonian Confederation, the Order, the Archbishopric of Rīga and the Bishoprics of Tartu, Oesel and Piltene came to an agreement to discuss together and to co-ordinate the political problems of the whole country "to the glory of God and for the blessing of the poor Livonian country". This political-military agreement was concluded—with rare foresight—only for the ensuing six years. Theoretically, however, it meant "finally a consolidation of the country". This agreement remained in force until the end of the Order in 1561. In practice, however, owing to the constitution of Livonia and, in particular, to the strong friction between the Church and the lay powers, matters were far from being peaceful. Although an understanding

was reached between the Archbishop and the Master of the Order at the Salaspils (Kirchholm) Convention in 1452, with a view to dividing between themselves the supreme management of the town of Rīga, a new rupture occurred between the two authorities and, for once, the prospects were ominous. Civil war broke out and lasted for several decades, just at the time of the most dangerous onslaught by the Muscovites. This civil war is closely connected with two names, those of the Archbishop Sylvester Stodewescher and Master G. Mengede. The latter died in 1469, but the former did not die until 1479 as a prisoner of the Order in the archiepiscopal castle of Koknese. After the great successes of the town of Rīga and after the crisis had passed, the Order finally prevailed. Livonian affairs recovered and solidified to an extent which allowed the country to indulge in all sorts of liberties. As the internal troubles increased, the threats from abroad increased too, particularly when Lithuania and Poland joined forces, as did the Scandinavian kingdoms a little later through the Union of Kalmar, which lasted until 1523 when the Vasa dynasty of Sweden put an end to it. Yet the greatest dangers for Livonia, which became more and more isolated, threatened from the east. The first indication of this was the great victory won in 1380 by Dmitry of the Don over the Tartars; a fact which testified to the growing strength of feudal Russia, able to oppose her secular oppressor under the leadership of a remarkable chief. Coinciding in time with the events of 1380 was the Lithuanian-Polish union of 1386 under Polish hegemony. Lithuania reached the climax of her power during the reign of Vytautas the Great (1392—1430) when she dreamed of an empire in the east. The Russians, or, more precisely, Muscovy, being squeezed in, as it were, between two aggressors was forced to relinquish her western bases, Polotsk (in 1520), Smolensk (in 1404), Kiev (in 1362), Chernigov (in 1355), without however, losing her spirit of unity, which developed under the rule of the Muscovite princes and consolidated to such an extent as to enable the Russians to face the Tartars in battle on the plain of Kulikovo (in 1380).

Ivan III, this great "collector of Russian lands", freed his country from the Tartar yoke. But all this increased the menace of the Russian expansion to the west. Thus, next it was the turn of Novgorod the Great which had reached the peak of its expansion and economic power. "Who dares to rise against God and Novgorod the Great?" was a well-known saying at this time. But in 1478 Novgorod was humiliated, finally and irrevocably: the big bell of the free commune, *i.e.* of the people's convention, was moved to Moscow and in the following year the population of the town was almost completely annihilated. Some ten years later it was replaced by all kinds of miserable people, as a contemporary chronicler describes it. Its glory had departed for ever.

It may be of some interest to quote here a passage from a Russian chronicle, referring to this massacre in the town of Novgorod: "... and the Tsar ordered the great boyars, notable merchants, civil servants and sundry citizens of Novgorod the Great to be brought before him with



Riga Castle, reconstructed (1491—1515) and remodelled by Walter von Plettenberg. During a conflict between the Order and the town of Riga, the castle, built in 1330 (see p. 142), was destroyed by the burghers of Riga in 1483. After the victory of the Order over the townspeople, the latter were compelled to rebuild the castle which was finished in 1515.

their wives and children. And the Tsar ordered them to be inhumanly and terribly tortured and then burnt with fire and baked in his presence. Afterwards the Tsar ordered these tortured and burned people to be tied to sleighs, dragged to the bridge over the river Volkhov and thrown into the water. Also the wives and children of these wretched people were brought to the bridge, their legs and arms were tied up, the children were

tied to their mothers and all of them thrown into the river . . . Servants of the Tsar, noblemen and warriors were in boats on the river, finishing, with the help of pikes and hooks and axes, those who were still alive. In such a manner it continued every day for five weeks in succession, about 1000 people a day being killed, but on some days even up to 1500. The town and the surrounding districts, monasteries and churches were sacked and destroyed. The Orthodox Tsar and the Grand Prince and all his retinue then raided the town and its suburbs, stripping the inhabitants, including the women, destroying houses and knocking in doors and smashing windows . . ." There is no need for comment or explanation. It was a warning to Livonia.

In the meantime, the political troubles within Livonia became a subject of international importance. In 1481—1482 the reverberations of the struggle between the Order and the town of Rīga reached the great chancelleries of the Pope and the Emperor. Thus Papacy and Empire found another reason for quarrelling; the question was who should enjoy the prerogatives exercised in the Hanseatic town of Rīga. Generally speaking, this is just another expression of the age-old feud between the Pope and the Emperor, which once again comes to the fore in this remote outpost of Latin Christianity. In 1484 Rīga got the better of the Order and even succeeded in destroying its hated castle. However, five years later Plettenberg, Master of the Order, in the strongest terms, demanded its reconstruction. Opposite the fortress of Narva, on the other bank of the river, rose (like a menacing symbol) the fortress of Ivangorod in 1492, and it was not long before blood flowed freely in this region, too. Some years later, more or less serious clashes with the Russians took place, and their unprovoked attacks on Livonia illustrate the changed complexion of the situation. It was due to Plettenberg "that Livonia was able to overcome, with a good deal of luck and glory, this internal and external crisis" (Schiemann). He became Master of the Order in 1495 and remained Master until 1535. He anticipated the dangers from the east, and looked everywhere for help: to Denmark, to Sweden, to the Pope, to the Emperor and elsewhere. However, he only succeeded in concluding a very weak alliance with the Lithuanians which proved of little use. The Lithuanians had once again, in 1492, separated from the Poles, a frequent occurrence during the period of the unfortunate matrimonial alliance. Thus, in the long run, Livonia was left entirely alone to face half the continent. After the terrible defeat of Novgorod, and the subsequent invasion of her own territory by the Muscovites, there was nothing left for Livonia to do but to fight or to perish. In spite of the dark picture which the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order painted of the international situation—of the splitting up of the forces of the small Livonian communities, of the dis-

content of the citizens who even threatened to join the Russians—in spite of all this, the Livonian Master decided to face the “innumerable” armies of the Muscovite Grand Prince. Plettenberg collected his small forces together which, according to one source, consisted of 2000 knights, 1500 German mercenaries, a few hundred peasants, and a few cannons (Rus-sow). He marched on Pskov where he waited in vain for the Lithuanians to join him. Prussia, in the meantime, trembled for her own fate and had Masses celebrated and prayers read for the salvation of Livonia. A contemporary chronicle, the *Schonne Historie*, gives a description of the famous battle of Smolin, near Pskov, on the 12 September, 1502. Prisoners of war brought the news that “the Russians believed that no fighting would be necessary, that they would be able to capture the Livonians without striking a single blow, bind and dispatch them to the Grand Prince and afterwards set forth to conquer weak, defenceless Livonia . . . Now, when they encountered the enemy eight days before Holy Cross Day (12 September), the Master and his horsemen exposed themselves to the view of the enemy. The latter greatly wondered at this audacity and in a short time surrounded the Livonians from all sides. When fighting broke out all around, they became lost to the view of the foot soldiers and the Livonian peasants. They believed that the Master and his horsemen had been overpowered and carried away, and that the Russians would soon return to capture them as well.

Then it came to pass that the aforesaid Master and horsemen succeeded in breaking through the enemy lines, thus putting them to flight. When they returned to their own people, horse and horsemen were both covered with blood and dust, and no colours could be distinguished on them. This had so exhausted the knights and their horses that they were unable to pursue the enemy. But they waited for three more days on the battlefield for the enemy to return in order that they might fight him and defeat him once more. In this battle many Russians were killed; their numbers cannot, however, be properly known, because it is their custom to carry their dead away with them or, in the case of a hurried flight, to tie them to their horses' tails and thus trail them along . . .”⁹

The Russians being thus repelled did not, however, consider themselves beaten, which is clearly shown by the manner in which Ivan III received the Livonian emissaries: after all kinds of humiliation, they only succeeded in obtaining a truce for six years and in 1509 concluded a miserable peace for fourteen years; the treaty contained a clause which paralysed their trade by forbidding the export of salt to Muscovy, on the transit of which was mainly founded the wealth of the Livonian towns, especially of Reval. Yet in spite of it all this period was followed by 50 years of peace in which Livonia had a chance to regain her strength. In 1512 war between



Map 18. The most important trade routes of the early Middle Ages (the small circles indicate the principal harbours) in the eastern Baltic countries and neighbouring regions. The transit trade with the eastern and southern countries was an important economic factor for the Balts. The population increased mainly along these trade routes; the areas lying along or near the most advantageous lines of communication have since prehistoric times been more thickly populated than the regions far from traffic routes.

Lithuania and Russia broke out which ended in a defeat for the Russians who within their own territories had re-captured Pskov, Smolensk and Novgorod-Seversk. The age-old eastern frontier of Lithuania began to be seriously disputed, while at the same time in the west the boundary shifted in favour of Poland, and the war with Prussia ended in the subjugation of the Teutonic Order. In 1521 the Tartars struck a heavy blow

at the Russians, advancing to the very gates of Moscow, as they did later during the reign of Ivan IV, in 1571. After all, the Russian armed forces were still much behind-hand as far as military technique, armament, and fighting tactics, etc., were concerned. In general, the balance created by the presence, in the eastern sector of Europe, of the two great powers—the Germans and the Tartars—mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, continued to exist, though not for long. For after the appearance of the third factor (Lithuania—Poland) the balance was seriously disturbed.

The following valuation of the political-military work, done by Plettenberg in connection with the struggles during the Reformation, is given by Schiemann:¹⁰ "Plettenberg's doleful task during his last years was to hold the country together as best he could, it being reduced by religious disturbances to a state of political demoralization . . . (he) seems towards the end of his life to have become yet more suspicious of any innovations which in his opinion might have only added fuel to the flames of the Livonian Confederation. However, it was beyond his power to remove the causes of the impending catastrophe, or the wide-spread luxury and ruthless selfishness both of individuals and of classes." The Master died at Cēsis on the 2 February 1535, at a great age and after 41 years as Master; death took him unawares, seated in an armchair and girded with his sword. His memorial tablet has been preserved in Cēsis Church.

Livonia, threatened by a rising flood of disastrous events, thus became involved in the dangerous play of maintaining the balance. The internal social structure of the country during this time was characterized by the efforts of the knights to consolidate their position at the expense of the rest of the community. This they succeeded in doing, but it led to further struggles between the Order and the towns. Despite a direct interference on behalf of the towns by high representatives of the Church, in the end they were brought to submission. This resulted in a decline of the political and social standards of the peasantry, and in a deterioration of their situation as compared with other countries; a national barrier separated them from the master-classes. Thus, the Latvian peasants during the last years of the Confederation became serfs (*glæbae adscripti*).

The general lines of development of the relations between the feudal nobility of Livonia and the rural population may be divided into four brief sections: (1) the first contact of the conquerors and the conquered in the matter of land during the time of the German domination, (2) the infiltration of the feudal system, (3) the conversion of the fiefs into heritages, and (4) finally, at the end of this period, the development of the system of serfdom.

Almost all peace treaties of the 13th century between the conquerors of Livonia and the former ruling powers recognize that the free people have the right to own land and to inherit it, with some limitations which depended on the *ius dominorum* imposing certain duties which thus turned their lands into taxable land, the so-called *pagus censiticus*. The taxes imposed are characteristic of the Middle Ages: the well-known, and well-nigh sacred, tithe (*decima*) and the *census*, the latter being an imposition of fixed value and independent of the tithe. As in the Slavonic countries colonized by the Germans east of the Elbe so in Livonia it was not the area of tilled land which served as a basis for assessing taxes, but the number of farming implements such as ploughs, harrows and sickles. Eventually, it is the number of horses, employed on the farm, which is introduced as the criterion. In these terms, then, the passage from a Rīga contract made with the Kurs in 1230 must be interpreted: amount of rye to be delivered yearly—two *modii* (in Latvian *pūri*, each corresponding in weight to 81.9 kg) from the plough (*uncus*, in Latvian *arkls*) and just as much from each harrow. At that time the Kurish *arkls* denoted the farmland which was worked by one horse. At a later period beginning with the 16th century the *arkls* (in German *Haken*) became a superficial unit of varying size for measuring the area of tilled land, which in Vidzeme, where the *arkls* of the Master, or of the Order, was in general use, equalled 21.6 hectares, compared with 10.2 hectares in Germany.

In addition to this tribute the rustics were obliged—as it is quite natural in countries so frequently in a state of war—to do statute-labour building castles, churches, and roads. Although the Bull of Pope Gregory IX in 1236 exempts the newly baptized from other obligations, the Master of the Order gradually introduced the *corvée* (cf. the covenant with the Kurs in 1257, and with the Semigallians in 1272), which is the beginning of public compulsory labour: “every Kur will work for the Order for four days a year, two days in the summer and two days in the winter.” However insignificant this duty was at the beginning, once established, this principle developed into an intolerable burden enhanced by the practice of “bee work”, where a number of people were jointly doing some definite work on certain occasions, set to good, e.g. at harvest time, which was combined with a good deal of compulsory feasting after the work was finished. Here are some data for comparison: while in the 15th century, with the enlarging of the area of tilled land on the big estates, the number of statute-labour days was raised in some regions to nine days per annum, in the early 16th century 32 labour days were reported in Kurzeme, and 26 to 45 days in the island of Oesel.

This initial and transitory stage was characteristic of the early periods of the feudal system. Thus, Bishop Albert (1199—1229) received Livonia

in feud from the German king Philip in 1207, with all rights and privileges of sovereignty. For his part, he ceded, in the same year, a third of the conquered land to the Order of the Sword, which event in due course led to new obligations on the part of the peasants towards their new feudal lords, notably when under the new economic conditions, *viz.* those of capitalist production, and, partly, in their endeavours to compete with the towns, the latter themselves turned from German professional warrior-knights into noble land proprietors.

Slowly but fatally the way was prepared for the process of the formation of the big landed estates, and a few centuries later we see that landed estates, except the state-owned demesnes, have already become inheritable feudal property. This first happened in the Estonian provinces of Harju and Viru. Thus, from the 16th century onward, the social gap between the German nobility and the non-German peasantry widened more and more, until, in the 19th century, the emancipation of the peasants completed the circle. The German conquerors left to the Livonian freeholders the right of possession which these free peasants then gradually lost, together with their personal freedom. In the early 19th century, they were granted the so-called "freedom of the bird"; this "freedom" meant in fact that they became outlaws. Eventually, in the second half of that century, they regained, by considerable economic efforts, the right of possession over their own land.

The process of formation of private estates in Kurzeme and Vidzeme is exceedingly complicated on account of the many outward influences and the confusion of the juridical norms. Very little light has as yet been thrown on this problem, and here, too, the lack of sufficient historical evidence and information does not permit us to draw anything but a general outline of its course of development. Since the usufruct of a feud implied solely the right of supreme ownership on the taxes from the land and on the statute-service of the peasants, the foundations of the development of private estates and their enlargement, at least during the first centuries of alien domination, are to be sought elsewhere. Several views are held on this matter by historians. As for the possible reasons for such a development, here we will note a few: many peasant riots, the desertion of peasants which increased to a dangerous extent, particularly towards the end of the 15th century. The official documents as, for instance, the correspondence between the various small Livonian states or communities, are couched in highly menacing tones and reveal to us the morbid social conditions of that age in this country. Hence it would be much to the point to remember R. Vipper's expressive remark: "serfdom was an interminable and continuous war; the peasants never recognized it, but the landed gentry, apart from the economic advantages derived from

it made the best of it as an instrument of terror, without which they could not have survived amidst a hostile population."

An example of the growing oppression of the peasantry by the nobility was the intensification of the system of statute-labour towards the end of the 15th century, which grew with the increase of the burden of debt on the peasants; this last circumstance resulted in their increased economic dependence. Gradually, the symptoms of that economic-social position begin to take shape, which eventually turns into what is called rural bond-service (*Schollenpflichtigkeit, Leibeigenschaft*): (1) In the official deeds and documents an increasing number of terms is to be met with, such as *Erbmann, Erbbauer, Eigen-Mann*; (2) in a deed of 1497 mention is made of the sale of peasants for 60 old Rīga marks each; (3) the hereditary lord, notably in the bishoprics, acquires the right of criminal jurisdiction over his peasants. All these examples clearly set off the characteristics of bondservice. We shall come back to this question in due course, especially to its internal development, so let us now point out but two more important points which will help us to get an insight into the living conditions of those times, and which refer to the relations between nobility and peasantry and show the patriarchal system of life at that period. (1) The permission given to the former non-German landowners to sell or make a donation of their land (*emptio vel donatio*); (2) the possibility of a voluntary cession of certain pieces of ground in compensation for obligations imposed and not rendered; (3) there are to be found indications that in certain cases, during preparations for, or in times of war, employment of force on the part of the stronger may have occurred (cf. the passage from a text, dating from 1280: *ab antiqua terra verbis minacibus, verberibus, prece vel pretio effugando*); (4) in more than a few cases the feudal landed proprietors came to an agreement with the socager and enlarged the area of their estate by clearing woodland (*res nullius*) and preparing for tillage the free stretches of land, belonging only to "God and the peasants", as it is defined in a legal decision of 1518; and (5) it must always be remembered that a great many names of estates, like their history, clearly show that they have developed from heirless peasant lands, or from such whose owners had perished during the many wars or epidemics.

It must, however, be pointed out that apart from the bulk of peasantry encumbered with taxes and corvées, there survived a certain number of freeholders (*Freibauern*)—the meaning of this word, however, is very vague and inexact. Another group that survived were the so-called *kuršu koniņi* ("Kurish Kings")—a group of certain small feudal lords (*leimani*) who formed part of the heavy cavalry; and finally, a third group, the so-called *leidas viri* or *leidenieki* who brought themselves off, either

with money or in kind, from paying taxes or doing service—they all form a social group holding a middle position between the feudal nobility and the peasantry, but it is of a transitory character.

This process of formation of private estates did not take place without resorting to brute force, to judge from the repercussions it caused among the peasant class. Above all, mention must be made of the Latvian rural commune *pagasts* (in German *Wacke*) which for some time yet retained its local administration and its courts; the collection of tribute and taxes took place in kind according to the economy and the primitive habits of life. The *pagasts*, *i.e.* the collection of tribute, as this term implies, coincided generally with the end of the agricultural working period and also with church festivals or with fairs, and therefore was confined to such dates as Michaelmas, Christmas, Easter, etc. We find a very picturesque description, though written at a later time and in rather circuitous manner, in the Livonian Chronicle by B. Russow (the first edition appeared in 1578), which in general is sufficiently correct and truthful, as is proved by documents of an earlier date. The passage in question runs as follows: "Each *pagasts* (*Wacke*) was obliged each year to arrange a great feast for its lord, at which the entire peasantry and all the freeholders had to be present, in order to pay their lord the tribute and taxes of that particular year. The Masters of the Order organized this festival at Michaelmas and on this day all the servants of the castle and estate came together, likewise the masters, freeholders, Germans and peasants. When everything was paid, the whole party began a great row, shouting with all their might, as is the custom in Livonia. Huge wooden tankards (*Kaussen*) were brought out; they were so big that a child could be bathed in them. Then it started: everybody drank everybody's health, two at a time, not only from one tankard, but from several, big and small, until, finally, all were completely drunk and did no longer recognize one another." The quantities of food and drink consumed at such rustic patriarchal feasts in comparatively good times were impressive indeed, to judge from the respective authentic documents; the great number of candles which people were required to bring along with them and the custom of inviting musicians guaranteed the merriness which on such occasions must have prevailed for some time. References to these feasts are also to be found in Latvian folksongs.

As regards the rural courts and their working, it must be stated that here, as was the case elsewhere, the main principle was that the question of the guilt of the accused was discussed by members of his own social class, which means that when the court was sitting in judgement on a peasant, the sentence was pronounced by peasant judges (*Rechtfinder*);

while the president of the court (*Vogt*, in Latin *advocatus*) and the two assessors (*Beisitzer*) only saw to it that the pleadings were taking a legal course, and in the end ordered the bailiff or some other magistrate to execute the sentence. Such was the procedure, so vividly described by Rus-sow, in criminal matters, while civil cases remained within the competence of the communal peasant tribunals. The non-German freeholders were tried according to the peasant rights which were in force from the 13th century until the 17th century. These laws did not as yet recognize rural bondage, the peasants being at liberty to dispose of their property, to change residence, even to move to town. In addition they were allowed to carry arms and to take part in military raids.

The 14th and 15th centuries, following a period of conquests which was relatively well recorded, have left very scanty information not only with regard to the conquered peoples, which might more easily be accounted for, but about the cultural manifestations of the ruling society. An exception is the secular and religious architecture—the castles and churches,—which is but natural in a border-land, and the unfolding of a rich art in the Hanseatic towns. As far as the literary documentation is concerned, the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order is very far behind its senior partner in Prussia. When studying Ziese-mer's book,¹¹ we are naturally led to compare conditions in Livonia with those in Old Prussia, and to ask what the reasons are for the differences. In seeking for possible explanations, we may mention some which seem to us more plausible than others. There is, to begin with, the fact that the region in question was the Russian and Lithuanian frontier area, almost constantly in a state of mobilization on account of the incessant internal discords among the conquerors themselves. Secondly, in this frontier region so many artistic and, presumably, also literary documents of value must have been destroyed during these wars. Thirdly, it may be safely assumed that the standard of humanitarian education among the Livonian conquerors was on a much lower level than that of the conquerors in Old Prussia. Likewise, the complete lack of any contact whatever with the local population on the part of the conquerors—this gap, incidentally, is referred to by the Baltic-German historians as *fatal*—greatly disturbed the unfolding of that delicate and sensitive flower which is called artistic and literary culture.

In a like manner, the non-existence of chronicles and even of spiritual texts—those of a juridical nature excepted—which might so much as reflect the outline of the life of the non-German peoples, serves to stress this absence of intercourse between the lords and their subjects. The latter continue to live according to their ancestral traditions, as is testified by the *Statuta provincialia concilii Rigensis* (1428). They continued to cultivate their folksongs—we do not know if any epics existed at this time.

In these folksongs survived many memories, juridical as well as administrative terms, especially those used in everyday life, which led some historians to assume that this was the time from which the majority of folksongs took their origin (see chapter III). As the florescence of Latvian beliefs continued at least until the middle of the 17th century and in certain cases even up to the 19th century, and in view of the very conservative character of the literary and musical tradition of the Latvian folksong up to the present time, it is not too difficult, despite the lack of absolutely unequivocal information, to imagine the existence of a rich folklore and folk-art among the Latvians in those remote centuries.

In the 16th century, under the onset of hurricane attacks from all quarters, the political (not however the social nor the national) structure of Livonia collapsed. A host of foreigners arrived and it was they who described the country and its people "on the more or less mysterious shores of the Unknown Ocean which once upon a time surrounded the terrestrial disk." At a later date it was called the German inland-sea (*mare clausum Germanicum*), as previously it had been called the Hans-eatic Sea. When the Baltic was finally opened up it revealed both the earlier and the present conditions of the life of the races populating this country.



* Seal of Bishop Rotgert Brigenius of Kurland (1403). The inscription reads:
S. rotgeri. epi. ecclesie. curoniensis.



*

VIII EAST AND WEST

Plettenberg's victory over the Russians near Pskov was the last large-scale gesture of the Livonian Order—its swan song, as it were, after three centuries of aggressive and defensive fighting in this bridge-head into the east. The ensuing fifty years of peace were, in a way, the preamble to the approaching decline and ultimate collapse of this military-political organization. There were several reasons for this collapse. The Order proper had gradually lost its monastic character, the friar-knight having developed into a well-to-do lord enjoying all the conveniences of life. The changes, affecting the Order in Prussia, where it was secularized and turned into a Duchy in 1525, were but the logical consequences of the modifications brought about by the progress of time. Apart from symptoms of a general character, mention must be made of the modern worm which was gnawing at the roots of this organization: after the Reformation which spread so swiftly through Germany and the neighbouring countries, any Catholic Order became an absurdity—if faith declines, nothing is saved or gained by preserving its outer form. From the

* Ornament of a dagger-sheath, 14th to 15th century A. D. Double-scroll hook and zigzag ornament in inlaid bronze on leather ground, similar in style and form to analogous samples of the 11th and 12 centuries, found in the Liv areas and Letgallia.

point of view of the former balance of power, we are able to follow the gradual transformation of the comparatively small units of the Order in the vicinity of the Baltic which could only exist in the time of feudal combinations: in the east, in the endless plains of Russia, a new empire was in the making, to which Lithuania and Poland responded in 1569 with the Union of Lublin; Sweden was also casting cautious glances in the direction of the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Thus Livonia became an object coveted by its neighbours who were expanding their territories and power. The situation is clearly and distressingly characterized by the desperate appeals, launched in all directions, to secure help and support, and by the painful agonies—unanimously confirmed by many local and foreign sources—of the expiring Order. A growing decay of morals among the higher circles of the Order can be observed during the last years and decades of its existence. To quote Ammianus Marcellinus,¹ “their goblets were heavier than their swords.” The pamphleteers of the rising Counter-Reformation accused the ruling classes of a corruption of morals as the result of the Reformation. We can easily understand the real reason for these pamphlets: in their writings the exiles, and the people dispersed by the terrible onslaught of the Russians, bitterly reproached all those who had not anticipated the impending dangers and had rated the enemy too low. We must not take all these rebukes too seriously, but the real situation showed clearly that, when the armies of the Order were up against the joint Russian-Tartar hordes, the times of Plettenberg could not be re-evoked. The days of the Order’s glory were declining fast and a number of local legends, as is customary in such periods, describe all sorts of evil forebodings.²

The development of the Reformation in Livonia took a very radical turn in the towns, where dramatic scenes of violence occurred (the iconoclastic riots). How deep the roots were which the Reformation had struck we shall see from the course of later events, when the Counter-Reformation made efforts to oust Protestantism from the positions it had conquered. The Reformation was less conspicuously successful among the aristocracy, while amidst the rural population its results were manifest in the fulfilling of administrative regulations, which, rather than affecting the people’s conscience, increased hopes of certain social reforms, as was also the case in other countries during political revolutions.

Chronologically, the Reformation in Livonia marched in the front line, as it were, without, however, evincing anything more than a local character, “without pathos”, as Arbusow,³ an historian of the Livonian Reformation, puts it. He based his remarks on the absence of contact between the ruling classes and the lower strata of the society which were of a different national composition. Speaking generally, we may say that the Re-

formation was initiated by the activity of two propagandists, Knopken and Tegetmeyer, pastors of St. Peter's and St. Jacob's Churches in Riga, respectively. This decidedly civic movement had, by 1525, expanded to the minor centres of Livonia. In August 1523 there arrived a personal letter from Martin Luther addressed to the Christians of Livonia and containing encouragement and advice. The years 1524 and 1525 were marked by violence, sacrilege, and the Expulsion of Franciscan and Dominican monks. The events, revolutionary in their general character and in their manifestation, took place in Riga, Reval and Dorpat and were rather brutal and violent. The towns pursued their own lines of policy in a more or less open way, the endangered higher clergy did everything in their power to save their position, sending a delegation abroad, even to Rome, and not hesitating in certain cases to apply clandestinely for help to the Russians (Blankenstein, co-adjutor of the Order, who was eventually expelled from the country); the landed nobility, ever aware of the presence of the non-German population, vacillated between the "new conscience" and practical considerations of inner and outer policy. Added to this were other motives which fitted into the spirit of the events, without being of any particular confessional significance, tending towards an emancipation from the domination of the Church towards the creation of one single power in the country; the far too numerous masters of the Confederation, whose activity was never sufficiently co-ordinated, never enjoyed popularity, neither among the great merchants nor among the small town craftsmen. In fact, it was the citizens of Riga and of Reval who, in March 1525, offered Master Plettenberg the "crown" of Livonia, after they had been impressed and prompted by similar events in Prussia during the same year. Plettenberg, cautious and wise, rejected this offer, and promised only his military protection (1526). In the end, the Reformation did not entail for Livonia the forming of a new state, as it did in Prussia and the Netherlands. To the landed nobility the inappeasable restlessness of the towns-people hardly seemed suited for tackling the country's problems. The leaders of the Order, being conscious of their responsibility in the field of foreign policy—the last war with Russia was still fresh in everybody's memory—and observing the ominous development of the German war towards the boundaries of East Prussia, tried to check the tide of the movement and to conduct it into controllable administrative channels with the help of the pastors of the new religion. After renewed efforts to give vent to their dangerous tendencies to get rid of the social yoke (risings in several provinces, refusals to pay taxes, etc.) and left without leaders, the country people, riotous as they were, especially in Estonia, calmed down in the end and everything remained as it had been before, until the next incursion of the Russians when new and

rather serious revolts took place in certain districts. Summing up the results of the Reformation in Livonia, we may say that in the beginning it appeared to the peasants as of a rather formal and alien character, so it was a considerable time before the new spirit became more or less firmly rooted in the minds of the people, on which Catholic and Pagan influences



Seal of the town of Straupe, 1515—1533.

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kept their hold for a long time yet to come. According to Arbusow,⁴ the Reformation exercised a favourable influence insofar as it took great pains to organize non-German congregations, for which it provided churches and ministers (e.g. St. Jacob's Church in Rīga). These centres and the initiative of several pastors, as, for instance, Ramm and Eck, gave rise to the first movement in Latvian spiritual literature, which grew more vigorous and active during the later period of controversy and struggle between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. The beginnings of the literary movement, indeed, were very modest. It is believed that the Lord's Prayer in Latvian, which is to be found in the Old Prussian chronicle of Simon Grunau, like the other one, quoted by S. Münster in his cosmography of 1550, dated back to the Catholic era of Livonia. Ramm's name is associated with a number of religious texts in Latvian, part of which were printed in Rīga by N. Mollyn as late as at the beginning of the following century. They refer to 1530 and subsequent years. There exist some traces of other religious texts by other authors, but the ravages of time have left us but few remains.

In order to get an insight into the unavoidable and tragic condition

of the country during the time of the collapse of the Livonian Order, it is necessary to view the occurrences which took place in the history of Europe in that fateful century. Let us first of all begin with Livonia's closest neighbours: Lithuania-Poland and Muscovy. Both these States were in the prime of their power, yet they were soon to quarrel over the domination of the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. There is a certain parallelism to be noted in the growth of power of both of these States which strove for access to the sea by way of the ports of Danzig and Rīga. After a period of inner disunion Poland was ruled by kings, of whom Wladislaw Lokietek (1306—1333) and Casimir the Great (1333—1370) succeeded in consolidating the country and making her great and powerful. The union of Lithuania and Poland under the lead of the Jagellon dynasty raised these two states to a level of power which enabled them to face the mighty Teutonic Order. Poland-Lithuania attained, in the reign of the Jagellons, her greatest expansion in Europe at the expense of the east. For all that, the union was not a very close one, since Lithuania retained her Grand Dukes and, after the death of Casimir IV in 1492, the two states again separated until, in 1569, the personal union was replaced by a real and actual one. The early 16th century was marked by prolonged and tough fights with the growing State of Muscovy. As early as the last decades of the previous century the Poles had successfully held back the Turks and had driven them from Moldavia, and in the first decades of the 16th century they seized East Prussia, annexing the region of Masovia and thus securing an access to the mouth of the Vistula, called the lungs of the basin of this river. Danzig, this headstrong German town, did not fall into Polish hands until 1577. This was Stephen Bathory's first act which marked him as a great ruler.

Muscovy, on the other hand, put Ivan III to the fore as her first emperor of international stature. After the fall of Novgorod and during the reign of Vasily (1505—1533), his successor, the Muscovites seized Pskov, Smolensk and Riazan, thus drawing dangerously near to the frontiers of the Order in Livonia. It was Ivan IV, the Terrible, who was first destined to raise the notion of a Russian Empire, and it was he, too, who destroyed the remnants of the feudal particularism of the boyars and who tried to implement the huge plan of the Empire; he was crowned Tsar in 1547. His march on Kazan in 1552, and on Astrakhan in 1556, in order to break the rest of the Mongolian might, and the conquest of Siberia (he got as far as Irkutsk in 1581), called for a counterbalancing movements towards the west, against the "confounded Germans" (*niemtsy proklyatiye*, as he is said to have called them in his rage). Powerful as this move was, it still lacked organization, and did not succeed in matching western methods and military technique.

In spite of the undeniable, though intermittent and relapsing, growth of power and greatness of these two States, next-door neighbours to Livonia, there were yet other forces ready to take part in the game. From Scandinavia Sweden entered the ring, and after hard fighting succeeded in remaining victorious for a whole century. She had just finished a prolonged war with her old rival Denmark (1563—1570); she had delivered herself of the experiments of the queer Eric XIV (deposed in 1568, he died in jail in 1577); and she had fortified her position during the reign of the peace-loving and learned John III (1568—1592). When, after rejecting the Polish claims to the throne of Sweden, the ambitious Duke of Södermanland came to power (in 1594, crowned in 1607, he died in 1611), the Swedish wars of expansion, begun at an earlier date, gathered force and momentum.

We have thus tried to outline, geographically, the three principal routes of expansion which converged upon Livonia, the key to the control of the Baltic Sea. But there was still a fourth power—the Holy Roman Empire, of which Livonia for more than three centuries had nominally been a component part. However, very little help could reach this distant province, because the Empire, built up by Charlemagne and by various succeeding dynasties, was passing through one of its most critical periods. It was involved, internally, in religious wars which broke out with the Reformation. The struggle of the League of Schmalkalden with the Catholics, the efforts made to end the disunion, then, new conflicts and new fights—they all came to an end in 1555, but in the meantime almost the entire family of the German and Anglo-Saxon peoples had joined the Reformation. To the external complications, not to speak of the wars in France and of the troubles in Italy, were added the threats from the Turks, whose empire under the great Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520—1566), reached the climax of its power. Events such as the siege of Vienna and the subjugation of the heroic Hungarians (1545) made the great Empire tremble and remember Attila, the Avars, the Magyars and the Mongols. When the great Sultan died, the frontiers of this Empire extended to the Carpathian mountains and the rivers Dniester and Bug.

At last came the turn of Livonia. It is a fine thing to be able to write about Livonia:

Europae clypeus propugnatrixque Vienna est
adversus belli fulmina Turce tui:
Riga sed adversus quia propugnacula Moschum
sufficit, Europae haec altera clavis erit.
Admonitu Moschi horresco, mentemque subintrat
afflictae patriae tristis imago meae,

**Sehr grewliche/erschrock-
liche / vor vnerhörte / warhafftige Newe zente-
rung/was für grausame Tyranny der Moscouiter/an-
den Gefangenen/ hinweggeführten Christen auß Lyfland/ beydes an
Mannen vnd Frayen/ Juncffrawen vnd kleinen Kindern/ beges-
het/ vnd was täglichs Schadens er ihnen in irem Land zufüget/ Bey-
neben angezeygt / in was grosser fahr vnd not die Lyflender
stecken. Allen Chyften zur warnung/ vnd Beso-
serung ihres Sündelichen lebens/ auß
Lyfland geschriben / vnd in
Druck verfertiget.**



Zu Nürnberg bey Georg Kreydlein. M. D. L X I.

A contemporary print showing atrocities committed by the Muscovites during the war in Livonia.

as the humanist Basilius Plinius, of Rīga,⁵ did. However, looking at things as they really were, it cannot be concealed that many things in the Baltic countries were in a state of decay, and that the "mission" which had existed for so many centuries was on the verge of collapse.

The delegates from Livonia, who had often been to Moscow, were handed an ultimatum—*nihil novi sub luna*. The negotiations, to put it mildly, became difficult . . . and the Russian-Tartar armies marched towards Livonia on the road which had so often been trodden by the princes of Novgorod and Pskov leading on to Yuriev (Dorpat—Tartu), and thence into Livonia. On the Livonian side there was utter confusion—even panic: the military organization was failing—the famous 50 years of peace had left their mark. Therefore the Russians and Tartars gained notable successes. The armed forces of the Order were heavily defeated in 1560 at Ērgeme (Ermes) by the armies of Prince Kurbsky, the same who afterwards saved himself by flight from the vengeance of the terrible Tsar and became known through his very expressive correspondence with his former master, a correspondence which abounds in reciprocal reproaches and insults. Other no less serious dangers supervened from within, for the peasants and the rest of the people who had nothing, or hardly anything, to lose were not too prone to let themselves be beguiled into hoping for some changes. Instigated by the Tsar's emissaries, they became refractory, refused obedience to their lords and began to desert. Altogether, the situation took a very bad turn for the Livonian masters, while the enemy armies advanced and gradually occupied almost the whole of Livonia, except the two towns of Rīga and Reval, and the islands.

It is hardly necessary to comment on the ruthless methods of warfare in those times; however, some of the eastern bestialities practised by those barbarians were such as to horrify the rulers of the west and to make them see in the Muscovite Tsar a new anti-Christ who had come to endanger their very existence.

All those events were re-evoked as late as 1647 by Mancelius⁶ in one of his sermons, held when commemorating the sixtyfifth anniversary of the peace treaty of 1582, a passage of which runs as follows: "Five and sixty years have now gone by since the grandfather of our very esteemed Great Lord and Sovereign commanded that throughout the whole country this day be praised each year in honour of God, because the mighty Russians not only greatly devastated Livonia, but also tortured, skinned, singed, spitted, and roasted the people, the peasants as well as the Germans, even the gentry and the rich merchants, as if they were swine. They whipped their eyes from their sockets, shamed and raped wives and virgins alike, killed others, deported people to the Russian land where they became slaves

for ever. Others, naked such as when they were born from their mothers, were carried to the bridge, struck on their front with a stick or a club, and then thrown into the river to be drowned and eaten by fish and bird! Some mothers' children were eaten by the dogs at the wayside! Some rotted in the gaols! And who can tell of all the grief which the people, young and old, rich and poor, Germans and peasants, noblemen and other honest people, saw and suffered in those Russian times?

Therefore, praying to God, they sang:
We have all of us seen sorrow
Visit men, women and little children.
Save us, oh God, from seeing it again!

And so it happens that we parents have come to know bitter hatred in these times of war and wandering. Many a wealthy man has been wrecked, many a child separated from his father and mother, many a kinsman from his clan; yet those Russian times were still worse. In this war you might expect as much as half-mercy, but in those times, even when going down upon your knees, you dared not hope for mercy, neither from a dogkeeper nor from a ragged scarecrow. You were doomed to die, not knowing of what death..." Similarly he continues in another passage: "Therefore let man not be proud before God, nor inflate his chest like a toad. God's severe chastisement has been felt in those Russian times by the people who lived in Livonia. Neither German nor peasant was spared; neither merchant nor ploughman, the one like the other being so lashed with whips that the skin burst open and blood would gush forth with the flesh; others were chopped into pieces, others were skinned. Who in the morning had his piece of bread never knew what tortures he would endure before the evening. You never have heard of such hatred, so bear in mind what has happened in our times in this country..."

The advance of the Muscovites and their successes in Livonia seriously worried the responsible leaders of the neighbouring states as well. Projects of intervention and of reconciliation, which the victorious Tsar at first rejected, were submitted by the Poles, the Swedes, the Danes and the German Emperor. Many reassuring replies were written to the last Master of the Order in answer to his appeals for help, but real assistance was granted only to a very small extent. The Swedes felt safe in their comparatively isolated geographical position and were unwilling to be the first to take action, and the Poles were rather far away and difficult to rouse. So, except for the Holy Roman Empire which was quite impotent at that time, only the Lithuanians were left and they were directly threatened. They did not rise until the strength of the Order was exhausted, and so they avoided excessive bickering over the terms of inter-

vention. Thus, the fateful years 1560—1561 arrived. Prince N. Radziwill was at the gates of Rīga with his army and on 8 September 1561 reported an intricate situation to his king, Sigismund II. The report portrayed the spirit of the Livonians at that particular moment—a very hard one for them: "... and after the rest of the nobility and the other population had lost their faith in their masters, *i.e.* in the Masters of the Order, and did not hope to get either protection or aid, they became afraid of losing their possessions and belongings and began looking for assistance, whenever they could, so far as I was able to find out. Some of them put their trust in the Danes, some in the Swedes, some even in the Muscovites, finally stopping at Your Majesty. Almost all of them despise and profoundly hate the Order, and are convinced that the reason for its numerous defeats is to be sought in the loose life of their people." In such a way a foreign observer wrote, but so wrote one who was not a foreigner:⁷ "... all these events unchained a great deal of quarrelling and discord in the country, one accusing the other of being responsible for the disaster. The Order blamed the nobility for being unwilling to join them in going to war and for desiring noblemen and kings as their sovereigns. On their part, the nobility accused the Order of not having taken pains to provide for mercenaries for the defence of the country. In addition, the middle-classes reproached the aristocracy for its disinclination to go to war, although it boasted of its fine horses, it only knew how to show off on wedding and christening occasions. The nobility, in its turn, paid them back and reprimanded them for betraying the towns, as had happened at Narva and Dorpat. And lastly, the poor peasants are in general opposed to the Order, the nobility and the middle-classes, saying that they are indeed quick in torturing them, but when it would be their duty to side with or defend the peasants, no one is to be seen, and the peasants are left to their fate." The same motifs also recur in Kettler's despairing letters to several sovereigns. Having no other choice left, he signed, on 28 November 1561, the deed of submission to the King of Poland, not before releasing the nobility from its oath. At any rate, the energetic Kettler saved what could be saved for himself and for the future, namely, the Duchy of Kurland (Kurzeme). The farsightedness of this step, evidence of a bright and clear mind even in those times of general confusion, is shown by the simple fact that, despite its geographical situation, the Duchy could survive, being but in nominal dependence on the Polish government, for nearly two and a half centuries, *i.e.* until the last partition of Poland in 1795.

The entrance of Radziwill's armies into Rīga in 1562 is vividly described by B. Russow⁸ in his chronicle: "He solemnly entered the town of Rīga in August; in his wake followed the most varied foreign peoples—

Armenians, Turks, Podolians, Russians, and Wallachians and many Germans, Poles, and Lithuanians. He led them all on through the town, for which reason the hearts of the faithful filled with wonder, seeing separately so many peoples and tribes, each in their own costume, with their arms and their music. And the hearts of the faithful became sad at the sight of these unusual, strange and barbaric races and tribes treading the Christian roads of their country." The entrance of King Stephen, 20 years later, in March 1582 was described by the ambassador of the Danzig Senate, the well-known humanist Daniel Hermann:⁹ "From the castle down to the ice of the river Daugava, there stood, drawn up in rows, five companies of armed citizens and mercenaries . . . , one company of the latter, which was on permanent municipal pay, was on guard in the town, in the market place. Here were also three non-German peasant companies, armed with halberds and lances, standing around everywhere, on the walls and bastions, in dense rows . . . which greatly pleased His Majesty." It is in this connection that a Livonian patriot (presumably J. Padel, chief magistrate of Riga), wrote in his jeremiad:¹⁰ "This fine town and the whole country is now abandoned by the Holy Roman Empire and the Germanic peoples, . . . and left in the possession of non-German barbarians (*barbarisch Unteutschen*) who never had a high opinion of the Germans and who have always tried everything possible and with all available means, as those who live among them well know, and who never wanted or aimed at anything else but to harm German blood."

However, this, generally speaking, was only the first act of the tragedy; two more were to follow, one gloomier than the other, before Riga definitely passed into Swedish hands in 1621. When we see this country so deeply worried about its future, we may say once more, with regard to this corner of the earth—*belle tempête, pauvre pays!* Owing to international circumstances and to very lively activity on the part of the Lithuanians and the Poles, the Russian-Tartar troops withdrew from a part of the devastated country, leaving behind them heaps of smouldering ruins. But they returned later. Dorpat and, to a lesser degree, Polotsk which the Russians took in 1563, but which Bathory captured in 1579, remained the main bases for Russian aggression.

Troubles at home prevented the Tsar from achieving his aims. The year 1564 was a year of gruesome terror in the State of Muscovy—a terror directed against the boyars, which earned Ivan the epithet "the Terrible". His personality very strongly influenced the imagination of the peoples of the western countries, and many literary documents and prophecies of those times speak of it. One of the most complete contemporary biographies of him was written by Oderborn,¹¹ a pastor in Riga. Of the other observations and estimates, mention must be made here of those

given by a Danish diplomat who in a rhetorical manner pretended not to know whether to attribute the Tsar's raving and wild madness to his sadism, or whether to explain it as the consequence and manifestation of the wicked nature of his subjects. The imperialistic tendencies, which interest us most here, were revealed by the Tsar himself in a controversy with Prince Kurbsky in phrases like these: "... if your devilish treachery had not intervened, Germany would already have been converted to Orthodoxy" (1564), and, "not only Russia, but also Germany, Lithuania and Tartary would have felt the power of the Holy Cross (read: of the Tsar himself)" (1577).

Although sporadic incursions and manifestations of hatred had never ceased, the war in Livonia recommenced with great vigour by an attack on Estonia, which since 1561 had been under Swedish domination, and by a siege of Reval. It is during these years that under the complicated circumstances of Livonia a "king", the only one in the whole history of the country, *viz.* Prince Magnus of Denmark, emerged. This odd figure, fatally protected by Ivan IV, this "one-hour king", tried on his part to imitate the example of Kettler and to allot to himself, during these vicissitudes, the north-western part of Kurland, Piltene, and the island of Oesel, basing his claims on the one-time Danish expansion in these regions. The siege of Reval, involving—according to Russian methods—a thorough devastation of the country, began in January 1577. However, the Russian methods of warfare did not prove sufficiently skillful against "the greatly fortified German towns", as Ivan IV writes. Reval offered resistance, and Ivan in person led his armies unexampled in number for those times on to Rīga. One castle after the other surrendered, the resistance of the Master of the Order at Cēsis was shattered, the castle being blown up by its defenders who did not wish to fall into Russian hands to be tortured. Tsar Ivan's behaviour towards the survivors is described in Karamzin¹² as "one of the most horrifying manifestations of the tyranny of Ivan IV." There still remained some score of kilometres to Rīga. What the feelings of the inhabitants of this town were like, is evinced by a passage in a *Zeytung* (of 30 August 1577), whose author, after describing the events at Cēsis, goes on: "In the vicinity of Rīga the Grand Duke (Ivan IV) and his heavy artillery have pitched camp. May the Almighty give us strength and endurance to bear our cross of suffering in this moment of affliction. Indeed, there is no people upon the earth more desolate and forsaken than we poor Livonians. It is beyond my power to go on writing in so great a sorrow and in such a distress, suffering, poverty, and misery." However, the dark clouds which had gathered finally dispersed, withdrawing towards the north. At Valmiera Ivan IV treated his generals to a huge banquet to which he also invited a few Polish noblemen who had







been taken prisoners, and ordered Prince Polullensky to "return to King Stephen and persuade him to conclude peace on the conditions which I am going to dictate, for my arm is powerful—you have had experience of it, and he may too."

It would be possible to cite many comments, one more expressive than the other, on all these events, but it would lead us too far. May it suffice to mention that before the war between the united western troops, led by King Stephen, and the eastern armies under the command of Ivan IV, a second tide of Muscovite terror began.

The success of Muscovy was observed with growing anxiety by the western states, more or less distant neighbours of Livonia. The similarity of the new menace to the Turkish danger became ever more apparent. The Baltic problem entered upon its decisive phase. Lithuania and Poland, as a matter of course, felt most to be in danger, and the Union of Lublin, concluded in the interval between the collapse of the Order and the large-scale attacks of the Russians, is evidence of this feeling. Although the poorly organized and insufficiently consolidated masses in both these states could not be roused and drawn up quickly enough, they threw up some outstanding rulers of great capacity and leadership, notably in Poland where at this particular time several such men came to the fore. Of these the first and foremost was King Stephen, who was bold enough to fling at the noisy Polish parliament these classical words: *nec sum rex fictus vel pictus*, neither was his Lord High-Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, nor were many of his army commanders. Both the political and the military duel between the Russian and Polish monarchs revealed the extensive contrast between these two worlds. Two examples will help to illustrate this. Both leaders of this great contest kept up a correspondence between each other. It ended with a chivalrous challenge on the part of the Polish-Hungarian sovereign which Ivan IV disdainfully refused to accept, considering himself *hors concours*, as it were. Among other phrases, the Muscovite used one in which he called himself a sovereign by the grace of God, whereas his adversary, by way of insult, he qualified as a king elected only by the caprice of rebellious human minds. The other example of the contrast between the two sides in this conflict is to be found when we compare their armies: on the Muscovite side, there was a solid mass of Russians and Tartars, of which it would be rash to say that it was well organized; on the other side we see a conglomeration of peoples, and we can but wonder how, in spite of the grudge, arrogance and rivalry of the Poles, Lithuanians, Hungarians, and Tartars, it was held together during the wars of 1578—1582.

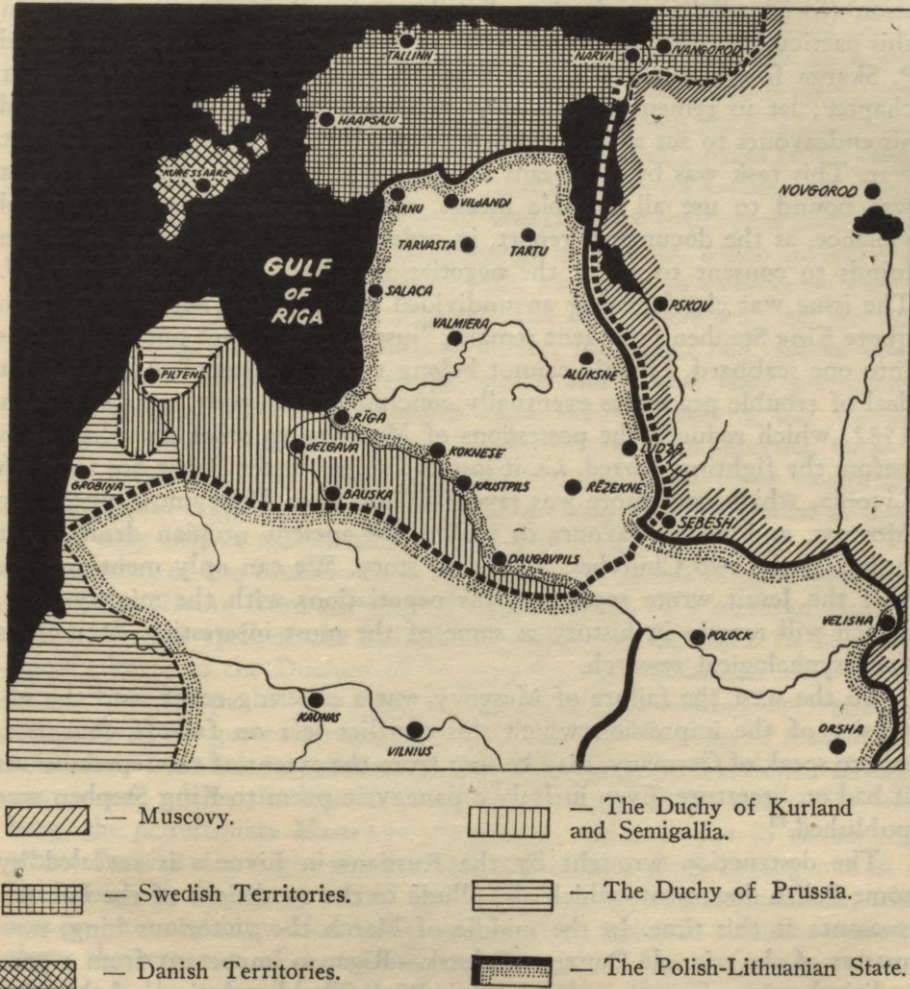
The salient events of these wars were the crossing of the forest area, the capture of Polotsk and Velikie Luki, and the siege of Pskov. In Livonia



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|---|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
|  | — Muscovy. |  | — The Duchy of Kurland. |
|  | — Swedish Territories. |  | — The Duchy of Prussia. |
|  | — Danish Territories. |  | — The Polish-Lithuanian State. |

Map 19. The Partition of Livonia in 1562.

the re-conquering of Cēsis was a significant feat, which was achieved by joint German and Latvian action, under the command of Jan Būring, a former officer of the Order, and which gave Kurbsky occasion to make his former chief the target of a venomous remark in a letter—"While making preparations to attack the fortifications, the aggressors advanced in the dead of night, and there were great numbers of dogs which were running wild, tearing to pieces the corpses which in the autumn before were thrown by the Muscovites to the dogs, the wild beasts, and birds of



Map 20. The Partition of Livonia in 1583.

prey for food. And when these dogs began to howl, to whine and to bark, Buring's and his companion's hearts failed them and they began to doubt of the success of the assault planned by them."

Fighting weakened both parties, and entailed incalculable consequences. It was contrary to the interests of the Holy See which after the Council of Trent (1545—1563) planned a counter-attack, in order to save and restore its prestige which had suffered so greatly during the last decades. Again Livonia was destined to become the stage on which the first encounter between the forces of the Reformation and the Counter-Reform-

ation (Swedes-Poles) took place. Small wonder, then, that it is partly in this particular milieu that the activity of such persons as A. Possevino and P. Skarga found scope. We shall dwell on it more at length in the next chapter; let us remember here only A. Possevino, the Jesuit father, and his endeavours to act as a mediator of peace between the two countries at war. This task was by no means an easy one; the active and deft priest was bound to use all possible means, not excluding those of physical violence, as the documents report, in order to compel the heated Russian minds to consent to renew the negotiations which had been suspended. The issue was clearly either an undivided Livonia or a new war, for, to quote King Stephen's pungent remark, "just as you cannot put two swords into one scabbard, Livonia cannot belong to two masters." After a great deal of trouble peace was eventually concluded at Zapolie, near Pskov, in 1582, which reduced the possessions of Muscovy to what they had been before the fighting started, *i.e.* it lost the access to the Baltic Sea through Livonia, which once more was saved for the west. Possevino's mission to Moscow, and his endeavours to realize the ancient utopian dream of a union of the two Churches, is another story. We can only mention here that the Jesuit wrote reports of his negotiations with the mighty Tsar, which will remain in history as some of the most interesting documents for psychological research.

To the west the failure of Muscovy was a cheering relief, and the intensity of the impression which this conflict left on far-off countries, not to speak of Germany, may be seen from the extent of the repercussions it had on literature. Even in Italy a panegyric poem to King Stephen was published.¹³

The destruction wrought by the Russians in Livonia is revealed by some Polish documents which also allude to the conditions of the Latvian peasants at this time. In the middle of March the victorious king, now master of the triangle Danzig—Polotsk—Rīga, so important from a geopolitical point of view, set out to visit Rīga. The descriptions of this visit give a lifelike and vivid picture, rendered in the true style of the 16th century, of the way of living and of the character of the king, of his army and his court, of solemn speeches, and numerous character sketches.

The interval after the second act in this drama, however, was nothing else but a brief respite before the commencement of a new struggle and new sufferings: once again dark clouds were gathering on the horizon, this time for a clash of a religious nature, though accompanied by a political-military rivalry for predominance in the Baltic; "Livonia undivided" had to pay for the honour of being the key to the mastery of the Baltic Sea (*dominium maris Baltici*). But here we will pause for a while, in order to see what had become of our unfortunate country, so ravaged

and despoiled by the numerous armies. This gigantic struggle had attracted the attention of numerous observers and a great many literary people and art connoisseurs, who were among the soldiery as well as among the king's and his chancellor's retinue. So it is but natural that many reports and much information are to be found which show a judgement in direct proportion to the author's literary accomplishments or his talent for observation. The first to deserve mention are two Italians, A. Guagnini and A. Possevino. The latter—of Guagnini we shall speak later—had been an eye-witness of the ruins of castles in Livonia, which he had seen “in a state of utter wreckage, full of filth, with window casements broken, and left to the mercy of the weather. The Muscovites who did not put much value on these castles did not inhabit them, but had erected small wooden huts which, blackened by smoke and grime, they preferred.” F. Talducci,¹⁴ a Tuscan diplomat, gives us similar accounts, but another diplomat, Ulfeld, a Dane,¹⁵ is said, on his return from Moscow, to have met at Tver over a thousand prisoners who “appeared to us so squalid, unhappy and ragged, as they were jogging along, that we looked at them—you may believe me—with the most profound pity.”

But what of the breakdown in the hearts and minds of these people in Livonia, suffering from the morbid hallucinations of a tortured fantasy, still under the spell of the horrible nightmare of the past? In his well-known letter to the Duchess of Mantua the same Possevino most vividly describes the packs of wolves, among them some looking like veritable werewolves, the gutted castles, beset by devils with the faces of Muscovites, the lakes, haunted by ghosts, and so on. Dionysius Fabricius, already mentioned, relates the legends about the castle of Fellin where Fürstenberg, the penultimate Master of the Order, was once put in chains and where “now every night the evil one makes his round, crying out in a loud voice, as the sentry would do.” The Cardinal Prince Radziwill, who was on a tour of inspection in Livonia in 1594, writes in a similar manner about the remnants of a magnificent castle which “in an impressive way testifies to the power of the Knights of the Order”—their former power, of course.

On such and on similar occasions, from case to case, momentary glimpses may be snatched of the vicissitudes of the Livonian peasant and his hard lot in misery and distress where, for once, he is the main figure. Let us now turn to the documents, in which he is mentioned, in order to see what information we are able to gain of his position, his thoughts, his sensations. Certainly we must not expect to find full evidence here, since what we learn about him is more like the flickering of light on a ruffled surface of water, and are indications, rather, of the state of his affairs. But they give us certain points of contact which lead us, step by

step, towards an understanding of his life. And it is the social conditions of the Latvian peasant which gradually emerge and become at once clearer and harder during this transition period from the Middle Ages to the more recent times when serfdom became finally and firmly established. According to the opinions of well-known specialists in matters of rural bondage, which, however, are far from being unanimous, particularly as regards origin and development (*e.g.* the bloody peasant revolt in Germany in the early 16th century, and the development of serfdom in the German-occupied parts of eastern Europe, especially in Livonia), this social phenomenon appears to be the complex result of several social, political, and economic factors which must be taken into consideration. One of these factors, the growing economic pressure of the young nobility, which is connected, in part, with the rich economy of the towns, is doubtless one of the principal ones, as is most certainly the tendency towards an economic control of the land, which gradually took the place of wanton and hazardous wartime practice. Further factors are the reclamation, clearing, and cultivation of waste land for the lords, *i.e.* the increase of the area of landed estate. And, finally, the progressive growth of the burden of debt on the peasant—the reverse of the coin—and the infiltration of the capitalistic money—economy into the former system of economy in kind: “a true capitalistic colonization within the compass of feudal society.”¹⁶ At the same time there was a gradual consolidation of the political power of the local aristocracy in the border-land, which implies a gradual increase of social pressure. Traces of these phenomena may be found as early as in the second half of the 15th century and in the early 16th century. They are also confirmed by a marked reaction of the peasant himself to the new conditions—by riots, risings, and mass desertion.

From a common European point of view, the origin of serfdom and its development in these eastern regions becomes interesting if we examine how, when, and from where it came. In those countries of western Europe where the system of natural economy prevailed, as, for instance, in France, and, partly, also in southern and western Germany as far as the historical line of the Elbe, which is the border-line of the new German colonization, mediaeval bondage and servitude were also the results of a slow but continual consolidation of some elements of feudalism with no more than an occasional interference in this process by the central authorities. Beyond the Elbe, however, in the German-colonized Slav territories, the forming of the *latifundia* entailed, at the same time, an increased concentration of the aristocratic social power and the submission, notably in the 16th century, of the respective peoples to the severe Roman agrarian laws. Livonia was the most advanced point of German expansion on the frontier bordering on Muscovy, where the growing centralization of

power was accompanied by an increasing dependence of the Russian peasant which, during the reign of Peter the Great and his successors, reached a point where there no longer existed a theoretical difference between serfdom and slavery. In Livonia the fate of the peasant was already sealed: its rural population was doomed step by step to reach in the 18th century that miserable state where the economic and social conditions, prevalent in eastern Europe, notably in East Prussia, which so often served as a model for Livonia, became merged with those characteristic of Russia. After 1710 the Latvian and Estonian peasants became living machines—robots.

If the 16th century marked the beginning of great events in Livonia, it was also a period of more or less significant changes in agrarian legislation. It has been the wish of some of the Baltic-German historians to call this century the century of the Privilege of Sigismund Augustus. Such a desire shows with sufficient clarity what importance is attributed to a deed whose fate is rather mysterious. The final ratification of this Privilege by the supreme authorities of the Polish State has been a topic of vivid discussion and, considering the loss of the original document, we cannot form a clear picture of the last and decisive phases of the end of the legislative procedure. In general, there are two points of view which ought to be taken into consideration in this matter. One is that by making so great a concession in matters of an internal nature, the king of Poland would have wished to alleviate the severity and pain caused to the German nobility by the necessity of resigning their centenary independence. This is the first time that the Livonian nobility found itself in a situation which compelled it to submit to changing its ruler as henceforth it was frequently bound to do. But these aristocrats have always known how to guard their social, economic and cultural position with admirable endurance and skill, of which the contents of the Privilege give a convincing picture. On the other hand, besides that uncertainty which existed with regard to the legislative procedure, there is some speculation concerning the internal conditions of the country: we may indeed call this deed a true reflection of the wishful thinking of the nobility, an optimum of its aspirations, which is confirmed and emphasized by the fact that they highly prized the contents of the Privilege, quoting it on every possible occasion as, for instance, when they surrendered to Peter the Great. This Privilege, as was said before, ought not to be regarded as an attempt, on the part of the nobility, to assume new rights; it is rather a question of consolidating, juridically, the power and importance of the former vassals of the Order to such an extent as existed in the Archbishopric of Rīga, where since ancient times the peasants were subject to the arbitrary actions of the lords much more so than in the State of the Teutonic

Order itself.¹⁷ The Privilege of 1561 granted the nobility almost unrestricted freedom of action over their land. Using technical terms, one might say that to the usual fief was added the *feudum gratiae*, which conferred the right of inheritance on both male and female collateral family members, and, likewise, the *manus conjuncta*, which entitled the vassal, without any previous permission of the feudal lord, to conclude collective settlements of succession not only with his kinsmen but with unrelated families, a practice never before used, neither by the vassals of the Order, nor by those of the bishopric of Kurland (cf. section 4 of the Privilege). Parallel to this, as a matter of course, the deterioration, both juridical and actual, of the conditions of the peasantry went on steadily. Section 22 calmly and quietly accepts the attachment to the soil (*glabrae adscriptio*), i.e. recognizes the right of the lord towards reclaiming the peasants who deserted (*secundum morem et antiquam consuetudinem Livoniae*). In section 23 the Polish government renounced, in favour of the lords, its right to statute-labour provided by the landed gentry (*nobilium rustici*). Section 26 cedes to the nobility the civil and criminal jurisdiction over their peasants, offering the following reasons: "... as it has happened in Livonia, that some noblemen have been murdered secretly by their peasants, and it being necessary to keep these latter duly in awe, in order to prevent them from doing such wicked deeds in future, the Livonian noblemen etc. . . ." In comparing this paragraph with those texts which we are going to analyse shortly, we may imagine what the relations between some of the lords and the peasants were really like, if the latter, according to A. Volanus,¹⁸ a Polish humanist, were held in an agony of constant suspense about their lives and their property, fearing the wrath of their lord.

There are some points which seem to us the most important of this historical document. The preambles to the paragraphs also give an answer to the questions *why* and *how*? "Since messengers of the Order and of the nobility have come to us and have most humbly begged to confirm their rights, liberties, privileges, and immunity, they received from us in writing these few chapters and sections which they insistently begged us to confirm, to agree to, and to ratify in every detail, with all clauses and stipulations; the contents of the chapters and sections are quoted word by word and read as follows . . ." (follow 27 sections and the date: Vilna 1561). The Privilege is couched in the form of a petition to the king. The first step made by the Baltic nobility towards gaining political independence was successfully and cleverly achieved. It helped them in the game between the big states which conquered Livonia, to preserve through several centuries many of their ancient privileges. This Privilege, granted by King Sigismund, is of particular importance for the nobility,

being the first successful undertaking in the international arena and a memento of the bitter experiences suffered.

This is what matters were like in theory; in practice, however, after a quarter of a century of wars with the Muscovites, Livonia was so ravaged that there was virtually no chance for the nobility to carry out, methodically, their far-reaching plans. This utter misery ultimately dictated everything and even decided the matter of who was to bear the marshal's baton, as is suggested in the Privilege of Sigismund. What more impressive passage is there to quote than this, which has become tragically familiar: "From Rīga to Dorpat not a single dog was heard to bark, nor a cock to crow." It goes on to say that the fields were covered with a growth of bush. Another piece of evidence, of 1618, reflects reminiscences of those times when "outside Rīga, for miles and miles at a stretch, nothing but a vast wilderness and a dismal sight is to be seen."

King Stephen, who, according to many official documents, had acquired this country by right of war (*jure belli*), did not consider himself in any way bound to keep the promises of his predecessor. On the contrary, having begun a policy in Poland which was favourable to the peasants, for instance, by forming them into army units, he tried in various ways to introduce this policy of his into the conquered country, as was evident from some trifling matters on his entering the town of Rīga. The following data will illustrate it: the revision of the rights of property, carried out both in 1582 and in 1590, was undertaken with a view to retracting from the nobility everything which did not lawfully belong to it. King Stephen likewise reduced the facilities of inland trade which the nobility enjoyed, granting some of these privileges to the rural population. The text of the new Administrative Statute of 1583 (*Novae Gubernationis Livoniae Forma*) is of particular clarity: "It having been brought to our notice that in the past the peasants of Livonia have been cruelly oppressed (*miris modis pressam*), we decree that it is necessary to reinstall them in tolerable conditions and to examine the various causes of this matter in the provincial Council; having given it our attention, we ordain that in fulfilment of this decree due counsel be taken." The will of the King was adequately re-echoed in the speech, made by Penkoslawski, the King's commissary, at the Landtag in Rīga on 29 November 1586: "His Majesty is painfully aware that God's wrath has been resting on Livonia for so long a time. All assembled here will agree that one reason why this chastisement has been inflicted on the country is because the nobility have oppressed their peasants so cruelly, imposing on them such terrible servitude and penalties, the like of which has never been heard of in the whole world, not even among the heathen and the savages. Nor will the gentlemen present have any doubt that the Almighty has allowed this

country to pass into the hands of the conqueror, in order to put an end to the tyranny which has ruled here for so long." To conclude the series of documents testifying to the good-will of the King of Poland, if not of the Polish government, let us refer once more to Volanus¹⁸ who provides us with an insight into the relations between the lords and the peasants. "If it is true", he said, "that the defenders of the native country are entitled to some compensation, then it is likewise necessary to curb their unlimited power over the peasants. Custom and practice have resulted in the lords having obtained the right to decide on the life and death of the peasant, and this without their referring to any law or justice, or appealing to reason, but acting according to their whims and moods, frequently venting their fury on them in fits of unbridled wrath and even killing them. The peasant has no opportunity to lodge his complaint with higher authorities. In order to guard his life and to keep his possessions, he has no other means of defence than to rely on the chance of finding a human and benevolent lord of a righteous and noble mind. If, however, by any chance, he has to live and toil under an irate and ruthless master, then . . ."

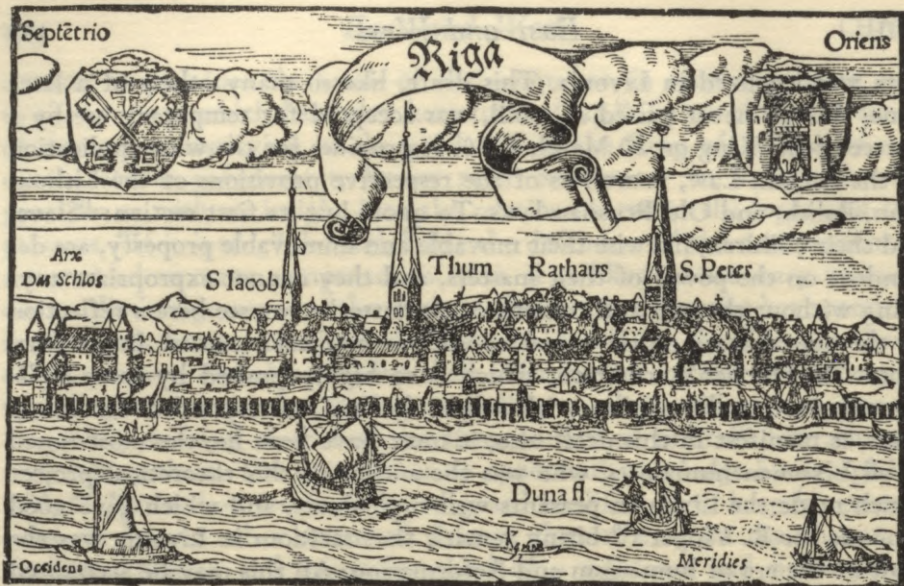
The events took their course in the spirit of the period. Though rather vague, the Polish documents about Livonia may help us to arrive at some general conclusion. For reasons easy to understand, the desertion of peasants increased, more or less in proportion to the extermination of the peasant farms (the later German term for it being *Gesinde Sprengen*), to the enlargement and rounding off of the estate lands, to the cultivation of waste land, to the progressive growth of the duties and statute-labour, and to the efforts on the part of the central administrative authorities to equalize the system of those duties, instead of the one-time individual and very vague right of prescription. For this purpose of equalizing the system of duties a more precise unit of assessing land was introduced. This unit was the "plough" (*uncus, baken*) which was made, as far as possible, the standard measure. This tendency towards a unification was similar, in general, to that going on at the same time in Russia and Lithuania, and it clearly marked the process of consolidation and unification of the central power. These are the first symptoms characteristic of the large monarchies of the future. Gradually, the gap between the ruling and the socially ruled classes begins to widen, and it becomes more and more profound, replacing all hope of a primitive and patriarchal, and sometimes very simple, way of common life between the two classes. It is towards the end of the Polish period (in 1599) that in Livonia the draft of the *Liefländisches Landesrecht* was prepared by David Hilchen, syndic of Riga and a noted lawyer and humanist, at the incentive of a Polish commission, and which by some historians is rated as the legislative act by which serf-

dom was legalized in Livonia. This draft, like so many others of a later time, though never passed as a bill, was accepted for temporary use by a decree of the King on 20 March 1600. It provides for the wide application of the Roman Law, as well as of the respective provisions of the Lithuanian, Polish, and Old Prussian laws. To quote but its first section: "Slaves and their children, likewise their movable and immovable property, are dependent on the power of their masters, and they cannot expropriate anything without the will and consent of the latter"—we see here a reflection of the actual state of the social conditions and their nature in its final aspect. If Hilchen's erudition, which is so highly praised by some well-known western humanists with whom he had corresponded for many years, is manifest in this draft also, it must have been he, the most noted of all Livonian humanists, who was the author of this theoretical project which made the Livonian peasants well-nigh slaves, and which gave good grounds for R. Vipper's¹⁹ biting remark that serfdom in Livonia was the fruit of the era of humanism and Reformation. All this may be accounted for by the peculiar conditions of this political-military border-land, but it also clearly testifies to a colonial civilization or, we might say, to a civilization whose spiritual roots hang in the air.



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* Signet (1652) of the Latvian freeman Philip Franz Koenig (Kēniņš) of Koknese, Judge and Cavalry Captain. The crest is a crowned king (king in Latvian = *kēniņš*) holding a sceptrel; the arms: a sceptre passed through a crown.



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IX

CATHOLIC COUNTER REFORMATION

Stephen Bathory's coloured standards were carried to Rīga at a time when Poland was at the height of its power and, indeed, as the last and most distant eastern bulwark against the threatening dangers from the east, this nation (*Rzeczpospolita*) could inspire respect and fear; yet neither the Poles nor the Hungarians could ever settle accounts with the Muscovites and the Turks. This Polish-Lithuanian country stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, from Poznan to Polotsk, and from the Carpathians to Pskov. It knew its strength and organized a zone "without peace or quiet", which formed a buffer between itself and the east, along a frontier which has never been defined and is still disputed. This time the conflict engulfed a wider area and more people, not only because of the growth of the nations and their military resources, but also because states as political organizations had become stronger and more efficient. It was the beginning of modern times which gradually

* Riga in 1548. The oldest known picture of Riga, a wood-engraving, from Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*, Basel 1550 and later editions. The drawing for the wood-engraving may be assumed to have been prepared by Hans Hasentöter (1517—1586) from Hessen, who between 1544 and 1550 had been a clerk in Livonia and wrote a chapter on Livonia for the 2nd edition of *Cosmographia*.

led to imperialism and expansion. The story of Livonia, converted "from colonial history into provincial", was a sign and symbol of extensive future changes.

Of weighty consequence was the fact that King Stephen Bathory, an ardent Catholic, brought to Rīga another "standard", that of the Council of Trent. With it came internal strife and external complications. It did not take long to convert an impoverished Livonia devastated by Muscovite wars into a battle field for the opposed forces of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The struggle between these two forces lasted until both opponents were exhausted at the end of the Thirty Years' War.

The plans of King Stephen in the conquered province were clear and decided, and from his point of view, as a restorer of order, were both logical and intelligible. The King was persistent but the resistance of the fanatically inspired small groups of Protestants, especially the small handicraftsmen and plebeian corporations, soon brought dissent, clashes and an openly hostile attitude. Hostilities between the Jesuits and the citizens were only lightly camouflaged, as, for example, the attempt to stone the Jesuit father P. Skarga, and only the fear of the ruling powers prevented more such incidents as the Calendar Rebellion of 1584—1589. The plans of the Jesuits were far-reaching. We must read Father Possevino's large correspondence, which is in the secret archives of Vatican, to understand clearly what their final aims were. It was planned to conquer, or rather to reconquer, the whole of northern Europe for the Roman Catholics, and it was to be executed by the Order, with the hope that they would be able to extend their influence even to Moscow, the chief fortress of dissent. As everywhere else so also here the Jesuit activity spread and established bases for disseminating religious propaganda and here they created brotherhoods at all places of importance. In the years up to 1621, in the territory of the former Livonian Order, excluding Kurland (Kurzeme) where the Jesuits remained up to the fall of that Duchy, their activity was very important not only as administrators but also because of the influence they exerted on the local population. In the Jesuit Chronicles (*litteræ annuæ*),¹ which are scattered over all Europe, there is a good account of the work of the Jesuits among the Latvians. They show that the Jesuits gave help to the poor in their distress and poverty. For the peasants enjoyed only a low living standard as a result of many wars, and previously it seems that the lords had no interest at all in the souls of these people considering them "lost". The only road to their hearts—hearts that knew little happiness but were proud in their solitude—was through love and humanity, and that is why results were soon achieved. Father Tolgsdorf of Cēsis in the end won the love and respect of the Latvian people as well as the name of "Latvian Apostle".

Here we may find two examples that show the simple and close relations between the teachers and their religious flocks. The first is mentioned in a letter written from Tartu by Father Possevino to the Duchess of Mantua on 9 August 1585; in it the people of Livonia are praised for their truthfulness and deep attachment. The other example is a MS (No. 5) in Cracow University Library, where on page 323 et seq, there is a copy of a certain treatise (*Status Livoniæ in spiritualibus*) where, among other things, it may be read that the poor Latvians, Estonians and Livs were humble people who could easily be approached by gentleness, much more so than any other peoples; with tears in their eyes they blamed their German masters and their clergymen, who had ignored them, "there was not a soul who would open his heart to understand their misfortune . . ."

As we see this is a language which differs widely from that spoken and written in previous centuries, and must have been absolutely new to the inhabitants who were only used to administrative and commercial relations with that social section, which had no interest in their spiritual life leaving them to face the world with their own beliefs and illusions. Here is quite an important proof of this: a certain Latvian peasant who had been sentenced to death for sorcery, relates at his last confession to a Jesuit father that evil spirits had assembled in a church in Rīga: "There, on the very night that Christ was born, according to the Lutheran calendar, the Devil, himself, had come; he was dressed in the German fashion in black silk closhet and sat not far from the altar on a high seat; one could distinguish him from the others because of his nine heads, on everyone of which was a tight fitting silk cap, but each face was flat and fat. Around him together with youths stood servants, about twenty in all, each of whom was dressed in black, again in the German fashion." This meeting of the devils ended with a great feast. Sounds of different musical instruments were heard, organs and guitars—but not the Latvian harp (*cochlea Lothavica*) which has five strings; true believers call it the harp of God, and it was not there—to the sound of this music they danced until the cocks began to crow . . .² Objectively, we may note the fact that the people did not always trust the Jesuits whom they called good Catholics (*homines optimi et catholicissimi*). This fact is illustrated by Einhorn³ who tells us that the peasants laughed at the clergy behind their backs, which, in his opinion, is a proof of the sly and evil character of the Latvians.

In Rīga, as has been said before, the dissatisfaction of its citizens was shown by the Calendar Rebellion, and the chroniclers of those times wrote extensively about it. The Rebellion was put down and several of the leaders were executed in the square in front of the Law Courts. The beginning, development and end of this conflict throws light on the

Polish-Lithuanian methods of government which were unsuitable for this rich country and the living conditions which existed in this large city. But this is outside the sphere of our review and we must satisfy ourselves by transmitting such facts as show that the badly organized management of the city reflected on the country life which surrounded it. The minutes of two trials show how actively the country people resisted the base attacks of marauders and how much the Rīga Town Council resented such brutal cheating and plundering of their peasants, which caused the latter to sink to a low level of existence.



Gold ten ducat piece of Rīga, coined in 1586. It shows Stephen Bathory, King of Poland, and the great coat-of-arms of Rīga. The legend on the face is: STEPHANUS + D + G + REX + POLO + MAG + D + LI +; on the reverse: MONET + NOVA + AVREA + CIVITAT · RIGENS +.

In connection with all this let us touch upon the subject of the administration of the country by the Polish-Lithuanian conquerors. Baltic German historians are harsh critics of this administration and use such expressions as *polnische Wirtsbaft*—nothing could be worse. Without going deeply into this question we can see many reasons for such opinions. However, without discussing the question of the talents of the Poles as administrators we must, in all fairness, take into account certain facts. The first is characteristic of Livonia at that time: we must never forget that during nearly the whole period of the Polish-Lithuanian administration there was internal disorder and fighting; war with Sweden and confessional struggles made it a period hardly suited to productive or constructive work. It must be remembered that during similar periods even German administration functioned weakly, e.g. during the last years of the Order.

Nevertheless much evidence of the despotic actions of the Polish-Lithuanian garrisons and of the soldiery while passing through the coun-

try is to be found all through the Polish period. The peasants naturally suffered most, and the texts of those times describe their feelings and record many of their expressions.

The Livonian peasant only felt the burden of devastation lying heavily on his hardened shoulders, he protected himself to the best of his ability by taking his possessions into forests and by hitting back whenever an occasion offered itself. This we see in the aforesaid minutes and read in Guagnini's chronicle⁴ which was one of King Stephen's hand books. In a certain place it is written "even though these people are very poor, they are treacherous, deceitful, conceited, cruel and are quick to commit murder. Their greatest hate is for the Poles, Ruthenians, Lithuanians and other soldiers serving in the Polish army—but not the Germans under whose yoke they have been before. They call these foreigners the robbers of their goods and their livelihood and whenever possible they kill all foreign soldiers who have been careless and have allowed themselves to be deceived. In this country it is dangerous to travel alone or in small groups, especially if it becomes necessary to spend a night with these peasants; they try to kill or strangle travellers in their sleep. In these districts taverns are very scarce, so travellers usually try to reach a castle or an estate in order to spend the night there. Even churches are scarce and may only be found in castles." And then the chronicler goes on to write about Latvian women and especially their dress; they are all "soothsayers and very apt magicians most of whom have taken up the art of magic (*matronae sagae et incantatrices peritissimae sunt, artibus Magicis supra modum deditae*)."⁵ About thirty years later the Catholic bishop Schenking added to the writings of Guagnini; he gives us still more realistic description—in these years (1610) misery had increased, "whole castles and even large estates now lie in ruins and are overgrown with thick bush and have become the homes of the wild beasts of the forest. Of the many inhabitants only a few are still alive, and they are even worse off than those who are dead, as the latter are free from all fear and care, but those who are still alive run like hares into the woods at the very rustling of a leaf, and with trembling bodies avoid all contact with their fellow creatures, fearing for their life, alike from friend or foe. The only ones who can persuade them to come out of the woods are those who come into the open unarmed, and those who speak to them in a friendly manner in their own local language. Churches are burnt down and plundered."

What has been said must not, however, be thought only to apply to the Poles. Russian atrocities have been described in the previous chapter, and the behaviour of the German junkers gave rise to open peasant insurrections and revolts. Gotthard Kettler, Master of the Order, wrote to

the Estonian nobility and to the Council of Reval on 22 December 1560: "... news is reaching us of some young noblemen who attack and kill the poor peasants when they come up to town and who also raid the country, ravaging and plundering peasant farms..." In Estonia, about that time, the rising of peasants seems to have assumed large proportions, according to a letter by the same Kettler to King Sigismund Augustus of Poland written on 8 October 1560, and in another to the Council of Reval dated 14 October 1560. Similar references were made in two letters to King Frederick II of Denmark which Duke Magnus wrote from Arensburg on 13 and 17 October 1560. As a matter of course, these revolts were suppressed. However, in another letter to King Sigismund Augustus, Gotthard Kettler reports: "We must strictly and severely direct our officials to keep an eye upon the peasantry, lest they go over to the enemy on account of the hard slavery (*duram servitatem quam praetendunt*)..." Similar conditions also existed in the Latvian part of Livonia (Vidzeme) and to them may be applied what Kristiernsson wrote to King Eric XIV of Sweden from Reval on 31 July 1561: "... I most submissively bring to Your Majesty's attention that to this very day the nobility of this country have behaved towards the peasants in a very unrighteous and unchristian manner. They have in this respect neither law nor regulations to which they should conform, and so they treat their peasants just as they are pleased to do. And all this continues to this very day... Hardly a day goes by without the peasants crying and complaining that the lords defraud and rob them so long as they still have a mouthful to eat. In a most miserable way they are all, aged and young alike, tortured and flogged..." In his reply King Eric wrote on 30 October 1561 that "... care should be taken that the country which has been devastated should again be populated and the soil tilled for various purposes. With cleverness and full authority this matter might be discussed with the Estonians and the Kurs and they should be settled on farms and promised as much necessary food as they might well subsist on, provided they be loyal and keep their fields and meadows in good order... Half of the season's yield should be left to them in a like manner as our Finnish peasants in Finland get it. In compensation, they will be free, unmolested and they will not be treated in a bad way as has been the case before, during their hard serfdom..." There follows his decree, dated 6 December 1561, to the ordinary nobility about the unchristian flogging of the poor peasants, etc. "We, Eric XIV, ... herewith bring to everybody's notice and cognizance that We have received creditable information about the extent to which the nobility allow some of their officials and magistrates (Ampleuten und Voigtenn) by unchristian and wicked whipping to oppress and torture their poor peasants and subjects in the union, and

that in connection therewith some Muscovites find pretexts to entice these same subjects away from us, consoling and promising them to be free from these tortures in their country . . . Therefore We order all our provincial governors, knights, noblemen, officials and magistrates and everybody who rules over such peasants . . . that they henceforth fully and completely give up this habit and refrain from such unchristian tyrannical severity. However, should any of their peasants appear to be refractory towards their lords or else commit other gross offences they will be arraigned and receive adequate punishment in accordance with a just verdict . . ." However, the nobility held other ideas as is evident from their letter of 10 July 1562, which is a classic example of their arguments in favour of the existing system: ". . . there are among them so many insolent scamps who must be kept in awe by adequate punishment, and unless the peasant people is constantly and frequently rendered pliant scarcely a year would pass without several hundred people more than usual being put to death in one manner or another. If, however, anybody deserving capital punishment happens to save and preserve his life, being flogged instead, he, forsooth, has every reason to praise such an order rather than complain of it . . ." Such was the difference between the view held by the King of Sweden and of the Livonian nobility. In this connection it is well to compare the "Privilege of Sigismund Augustus" (par. 26), where the Livonian lords beg that by a special grace and judicial power of His Holy Royal Majesty (of Poland) their estates be granted criminal and civil rights of jurisdiction, which the nobility of the Duchy of Estonia had already obtained from the King of Denmark at an earlier time.

It would be absurd to imagine any sympathy among the peasants towards the Muscovites, as whenever they could they took an active part in driving them out of the country. Such was the case when Cēsis castle was re-conquered from the Russians. "Mobilization" of the peasants is mentioned in the compact concluded on 25 July 1559 by the Rīga Landtag in connection with the memorial, dated 21 July, of the Master of the Order: every manor-estate had "to provide one out of very three of its peasants, able to carry arms, either on horseback or on foot. These people shall be used for defence and they shall be given a banner of their own, and they shall live in a separate encampment and shall be provided with food . . ." In 1558, during a Russian invasion through Estonia, the Dorpat region mustered 7,000 soldiers, 10,000 peasants and 2,000 horsemen, to fight against them. Lists of mobilized Latvian peasants are to be found in several other documents. Complaints about the presence of such peasant-soldiers in the Swedish army may be found in a letter written by Zamoyski in 1602 to the Count of Nassau.

One might conclude with these words: The 16th century in the history of Livonia may not only be called one of the most agitated centuries, but also one of synthesis, by the manner in which the great currents of this history make their appearance, one after the other, in the course of a few decades: invasions of the Muscovites, the decline of the Teutonic Order, the military operations on the part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, later, of the King of Poland on the one hand, and of the Swedes, on the other. There were gushes of wind from almost all directions at the same time. Thus, the historians of those countries are provided with sufficient material, beginning with the evidence of eye-witnesses. I am not going to repeat here all my reflections collected on these matters, but will point out some considerations only. Neither of these huge powers, neither separately nor together, was able to annihilate the Latvian people. More than that, they did not even succeed in gaining a permanent footing on Livonian soil, in spite of the length of their domination on the shores of the Baltic, which lasted one, three or more centuries, as the case might be. They were not able, nor did they know how to establish permanent domination—it is up to them to decide which. They stopped at the colonial phase. The colony—a notion which implies temporary advantages, which proves a certain power of expansion, a military enterprise and a political organization, but does not imply an ethnical assimilation or a fusion of different national units and a moral victory, perfect and complete. By choosing the 16th century, of all, in Baltic and European history, I wished to attack the intrinsic and most intricate knot of Baltic history which by necessity was bound to capture the attention of the many Alexanders, *i.e.* states like Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany. In my opinion the 16th century in Livonia is a sanguinary and instructive synthesis of quite a great period in the history of the Baltic peoples, a period inserted between the loss of the political independence of the peoples, inhabiting this eastern Baltic littoral, and the restitution of that independence.

In order to form an impression of the progress of the war between Poland and Sweden, which followed the Muscovite wars, we must cast a glance at the political and military situation of that time. Briefly we may say that at this time eastern Europe was a classic example of forces from the north and the south—the vertical forces—concentrating their efforts on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and striving to hold their position. The Poles, in this respect, were very nearly successful but not entirely; the Swedes felt themselves strong in their position in Estonia, besides which they had a very good war leader capable of realizing his ambitious plans. This leader was the Provençal Pontus de la Gardie who had achieved his position after many colourful adventures in the manner of the 16th century. The struggle between the Swedes and the Poles went

on without interference from the powers of the west and the east—the horizontal powers—who had fallen back from Livonia, the scene of battle. The German Empire had turned towards the west and deployed its forces for internal battles. This occurred after the secularization of the German Order due to the direct influence of Poland, after the collapse of the Livonian Order, and the fall of Danzig and Riga, which meant a loss of power to the Hanse. The Muscovites, on the other hand, had been defeated by the combined forces of the west with great loss and sacrifice, and had become so weak internally that the so-called “era of confusion” ensued; they were therefore out of the game for several decades. So this battleground was free for the two neighbours.

Not taking into account the hidden dangers from the Swedish side, already apparent during the war with Moscow, both the Swedes and the Poles were united in their stand against the common enemy, the Muscovites. The battle of Cēsis in 1578 was a clear proof of that. Characteristic was the attitude of King Stephen towards De la Gardie after the signing of the peace treaty at Zapolie. For about two decades the western allies settled down or improved their positions preparing for the morrow. Livonia relaxed, but in towns, especially in Rīga the art of writing spread with magnificence and richness, as it had done in the 16th century. This one may call the humanism of Livonia, which at that time greatly exceeded the general spiritual development of the other centres around the Baltic Sea, Sweden included. Hostilities broke out when the High Chancellor J. Zamoyski invaded Estonia. His plans were, as may be seen from his letters, to push the Swedes out of Livonia and at a convenient moment to bring Finland under his control. The encirclement and fall of Weissenstein in 1602 looked promising, but the Turks drew the attention of the Poles to the south. The High Chancellor fought bravely with his famous Polish cavalry, but this Turkish diversion left the fields of Livonia free for the Swedes, and Charles IX of Sweden attempted his first attack on Rīga. However, in 1605 both armies met at Salaspils, and Chodkiewicz's leadership, the bravery of the Polish knights and the speed of their terrible attack crushed the numerically superior enemy; with great difficulty Charles IX escaped with a few ships.

The Swedes who had been thrown back did not calm down, but prepared for new attacks and tried to find a suitable occasion for the realization of their plans. It was then that Sweden's greatest king, Gustavus II Adolphus (1611—1632), ascended the throne, and as Poland was surrounded and threatened by openly hostile countries, she was at a disadvantage. This combined with her unfortunate geographical position, in the middle of the continent, resulted in her defeat. It was Radziwill who should have come to the relief of Rīga, but his forces were so small that he did not dare to

Neue Zeitung.

Von der herrlichen victori vnd Sieg/Welchen die Polnischen/Schwedischen vnnnd Deutschen Kriegsteut / für der Saade Wenden in Lyfflandt/ In diesem 1578. Jar wieder den schrecklichen Feind vnd Erbtyrannen den Moscowiter/ In eröberung ihrer Schantz vnd auffschlagung ihres Lagets/ durch sonderliche verleiung des lieben Allmechtigen / mit wenigem Volck am 21. tag des Monats Octobris manlich erhalten.



Im Jar/1578.

The oldest known drawing of Cēsis in 1578, representing the Muscovite siege. From the leaflet *Neue Zeitung* published on the occasion of the defeat of the Muscovites before Cēsis on 21 October 1578.

leave his camp at Vecmūiža on the Lithuanian frontier. Thus in 1621 Rīga capitulated to the King of Sweden after a long and brave resistance. This was a very awkward moment for Poland, as in 1620, at Checora, the famous Polish war leader, Zolkiewski, was killed in battle against the Turks after being treacherously deserted by the Cossacks; however, the following year the position was partially restored by Chodkiewicz. A few years before, the male line of the Dukedom of Prussia died out and this Dukedom went over to the Elector of Brandenburg who as Duke of Prussia swore allegiance to the King of Poland in this critical year of 1621. However, the Elector of Brandenburg also held lands to the east and west of the Polish possessions. The Polish land formed the century old "corridor" which she got back after the First World War. If to all these external difficulties of Poland we add the internal problems caused by the "frondeurs" among the Polish aristocrats, then we may well understand that the position was indeed dangerous.

These were the factors that governed the development of Livonia throughout the following century. Just as the Poles were forced to give up Estonia to the Swedes, so the Swedes were forced to give up Kurland to the Poles. In the same way as in 1601—1602, when Zamoyski set out for Estonia, so in 1655 the Swedes entered Kurland and for a short time were lords of the capital, Jelgava; and the Muscovites in their turn in 1656, having recovered from internal disorders, also appeared for a short time before the walls of Rīga under the leadership of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich. These were temporary changes—in the end everything in history is temporary—yet if we look at all the changes that took place in such a short time, we are drawn to the conclusion that the East Baltic still remains an unsolved problem for the great nations.

Livonia during the Polish—Swedish War was once more reduced to a pitiable state. Such is life at the crossroads of nations and empires! We are told of plagues in 1610,⁶ but here we will only quote from a report sent in 1618 by the Rīga Town Council to K. Radziwill (this report is in his family's archives): "The situation in Livonia is very regrettable, as battles, fires and destruction have devastated her. The King's soldiers, even though they are few, seek food only for themselves . . . Despair has taken hold of the farmers . . . The greatest part of the province has been turned into a desert of ruins, the work on the land has stopped."

The comings and goings of so many nations to and from Livonia brought her more than destitution and unhappiness. This unwilling projection onto the great stage of world events brought noticeable changes to the country's cultural and spiritual life, as happened in Italy during the same first century of the new era. Not only were there armies of destroyers crossing the sunny hills and valleys, fields and forests of this

country, but there were also many travellers—merchants, diplomats, technicians—who left some little souvenir of their visit by writing about the country, the customs of the people, and the way of life; all this was a revelation. Courtiers came with King Stephen to Rīga, and with King Sigismund to Reval; attendants to counsellors and bishops came; many people even if for short visits came to our country in those days, which up to then was only known as the furthest outpost of the Church and Christian knights against the unknown east. There was, as it were, a repeated opening and closing of the door to Livonia which allowed fresh air to enter but only in strong short blasts. Livonia appeared as a new world. Such iconographic pictures and literature of this country lead us to seek for material on this theme, not only in such prominent centres as Germany and Poland, but also in Italy, the Netherlands and elsewhere. This material which may be found abroad is, then, even more important than that emanating from purely local authorities. Yet the spiritual development of the Livonians continued in spite of the instability of life at that time, and work of value was produced. At a good guess we may say that of all the material available about 50% is to be found abroad and 50% at home. To illustrate the importance of these foreign sources it may be well to mention here the names of a few well-known Italians who visited our country roundabout the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries. Among these Italian travellers who left descriptions and drawings were the Jesuit father Possevino, Cardinal Annibale di Capua, Raffaele Barberini, the historian Alessandro Guagnini, and the Ambassadors of the Duke of Tuscany. Among others were Italian engineers, who supervised the building of the Rīga defences; and of the artists, who have given us through their work the opportunity to reproduce the ancient Latvian costumes, we shall only mention Dürer, the Roman Giacomo Lauro, and A. Bruyn. The fact that foreign artists were attracted may be seen in Giacomo Lauro's correspondence which was found not long ago.

The Livonian cartography, which was rather disjointed and individualistic in the 16th century, began to tread the paths along which modern cartography had already progressed and it changed from a literary genre to geographical science. This would have been the normal state of affairs in this important geographical century, the age of great cartographers such as Mercator and Ortelius, if there had not been some peculiar circumstances in relation to Livonia itself. Let us look at some of them: the determination of the contours of the Mediterranean proceeded gradually and in a normal way from the time of map-drawing at Pisa, but the tracing of the boundaries of the Baltic Sea came suddenly, in curious leaps. The reason for it was its remote situation, and that is why the correct pro-

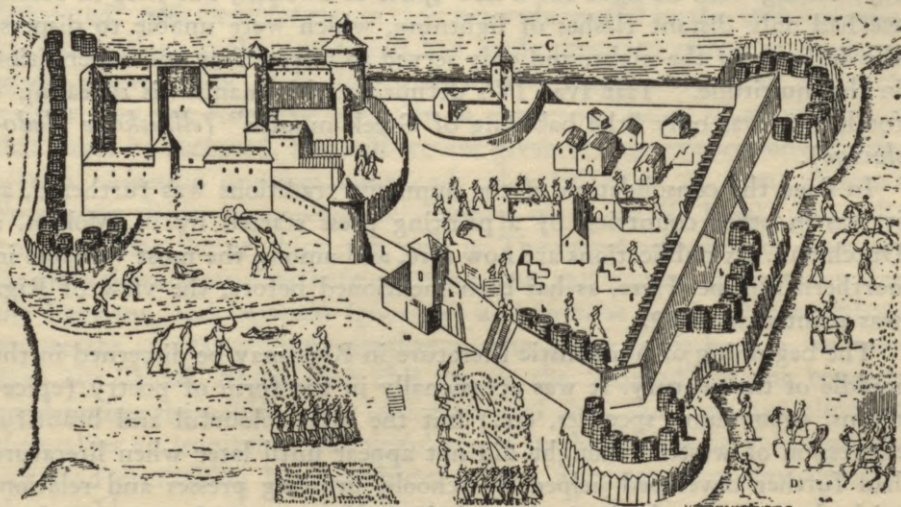
file of the Baltic was mapped in such a short time in the space of a few years, and this gives an impression that Livonia was placed too hastily into the general geographical picture of the 16th century. It is also possible that this was done with will and determination in order to take off the lid of the kettle which the Hanse had so carefully guarded.

L. Arbusow in his work which has already been mentioned, drew the general outlines of Livonian cartography. Here we will mention some well-known names: in the first group—Ziegler (1532), S. Münster (1544), Gastaldo (1548) in connection with Olaus Magnus (1539); the second group—Mercator (1554) in connection with Herberstein (1549), Palazzo Vecchio maps of Florence and Ortelius; the third group—Vopel; the fourth group—Agnese's maps originally intended for P. Giovio's work on Muscovy; the fifth group—Wied. Among the early maps of Livonia (Henneberg in Königsberg 1555, Renner in Bremen after 1556) we must draw particular attention to the works of such as R. Barberini (1565), Possevino (1582), the Dutchman Wagenaer (1584), and Poles such as Kwiatkowski (1567) and Strubicz.⁷

A chapter to itself could be devoted to Livonian iconography, that is, to problems aroused by illustrations of several castles, towns and local dress. The costumes we may find in several collections, which in Germany are referred to as *Trachtenbücher*, and which are from the later part of the 16th century. After careful research and study we find that drawings of Livonian dresses (only those of women, which are more original and beautiful) may be found in the following editions: (1) that of the Roman Bartolomeo Grassi (1585); (2) Cesare Vecellio (Titian's cousin), in Venice (1590); (3) Pietro Bertelli, in Padua (1596); Abramus Bruyn—the only edition known is the Antwerp edition, the fourth, of 1610 (1st ed. 1577, 2nd ed. 1581, 3rd ed. 1584). Bruyn's collection with its artistic conceptions may have formed the basis for the others. There are also similar drawings existing from the beginning of the 16th century; the most interesting of them are those previously ascribed to Dürer. A view of Rīga drawn in 1612 shows the town and peasant dresses. Other illustrations are scattered and are to be found in private albums. The aesthetic interest of the Italians and Dutchmen was rewarded by their discovery of the gorgeously decorative costumes of the Latvian peasants. They concentrated their interest on the non-German costumes of the Baltic, which seemed, as has already been said, attractive to artists of that century with an interest for "local colour".

The drawings of castles, towns and such like are connected with the two Polish wars in Livonia: (1) King Stephen's march to Polotsk (a drawing by Pacholowiecki), (2) Chancellor Zamoyski's march to Estonia

(views of Rīga, Valmiera, etc.). These were cut and printed by G. Lauro in Rome. We must remember a particularly beautiful view of Rīga in 1612, which, as I have been able to ascertain, was taken from an original drawing by a Dutchman.



The oldest known view of Valmiera, showing the town in 1602 during the siege. The town is situated on the Gauja river (c above). The castle (above to the left) and the church (above in the centre) were built in 1285 at the orders of Willekin von Endorp, Master of the Livonian Order. In the late Middle Ages Valmiera was an important city in the heart of Vidzeme, defended by walls and moats.

The golden age of Renaissance literature and its greatest achievements in Livonia took place in the last two decades of the 16th century, that is during the time between the end of the Muscovite War and the period of the new Polish—Swedish War. This new Latin literature arrived late, as compared with western Europe, but this tardiness may be better understood if we remember the geographical position of the country as well as the hindrances caused by the Muscovite War. This period gave birth to Latin schools in Rīga and in their programme works of such famous humanists as Erasmus and his Spanish friend Luis Vives may be seen. However, this large commercial city of Rīga did not get its university until 1919, during the time of Latvian independence; Possevino's and King Stephen's plans for study in this centre of many languages were never carried out. But Estonia was more fortunate as King Gustavus II Adolphus founded the University of Tartu in 1632. East Prussia already had its

university in 1544, Finland in 1640 (Åbo-Turku), and Russia (the successor of Muscovy) in 1755. The Russian historian Platonov's words help us to understand the general picture: "In the 15th and 16th centuries there came to Russia from the west ideas which laid the foundation of the Renaissance. There in the west it was like a morning sun with its glittering rays calling with its light for a new spirit to awaken, but here in Russia we had only distant flashes of lightning, which were unable to disperse the darkness of the night, and only served to inspire fear and superstition in the multitude."⁸ Tsar Ivan IV's definition of humanism is revealing—for him it was only "the babbling of Greek mouths" (*ellinskoye bladosloviye*).

In Rīga the consolidation of the humanist traditions was furthered, as it was in other countries, by a printing press started by N. Mollyn, a Dutchman. Its publications are now rare, and among the most valuable in northern Europe. Here, as has been mentioned before, the view of Rīga was printed in 1612.

The beginning of humanistic literature in Rīga may be discerned in the middle of the century. It was occasionally in the form of poetry (epicediums, encomiums, speeches, etc.) but the soft, colourful and beautiful expression of western thought did not appear until later when literature had further developed helped by schools, printing presses and relations with the west. In the beginning of the 17th century there was a sharp decline, and from the first years of the Swedish era only a few "epigons" have survived, anaemic in style and boring. It would not be fair to put the blame on the Swedes, as new times had arrived and such "talks" and dialogues of L. Vives and Pontano disappeared for ever; now the living language required more from literature. Representatives of humanist literature came almost entirely from the educated society of the towns, a few came from the country aristocracy. These people were usually school teachers, but they were in other walks of life too. There was, for instance, von Hilchen who was a widely educated syndic and Latin stylist, and also D. Hermann, a former diplomat, "His Majesty's secretary and a very well educated man" as the chronicles of that time called him; and another was Doctor B. Plen (*alias* Plehn, Ploen) the son of a Protestant priest and a sworn enemy of the Jesuits. Not a single "native" is among them, but that was understandable as the country was merely a colony and so there was little hope of finding a Pontano or a Poliziano, as the Italians had done. Leaving out scholastic and diplomatic speeches and occasional or family poetry, we may set down as most interesting the progress of the tendency to show, in a praiseworthy manner, and suited to the susceptibility and fashion of the age—even to people outside the Livonian frontiers,—this country with its history, local customs and the beliefs of the people.

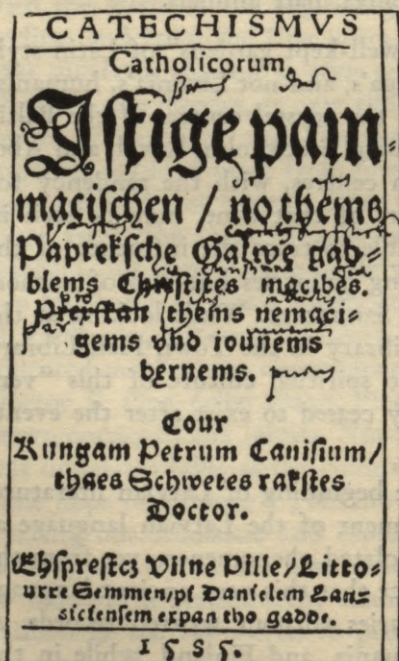
This branch of humanistic literature in Livonia shows many interesting and intimately conceived motives. However, to appreciate everything contained in it, it is necessary to take care and to have feeling for the delicate style so as to be able to decipher and understand everything. But it gives yet something more, as Taine puts it "a view from gilded windows of a carriage" on the people of the world. It was the first time that the "educated" (*die Gebildeten*), as they were christened in the 19th century, had come close to the people and had made them the object of aesthetic study, approaching them like artists. The material revealed by such writers does not form the basis for an exhaustive study of ethnography, that must be accepted, but still we are given certain conceptions of life, certain objective impulses clear and colourful as in B. Plen-Plinius's *Encomium Rigae*, a noteworthy literary work, as V. Rossi, the well-known Italian literary historian, calls it. The moral valuation by humanitarian writers fluctuates between sympathy and concealed contempt for the Latvians, and between ignorance and interest in them; everywhere we see the typical polished gentleman who wants to be human, we may even say liberal. Along with this we see the "learned" of the country condemning the nobles, or at least certain of their shortcomings, allowing themselves an ironical or disdainful smile; in their Latin compliments we can find everything but politeness, indeed, at times they even describe these nobles as centaurs—half human beings, half animals.

To close the short walk through the "well-kept gardens" of Latin stylists, as Plen puts it, we must add that Rīga's, and not Livonia's, humanistic literature had the place of honour in the coastal centres of the Baltic Sea, which were Lübeck, Danzig, Königsberg, Stockholm, Reval, and Åbo. Literary connections with many western centres, with the tendency for closer connections with the great authors of that time, may be seen in hundreds of Hilchen's letters. It is possible to trace the influence of the style not only of authors of neighbouring countries but also of authors from far away, even such as Bembo and Sannazaro. While looking at the books of what is left of D. Hermann's library in the Town Hall Library in Rīga, we feel the serious approach to spiritual culture of this "very learned man". Unfortunately this library ceased to exist after the events of 1941.

This humanistic 16th century saw the beginning of Latvian literature. It must be understood that the development of the Latvian language as a means of literary expression is not an isolated phenomenon, yet from the very first glance we see here a curious fact that this very ancient language has been preserved through many centuries without written records. A similar thing happened in Estonia, Lithuania, and Finland, while in the

east we see that the first Russian scripts, under strong Byzantine influence, had already appeared in the 11th century. This comparison leads us to the conclusion that those political forces which suppressed the eastern Baltic did not bother themselves to any great extent about such problems. Northern Europe and Scandinavia with their mediaeval literary traditions, particularly those in Iceland in the 13th century, were praiseworthy and original, but were left helpless outside the literary developments of the 16th century and joined more or less in the 17th century the new European progress in all its harmonious forms and proportions. Humanism was little represented; one swallow (Olaus Magnus, b. 1490, d. 1558 in Rome) does not make a summer. In Italy, the birthplace of humanism, through national traditions and the wonderfully developed new Latin poetry, which hailed "from an Italian mother and a Latin father" as G. Carducci puts it, the colourful mantle of 16th century literature was woven. In the same way grew and developed literature in Poland (Kochanowski and others). It would appear then that our own country was isolated from these fruitful influences, but if we examine Mancelius's sermons (1654) we find that the Latvian language was carefully developed and moulded after every law of classical style and method, which was a humanist characteristic.

Before the coming of Mancelius's majestic figure, Latvian literary tradi-



Title-page of the oldest Latvian book known, a Catholic Catechism (Catechismus Catholicorum) by Petrus Canisius. Of this book which was published in Vilna in 1585 a copy is in the Uppsala Library.

Die fünfß Haupt

stück des heiligen Cate-
chismi: Neben

Der Beicht / Frage vnd Antwort /
die da sonderlich den einfeltigen Bauern vor
vnd nach der Predigt sollen sein deutlich vnd
langsam vorgeliesen vnd gebetet werden.

I.

Die heiligen zehen Gebot.

Te Desmette Dewe Boußle. Exodi
tan zo. wetan.

Tas pirmais Boußlis.

Loew nhe buus chittes Dewes currech
prekkan man.

Tas Oteers

Loew nhe buus Dewe touwe kunge
waerdenhepatehese walkoot.

Tas Treßches

Thoew buus to sweete Dene sweeyt.

Tas cetworz

Loew buus touw Thewe vnde touwe
A ij Maibe

A page of Martin Luther's Catechism, translated by Johannes Rivius. This Catechism, which was printed in Königsberg in 1586 under the patronage of Duke Gotthard Kettler, became one of the most popular books among the Latvians.

tions of the 16th century, still poor and weak, were in a complicated state. This tradition, as is usual with all literature in its early stages, grew from the necessities of religious life, and, as in the area inhabited by Latvians fierce battles were waged at that time between the supporters of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, so literary development had to be along two paths whenever it was related to Holy Scripture and was required by the two confessions. The first full texts that were printed and which are at our disposal, are *Catechismus Catholicorum* (Vilna 1585), the Lutheran *Enchiridion* (Königsberg 1587); new bibliographical research shows that the first translations of the Holy Scriptures were made at least one or two generations before this time. Philologists have come to the same conclusion while analysing data in dictionaries containing suitable Latvian expressions; they have been forced to admit that this lexicography was so well worked out and complete that it must have been the creation of years of development. Interest in the Baltic languages was already shown at the beginning of the 16th century, for instance, the *Pater Noster* was reproduced in Latvian by Simon Grunau about 1530, and later by Sebastian Münster in 1550 (in Lithuanian 1539, Old Prussian 1561). Further development took place in the 17th century and the name of the Jesuit G. Elger stands out. Apart from the Holy Scriptures there developed the legal and business character of the Latvian language;

the latter being used by the sorters of flax, carriers and other guilds where the Latvians predominated.

Theoretically this ancient era of Latvian writing closed with the first Latvian Grammar which was of great importance. It is the *Manuductio ad Linguam Lettonicam Facilis et certa* written by J. G. Rehehusen, the Pastor of Aizkraukle, towards the end of the sixteen twenties but not printed in Rīga until 1644. Before it was printed it was used as a manuscript for several years as may be seen from the original text.

As the legal and social standards of the Latvian people at this time have already been described at the end of the previous chapter, let us now consider descriptions of beliefs and traditions of this period, which were numerous. These descriptions come from representatives of every nation and every walk of life, who in those days circulated in Livonia, thus philologically criticism is difficult but as regards their contents they are interesting, important and irreplaceable. These descriptions come from different sources: chroniclers, diplomats, merchants and officials of the local administration who came from foreign lands.⁹

In reference to the ancient heathen cults and rites of the Latvians in Livonia in the 16th century, we shall first quote R. Lubenau's short and expressive tale about what he experienced during the Christmas of 1586 while on his way to Kurland, when he stopped at a so-called "kuršu koniņi" (Kurish kings) village where he was able to study heathen superstitions. "At Christmas they set out to hunt in their holy forests, where for a whole year they had not killed a single animal or cut down a single twig; they skinned the does, deer and hares which they had caught and roasted the meat. This they laid out on a long table about the sides of which they had placed wax candles for the souls of their parents, ancestors, children and relatives and after that they stood or moved backwards and forwards, then they ate and drank and even offered us their food; later they brought in an empty barrel and hit it with two clubs, and the women and men danced round the table, the children doing the same; this went on all night. When at last they all went to bed they begged us also to eat and to take food with us as they themselves do not eat the remains but give it to the dogs to devour; they also did not take payment for what we had eaten."¹⁰ In the same way we find local traditions described by the adviser to the Duke of Kurland, S. Henning, in 1589, and many others. The annals of the Jesuit Brotherhood in Rīga in 1606 also give a long and really brilliant account of the life of the Latvian people, and mention an old man, of the Ludza area in Latgale, who was revered as a saint. Much local colour is also given in descriptions of funerals and weddings which in some parts remind us of the ancient mysteries of a civilisation which has ceased to exist. All such historical anachronisms are

registered in this north-eastern corner of Europe, even, as we may say, at the time of the Renaissance and later—400 years after the spreading of Christianity in this part of the continent. It is not a coincidence if such an official document as *The Laws of the Church of Kurland (Kirchen Reformation des Fürstenthumbs Churland und Semigallen in Liefelandt)* in 1570 is forced to condemn certain customs which go back to ancient times, and the authors put the blame for this on themselves and the governing powers, for their “criminal carelessness” for allowing these practices to continue. Let us look at some of these Laws of the Church in Kurland: “graves . . . must be fenced and separated from transitory and worldly places; in future graves may not be kept in the open forests and in unconsecrated places, but they must be placed by the side of old or new churches. Country people must be immediately punished and taught that kidnapping of brides (*violentus raptus*) is a great outrage and wilfulness. It must not be allowed . . . that kinsmen take away or carry off children from the country people by force in order to marry them or cohabit with them.” The same customs are also described in S. Münster’s well-known cosmography.¹¹ Evidence in official documents supports Münster’s descriptions. Let us look how this cosmography, printed in 1550, describes the kidnapping of brides: “If a peasant has a son who is old enough to take a wife for himself, he chooses a girl to his liking, goes to her home with some of his friends, hides near the house where she lives and waits for the moment when she comes out. They then take her by force, throw her into a sledge which stands ready for the purpose and hurry home. When her kinsmen hear her cries they rush out armed with swords and spears in order to rescue the young woman from the attackers. If they catch them a fierce fight ensues and those who prove themselves the stronger keep the bride. If the bride’s kinsmen do not succeed in getting her back then the others take her home with them, lock the bride and the bridegroom in a room and leave them there all night, and if they come to an understanding during this night they are allowed to live together in the future. Peasants who live near towns and who have been taught the word of God have altogether cast off this custom and do not allow such things to happen. In this country there are many magicians and witches who are said to believe that they can change themselves into wolves, to run about and to do ill to all who appear on the road, and afterwards turn back into human beings,—these are called werewolves. In this country fiery dragons which fly about in the air often appear by night, as well as other apparitions created by the devil.” So much of this is the echo of ancient Latvian folklore!

Similarly full descriptions are met with in the next century, in the works of Einhorn, who assures us of the impressive vitality of the national

traditions. The preservation of these traditions was possible because the ruling classes had only an economic interest in the non-German population; using Münster's words, "the Masters of the Order least of all bothered about peasants and allowed their overseers (landsknechts and amtsmans) to deal with them as they pleased." It is very difficult to reconstruct from these torn and scattered texts, whose authors were strangers to the people about whom they wrote, a full picture of the ancient beliefs of the Latvians, and still more difficult is it to reconstruct the "Olympus" of the pagan Baltic peoples. The study of the mythology of these peoples has been possible through their folk-songs, which are considered to be very ancient records of events. The results of this study have already been described in chapter IV.



* Seal of the town of Valmiera of 1524. The legend is: + S · CIVITATIS · DE · WOLDEMER



X

THE SWEDES IN LIVONIA

The century in which occurred the Thirty Years' War and the English Civil War may be regarded as one of the most blood-stained Europe has ever known. There were periods when it became one of unchecked massacre, or, to quote from Gustavus II Adolphus's letter to his chancellor Oxenstierna, "all wars in Europe have become entangled and fused into one single war." However, the centres of conflict, let us add, had little connection with each other. In the end the war on the Continent became a life and death struggle between France and her allies and the German-Spanish Empire, intensified and eked out with religious hatred—an heirloom of the previous century. For northern and eastern Europe an outstanding event in this century was when Sweden, as a significant and, at times, even decisive factor, joined the international game. The country, guided by the powerful sceptre and the victorious sword of Gustavus II Adolphus (1611—1632), Sweden's great warrior-king, attained and evinced, though indeed

* Map 21. The State of Sweden in 1660.

only for a few generations, a particular vigour of her own, which secured her a prominent part in the "European conflagration." Indeed battles such as were fought near Breitenfeld, on the Leipzig plain (on 17 September 1631), where Tilly, the commander of the army of the Empire, experienced his first military defeat, or at Lützen (on 6 November 1632), which cost the life of the King of Sweden, but brought fame to the arms of his troops, are indeed indelible testimonies to the greatness of Sweden. These successes served as a foundation on which the Swedes could build their incontestable domination of the Baltic littoral, and it was they who decided the fate of Livonia in this century. As is generally known, the Thirty Years' War broke out after the Catholic delegates were thrown out of a window in Prague by the Protestant authorities, on 23 March 1618, which was followed by the tragic events on White Hill, Bohemia (8 November 1620). However, the interference of Gustavus II Adolphus, his conquest of the southern shores of the Baltic, and his march on the Rhine became possible only after he had taken possession, in September 1621, of Rīga, the key to the eastern Baltic. In other words, the capture of Rīga was essential if he was to realize his ambitious plan of converting the Baltic Sea into a "Swedish lake".

Kurland, so far, remained outside Swedish plans; it was a sort of appendage to Lithuania. Once again the Daugava divided the Latvian land into two parts, this time for nearly two centuries, thus illustrating its twofold geo-political rôle: at once uniting and dividing the people. In this connection another significant point must be mentioned: East Prussia, the one time colony of the Teutonic Order, but since 1525 a loyal vassal of Poland—even when fighting against the Swedes whose power had grown after the Peace of Oliva in 1660, and even since the Treaty of Wehlau in 1657—became independent and was governed by the Elector of Brandenburg, but after 1710 by the King of Prussia. From this point Prussia began her development and the union between Brandenburg and Prussia meant the end of Poland. The second colony of the Teutonic Order, Livonia, however, did not revive politically for the next three centuries and became an object of political intrigue. This example, like so many others, testified to the decisive rôle of geography in the development of political events, and also accounted for the peculiar fate of the Baltic countries: they proved difficult to lay hands on, and still more difficult to keep, simply because of their geographical position—neighbours of ambitious powers. Serious changes in the fate of the Baltic countries took place when the short-lived Swedish dream of becoming a first-rate power ended. Swedish rule was replaced by the heavy yoke of Russia. The signal of alarm for Central Europe was the capture of Magdeburg (20 May 1631) by the Swedes. Great financial support was given by France

to Sweden. The aims proclaimed by the union of these two countries were "the defence of their oppressed common friends, the guarantee of the safety of the Baltic Sea and ocean, freedom of trade, the renewal of the independence of the shattered German States, etc." The Treaty of Westphalia, as mentioned, gave Sweden a decisive position in the European balance of power, as at that time the eastern countries of Europe played no part in it. Here is a passage from Barbagallo,¹ who describes the situation as follows: "During the Thirty Years' War and even seven years afterwards, when the countries of western and Central Europe were drowning themselves in a vortex of bellicose passions, the east of Europe seemed as if transfixed with fear at the spectacle unrolling before its eyes. None of the eastern states ventured to plunge into the raging hubbub or, when prompted to do so by feelings of sympathy or presumption, felt happy only when they had extricated themselves. Such was the case with the Ottoman Empire and, even more particularly, with Poland . . . Muscovy had just awakened from a long period of torpidity, and before thinking about interfering in foreign matters, she had to tackle the gigantic task of internal re-organization."

The Treaty of Westphalia, being like a tragic breath of relief, left all Central Europe in a terrible state: devastated, plundered, pauperized and plunged into almost complete barbarity. It is therefore characteristic that the renaissance of Germany gradually began in the north-east from Prussia. But new complications emerged from other centres. The two new sources of agitation are easily located: they were Poland and Sweden which were joined by Muscovy in the reign of Aleksey Mikhailovich, the second of the Romanov dynasty (1645—1676); an omen of the coming Northern War (1700—1714), which was to change so radically the relation of the powers of northern and eastern Europe.

The complications began in the southeastern part of Europe. This time due to the insurrection of the Cossacks under the lead of Bogdan Chmielnicki, their hetman, who not only shattered Polish prestige, but completely unsettled the military-political balance in this region. Being unable to resist the Poles alone, as their heavy cavalry was still very effective in the plains there, the Ukrainian Cossacks entered into an alliance with the Tartars of this borderland. However, this union, due to mutual distrust between the allies, failed to produce the anticipated results, and so the Cossacks threw themselves into the embrace of Muscovy, from which, despite numerous efforts, they did not succeed in disentangling themselves. The surrender of the Cossacks to the power of the Romanovs was to prove more tragic for the future of Poland, and no less so for all those who are themselves Ukrainian nationalists. Though internally weak, Poland was still able to deal heavy blows: three times she defeated Chmielnicki with

the help of all her more or less loyal allies, in 1649, 1651, and 1655. Of all these battles, the last one, near Beresteczko, was one of the greatest of that time—300,000 soldiers took part in it. But the local conflict developed into a disaster for the Poles who, in the long run, were unable to defend their extended eastern frontier. In 1653 Poland lost Smolensk, and in 1655 she lost Vilna, both of them capital towns of large provinces. Weakened and exhausted she was dealt another blow, an even more dangerous one, by the Swedes. After the dynastic troubles in Sweden—here the eccentric daughter of Gustavus II Adolphus, Christine, must be remembered—the young ambitious King Charles X disembarked on the shore of Pomerania with his veterans in July 1655 and took Warsaw and Cracow as if it were play to him.

It is not our task to follow all the events of these two fateful wars through which Poland realized, by the shedding of her own blood, what it meant to play a political rôle in eastern Europe. Let us but mention the peace treaties and their consequences: the Peace of Oliva (1660) cost Jan Kasimir his claims to the Swedish throne, which had been maintained from the time of Sigismund Vaša III, and compelled him to give up Livonia, which had been passed on to Stephen Bathory. The Peace, or more precisely, the Truce of Andrusovo (1667), deprived Poland of Smolensk, the province of Novgorod-Seversk, Chernigov, the Ukraine on the left bank of the Dnieper, and Kiev. This was the beginning of the great collapse on the Lithuanian-Polish eastern front. It was the region which had been fortified and guarded for centuries by the valiance and heroism of the warriors of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and of the Kingdom of Poland. But this "truce" was the beginning of the end. The Swedes had also made peace with the Muscovites at Kardis in 1661, by which a *status quo ante bellum* was fixed.

These large-scale events in eastern Europe had their tragic, if brief and transient repercussions on the eastern shores of the Baltic, as the Russians wrought devastation and destruction there. Yet inroads made by Tsar Aleksey into Swedish Livonia and the siege of Rīga in 1657 did not yield to the Russians the results they had hoped for.

At the same time as these failures in Poland's foreign policy, complications appeared in her internal affairs. These internal weaknesses and the deficient and unstable character of Polish society was due, in large measure, to the individual and anarchic tendencies of the *szlachta* (the Polish aristocracy). Their aspirations were manifest in the Polish constitution, for instance, in its *liberum veto* which has been repeatedly condemned. The truth of the matter was that this constitution defined a political organization which was, perhaps, too elaborate and little suited either to the vast plains or the period of struggles which led to the development



View of Riga. The inner fortifications and the principal structures: (A) the Cathedral Church, (B) St. Peter's Church, (C) St. John's Church, (D) St. Jacob's Church and monastery, (E) Town Hall, (F) and (H) bastions, Arx (R) Riga Castle outside the town walls. The town and the Swedish fleet on the Daugava are under Muscovite fire in 1656.

of empires; further it was too refined, perhaps, in its political and intellectual liberalism which was—to say the least of it—premature for Europe. Another fatal problem of an internal nature—that, too, in part connected with the constitution—was the question of succession to the throne. Even to the reader unfamiliar with Polish matters it may seem somewhat odd that after the death of several Polish kings suitable candidates for the throne were sought in foreign countries, including Muscovy. This became a particularly thorny problem after the extinction of the Jagellon dynasty with the death of Sigismund II (1572). The party struggles increased dangerously.

King John Casimir (1648—1667) died without progeny, and the intricacy of the dynastic problem, enhanced by great external and internal difficulties and endless wars, became well-nigh fatal to Poland. Yet a contemporary political satirist still had the heart to make a rather disrespectful pun by interpreting the royal Polish initials I.C.R. as signifying *Initio Calamitatum Regni*. Having lost his royal consort, and as he was tired of the trying duties of kingship, John Casimir, who had several times saved his country, abdicated and went to France in September 1668 where he was received with great honours by Louis XIV. He took residence in the Abbey of Nevers and died there four years later. He was not the first king to leave Poland, but his departure was much more dignified than the flight of Henri of Valois in 1574.

One of the most curious documents known to modern European historians has been preserved from the last years of his reign, *viz.* the speech by a deputy of the Warsaw Diet held in 1661, in which this deputy not only predicts the future partition of Poland, but foresees almost the exact manner of its execution a hundred years later.² This is an astonishing example of political clairvoyance; an allusion to the ominous nearness of Poland's end—*Finis Poloniae*. The passage in question runs as follows: "These are indeed dangers which threaten our native country—I wish I were a false prophet,—but it is clear that without the timely choice of a successor the State will be torn to pieces and divided up between peoples, *Respublica ibit in direptionem gentium*: the Muscovites, increasing in power, will get Russia (*i.e.* Bielorussia) and Lithuania, Brandenburg will obtain the neighbouring regions—Great Poland and Prussia, . . . and Austria, though evincing the most honest aspirations, in the case of a general partition (*in publica Regni direptione*) will not resist from taking Little Poland . . ."

Towards the end of the century, after a time of recovery under J. Sobieski (1674—1696)—who was not very popular in his own country but whose qualities as an efficient warrior were shown by his victories over the Turks,—Augustus II of the Saxon dynasty was elected King of

Poland. He reduced the country to utter misery during the Northern War. An insight into the whole situation at that time is given by Léger who sums it up like this:³ "During that period of miserable confusion and internal disunion among the *szlachta*, which corroded the intrinsic strength of the State at a moment when the Elector of Brandenburg crowned himself King of Prussia and chose for his kingdom the name of one of the Polish provinces, when Peter the Great opened his 'window to the west' it would most certainly have been in the interest of Poland to join Sweden in order to paralyse Russia. However, Augustus II chose the opposite policy: he hoped to re-conquer Livonia and hoped also, with the help of Tsar Peter, to rebuild a powerful Poland, . . ." Indeed, it was neither the first time, nor will it be the last, that someone has burnt his fingers trying to pick up the hot pie of Livonia.

From the point of view of Livonian internal affairs the Swedish period is usually divided into three phases: (1) the reigns of Gustavus II Adolphus and Christine (she abdicated in 1654); (2) the brief but impetuous reign of Charles X (died in 1660) in which the peace treaties of Oliva and Kardis were concluded; and (3) the reign of Charles XI, which gave several decades of peace to the country, but also caused considerable changes in its internal life as, for instance, the retrenchment of the power of the nobility and the reduction of their estates. During the reign of Charles XII Sweden began her decisive struggle with her sworn enemies, of which Denmark, Poland and Russia were the most obstinate.

Through this struggle Sweden, owing to the power of her army and the undoubted genius of her king, made the whole of Europe tremble time and again, yet also through this struggle she was brought to utter decay. The international situation, created by Swedish expansion, has been summed up by Richter⁴ in the following words: "(Sweden) pushed Poland back to the rear of the stage, but did not let Russia come to the fore. She filled all Europe with respect for her and for a whole century contrived to maintain her position at an artificially high level." However, she exhausted her own strength struggling with the growing power of her enemies, notably Russia. Yet Sweden's position changed so abruptly and radically that the memory of her glory under the reign of the kings of the great Vasa dynasty and of her importance as a political factor of the first order in Europe quickly waned. Similar "artificially high positions" usually re-adjust themselves in a like manner: such nations inevitably drain their strength, either for a considerable length of time or for ever. Thus, for instance, we see a historian describing the decline of the Portuguese colonial empire: "Little Portugal perished on account of her greatness." Now, as we have seen, there are three distinct phases which mark the Swedish period in the political, military and social history of

Livonia: the conquest and the consolidation of the new position; the renewal of war during the reign of Charles X, and a short invasion of the Muscovites; followed by the relatively long period of peace during the reign of Charles XI, which entailed a series of notable events for the Latvian people. The most outstanding problems of that time were: the confessional and social questions arising from the elucidation of the relations between the government, the nobility and peasantry, and, lastly, the problem of the development of a national culture, particularly in connection with the success which Latvian and Estonian literature was able to book for itself in this Swedish period.

The relations of the victorious Swedish kings with the nobility of Swedish Livonia did not develop under a lucky star. An official controversy began after Estonia had been incorporated into the Swedish kingdom in 1651. The quarrel between the two parties continued for some time, with increasing or abating vehemence, according to the tension at any given moment.

Gustavus II Adolphus, whom the Baltic German historians generally extol as having liberated the country from the grip of the Counter-Reformation, had a number of conflicts with the Livonian aristocracy. The heroic defence of Rīga, too, during the siege which he conducted in person, had some influence on the attitude of the King. In his rôle as conqueror, he had to satisfy his loyal army commanders, and thus it happened that in the long run some of his generals and noblemen were invested with landed property, totalling two fifths of the whole of the Livonian tilled area, *i.e.* 1,728 "ploughs" which were distributed to sixteen Swedish noblemen's families, the lion's share, one third of this area, to Oxenstierna. The reign of Gustavus Adolphus's daughter, Christine, was comparatively favourable to the Livonian nobility; this attitude of hers may be regarded as characteristic of her policy in general. "First the extravagances of Christine, who had increased the number of counts from three to twenty and that of barons from seven to thirty four, had to be repaired. After the compromise of 1655, the nobility restored a fourth of the property alienated since 1632. However, this 'reduction' helped Christine to secure the position of the rest of the aristocracy. The crown-peasants, whose situation was exceptional in the Europe of that time, became most of them peasants of the lords, and as such much more attached to the estates. On the other hand, the long absences of the king resulted in a growth of the power of the aristocracy."⁵

The tension which reached its climax in the reign of Charles XI, notably after 1681, produced a storm of indignation among the Livonian nobility, and from their ranks emerged renegades and a type of international traitor. Such a traitor was Patkul. On 27 April 1681 the King demanded



Riga in 1612. The town-hall (Curia) and square, St. Peter's and St. John's Churches. In the foreground the town wall with towers (I, H). The market place (K) with sheds at the side of houses, and the Blackheads' House of the Riga Merchant Guild to the right (L). The outer defence wall of the city and forts (C).



Swedish money coined in Riga: Charles XI's silver mark. On the face can be seen the King's portrait and the legend: CAROLUS D.G. SVECO: GOTHO: VANDALO REX. On the reverse are to be seen the coat-of-arms of Riga, surmounted by the Swedish crown, the year 1660, and the engraved initials I.H. The inscription reads: CIVITATIS SVAE: RIGENSIS: FIDEM: CORONAVIT:



Queen Christina's golden five ducat piece. On the face can be seen the Queen's portrait and the inscription: CHRISTINA D.G. SUE: GOT: VAN: O: DE: REGI: PRIN: HAE. On the reverse are to be seen the great coat-of-arms of Riga surmounted by the sun with an Hebrew inscription, the year 1644, and beneath the lions the initials of the engraver H. W. The inscription reads: REGIA CIVITAS RIGENSIS FIERI FECIT . EX AURO SOLIDO.

of the nobility a reduction of their estates and the introduction of a cadastral survey, as well as the renunciation of "the slavery and miserable servitude in the country which have created so much lamenting among the Christian people," for they were in contradiction to "justice and Christian morals." In their reply the nobility used the general arguments as a modulation to its theme: *Phryges non nisi plagis emendantur*, and pointing out that on account of the wicked nature of the peasants and their inborn hatred for noblemen "the abolition of slavery would only serve to incite them to new excesses and crimes, and it would but enhance their desire to settle accounts with their lords, and thus fill this country with murder and fighting." "By saying such things of their peasants the nobility has at the same time written a *testimonium pauperitatis* to itself and to its cultural mission, or, put differently, it has testified to its ability to rule over an enslaved people only, not, however, over a free one."⁶

The ideas and principles behind the Swedish agrarian legislation were applied to Livonia. In Sweden, the only country in Europe which has never known peasant slavery or statute labour, the peasant has always been able to take an active part in the country's political and administrative life. After securing, as early as in the middle of the 15th century, certain political rights for themselves, which was quite an unusual thing, the Swedish peasants won the fourth place in the country, becoming "the fourth class". At the beginning of the period of the policy of expansion, in the second half of the 16th century, having gained a notable say in political and military matters, the Swedish nobility fortified its growing influence on the life of the country and, at the same time, gradually ceased to pay taxes to the treasury, transferring that burden upon the peasantry (cf. the Privileges of 1562, 1569, and 1617). As a result of the extraordinary expenses incurred during the restless reign of Gustavus II Adolphus and the extravagant life of his eccentric daughter, the Swedish government became heavily indebted to the wealthy aristocracy. Here are some figures which provide sufficient evidence of this: in 1556, the nobility owned 22% of all the country's landed property, but a hundred years later it was 60%, the mortgaged estates included. This process, however, did not continue as it did in many other countries, but abated—due to the social influence the Swedish peasantry was able to exert,—and a growing opinion was voiced in favour of a reduction of the estates of the nobility, in view of the increasing financial difficulties and the numerous wars. Then, in 1655, the first decision, resulting in the so-called Small Reduction, was taken. It was followed, in 1684, by the Great Reduction, which once for all did away with the economic privileges of the Swedish lords. Thus, at the turn of the century and the beginning of the Northern War, the landed property in Sweden was owned by three economically

balanced groups: one third belonging to the crown, one third to the lords, and one third to the peasants. In the 18th century the state domains gradually passed into the hands of the peasants. The remnants of the former feudal system survived longest in the regions which had once been occupied by the Danes. How different might have been the lot of the Livonian peasants if Peter I had not succeeded in establishing his rule in this coastland and if, in general, at that decisive moment the continental armies had not proved superior to the naval forces.

The Swedish period in Livonia, like so many others, including the Russian period three quarters of a century later, began with attempts towards restoring the germs of normal life in every part of the country which had been swept by the tides of the Swedish-Polish wars. These wars, as we know, were the continuation of the Russian wars. The actual condition of the country was indeed very sad. It would be unnecessary to add new evidence to that already quoted in the previous chapter, but we may with the help of a few figures, adequately illustrate the tragic tinge of all these historical testimonies. The Polish—Swedish War ended formally with the Truce of Altmark in 1629. As early as 1624—1625, by order of Gustavus II Adolphus, a taxation of the land was carried out in those regions of the country which had been liberated from the Poles, *viz.* in the districts of Valmiera, Riga and, partly, Valka. From the assessment data collected, then, we may form a definite notion of the extent of the devastation wrought by the war which had lasted intermittently for 75 years. Prior to the Swedish—Polish War there were 24 lord-owned estates with a total of 5,158 peasant farms, while in 1625 there survived only 2,416, 47% had been ruined. Little more than 36% of the peasant land was in a tillable state, the rest being without working animals. Going over these taxation statistics, it gives you the impression that a hurricane has swept over the land—a hurricane not caused by the blind powers of nature but by man's insanity and bestiality.

The favourable measures on behalf of the Livonian peasants—favourable as the idea was understood at that time—commenced, as we have seen, as soon as the Swedish infiltration into Livonia began. They were not only the logical results of the ideas and views which had developed in the mother-country, but were also prompted by financial calculations of the treasury and by economic interests: we must not forget the importance of Livonia and Pomerania as the corn-granaries of the main Swedish kingdom, which became so important after the catastrophic peace treaty of Nystad. If as late as 1802 the area of tilled land in Sweden, this classic country of the peasant's fight with the forest, amounted to 2% (in 1935 it had reached these figures: 9% of fields and 3% of meadow-land), it is no wonder that several historians of the 18th century mention not a

few years of famine, when the corn ripened only every second or third year, and when the subsistence of the population depended entirely on the import of grain. In the reign of Gustavus II Adolphus from the port of Rīga alone a yearly amount of 400,000 bushels of grain were exported to Sweden. The wholesale trade in corn was in the hands of Dutchmen. Even as late as the second half of the 17th century almost half of the world trade tonnage belonged to them. According to Vreede's estimate (1634), about 40% of their bigger craft, the coasters excluded, navigated the Baltic Sea, and nearly half of all the merchandise was conveyed in Dutch ships. However, this lively activity which was virtually equivalent to a corn trade monopoly in the Baltic Region would not have been feasible without the raw products coming from eastern Europe (timber, hemp, flax, pitch, etc.), for which Danzig was the largest centre for trans-shipment.

The standard of Livonian farming is shown in the book *Stratagema Oeconomicum oder Ackerstudent* by Pastor S. Gubert, of which several editions appeared in the 17th century and later. Pastor Gubert pointed out that climatically the country was best suited for growing rye and oats, and to a smaller extent barley and wheat. Agriculture was based on the three- and four-fallow system, and the fields of the peasants, according to the author, yielded nearly twice as much as the lands of the lords, the tillers of which were not interested in their work. Stock-farming, flax-growing and the cultivation of vegetables were second in importance. Here, then, we must speak of extensive rather than of intensive cultivation. A special department, which evokes many historical reminiscences, was apiculture. The methods of soil cultivation were, of course, very primitive, and the pastor felt obliged to take a stand against various barbaric methods used, such as, for instance, the burning of woods for clearing and reclaiming land.⁷ In some of Olaus Magnus's publications after 1555, as well as in those written in the 17th century by the travellers Olearius, Meyerberg, and others—but especially in Meyerberg's writings,—are to be found numerous illustrations from 17th century Livonia and Kurland.⁸

The first steps taken by the Swedish rulers and great administrators on behalf of the Livonian peasantry, apart from those already initiated in the preceding century, were in conformity with article 5 of a draft by the Duke, later King Charles IX (1604—1611), which was sent to the Livonian nobility in May 1601: "... the peasants should be free of the lords, as the rest of the population of this country is free. It ought to be possible for them to send their children to school to learn different trades which might serve their country. They ought to have more children to cultivate the soil on their farms which should be left to them to use as they think

best. The custom of keeping peasants like slaves is no longer common in the Christian world and has therefore been abolished many years ago." But the suggestions of the Duke were, of course, not put into practice. The Livonian nobility repudiated the project and referred to the failure of a similar endeavour on the part of Stephen Bathory, asserting, *inter alia*, that "children and fools must not be given sticks to play with." However, the peasants were occasionally called together and even given some local administrative offices. Though the Swedish army, which consisted mostly of infantry, had suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the heavy Polish cavalry at Salaspils on 27 August 1605, the peasants of Swedish Livonia, with an instinctive foreboding of the dawn of a new era, were "drawn to Duke Charles like flies to honey"—as a high Polish administrative officer wrote in evident disgust.

It was to the credit of Gustavus II Adolphus that, on behalf of the south Livonian peasants, he instituted a judicial reform which was carried out between 1630 and 1632, but drafted at an earlier date. In each district a governmental District Court (*Landgericht*) was set up which deprived the nobility of their civil and criminal jurisdiction over their villeins. Yet the lords retained the right of apprehension and incarceration within the precincts of their estates (*ius apprehendi, incarcerandi in suis terris*). The instruction of 1632 provides for some kinds of punishment of a disciplinary character—domestic correction—which, however, in Swedish Livonia appears to have been very vague and elastic in practice.

During the reign of Christine, when so many of the positions of the Swedish and Livonian nobility, which they had lost, were restored to them, two projects for a Livonian code were drafted, though never enacted.⁹ They are of interest as they mirror the ideas and intentions of the Livonian nobility. These two drafts, in which the interests of the lords are thrown into relief, devote a great deal of attention to the duties of the peasants, but hardly a word is said about their rights. In both these compilations the position of the peasants is based on the positive and the prescriptive rights of the 17th century, and they reflect the confusion of theoretical notions which existed in the juridical interpretation of the problems of serfdom during that transition period. However, on analysing the texts, one may gather that in the middle of the 17th century the peasants enjoyed the right of property on their movables. What remained uncertain were the juridical grounds of their landed possessions and, hence, also the problem of the restitution of peasants to their former lords. It is very likely that in practice the lot of the peasants was very hard, judging by the contents of the numerous official documents of that time, in which the topic of the desertion of peasants, who usually fled to Kurland or to "Polish Livonia," *i.e.* Latvian Latgale, is constantly referred to. As late as

1643 the Chancery of the Swedish Crown tried its utmost to give clear instructions and advice in reply to the complaints of the nobility who had asked the Chancery to consider the peculiarity of the position of the peasants, and to provide such conditions for them that they would not be given "any reason for deserting".

There exists another juridical document, dating from the reign of Charles XI (1660—1697), or rather from his regency, and that, too, refers to the condition of the peasants of Swedish Livonia. It is the *Landespolizeiordnung* of the Swedish Governor General, Count C. Tott, which was published in 1668.

Being a regulation of a military and administrative character, as its title implies, it established a certain order of procedure in the country and settled some matters of communication (the maintenance of roads, bridges, coach-yards, etc.), and dealt with various rights, as, for instance, with the hunting rights of the peasants. It also contained remarks against prolonged and excessive feasting on wedding occasions. The fourth and fifth sections are the most important for us, because they raised the problem of the principles of the juridical status of the peasant; the fourth section *Von Zuschlag der Bauren und deren Taxa*—dealt with the distraint, according to official tariffs, of the statute labour of refractory or insolvent lords in favour of the creditor or the State; the fifth section dealt with the *Ausantwortung der Bauren*, treating the search and restitution to their former lords of peasant deserters. The sixteen paragraphs of this section, worded indeed in very choice terms, provide a clue to the sources from which the ideas contained in this regulation were drawn, namely, the Statutes of Piltene and of Kurland (see chapter XI), in which the fundamental principles of bondage are repeatedly mentioned.

Charles XI's radical reforms, which ring in a brief but very active period of progress and comparative prosperity for the peasants of Swedish Livonia, were introduced with a view of protecting the interests of the crown treasury; in other words it meant simply an economic re-building of the country which had suffered so cruelly during the wars. As we have seen, it was Gustavus II Adolphus who started investing his generals and higher administrative officials with fiefs which totalled about two fifths of the Swedish Livonian area. His daughter proceeded in a similar manner, and thus crown lands were turned into private property. A similar policy was also followed in Sweden, where five sevenths of the entire area were owned by the nobility, and since no taxes were levied on their lands, the government had to shift the whole burden of debt on to the shoulders of the other classes. Powerful opposition soon raised a voice. Christine had tried unsuccessfully to introduce several reforms, Charles X, in 1655,

carried into effect the so-called "Small Reduction". Charles XI, whom his enemies named "the Peasant's King" (*bondekungen*), on succeeding to absolute power on 10 December 1680, made great efforts to carry out his huge land reform both in Sweden and Finland, as well as in the Swedish provinces on the opposite shore of the Baltic: in Livonia, Estonia, Pomerania, and Ingermanland, in order not only to reduce and to adjust the influence of the nobility in state affairs, but, mainly, to secure the means necessary to Sweden for her existence as a great power. In Livonia this reform meant a revision of the *justus titulus* of the landed properties which had remained the same since the time of the Teutonic Order; and, in 1681, in spite of the protests of the nobility, a new cadastral survey was initiated, which was completed between the years 1687—1693; finally, almost three quarters of all Swedish-Livonian estate lands, which amounted to 4,010 "ploughs" of arable land, were confiscated. Altogether, 55% of the whole tilled area remained under state management, while 25% was left in private hands.

Simultaneously with this reduction of the estates another reform took effect, *viz.* that of the ground rent, which now had to be paid to the treasury on the basis of the taxes and the servitude of the tenant, and the thaler (*dälde*) was introduced as a unit of assessment. With the decree of 9 November 1689, the "plough"—the common unit for taxing peasant farm land—was made equivalent to 60 thalers. But since there always remained the risk that the method of fixing the amount of taxes and statute labour on the basis of a "plough" would be misused and exploited for purposes of speculation, the maximum amount of compulsory labour days for peasants was fixed by the decree of 21 March 1696, with the threat of heavy penalties in case of abuse. According to calculations made by A. von Tobien, the distribution of the charges per 60 thalers (or one "plough") of land was as follows: 24.3% went to the State, 12.9% went to the lords as taxes in money and kind, and the remaining 62.8% was taken up by statute labour. Though the number of compulsory labour days was comparatively high, this burden may not be considered as too excessive; to each "plough" there fell an average of 327 days per annum, with 15.8 inhabitants, five able-bodied farm people, to the "plough."¹⁰

In addition to these kinds of statute labour there existed another, a special kind, the *leida* or *laide*, also called "freemoney" (*Freygeldt*) in contemporary documents. As a technical term, *leida* appears only rarely in Livonian practice after 1385. It is to be met with during the Polish rule and became widely used in the Swedish period. In Stender's dictionary the explanation *Zinse der Freybauer*, *i.e.* the taxes of the freeholders, is given for it, which provides a fairly exact notion of its nature by allusion

to those peasants who enjoyed the rights and economic advantages of being exempt from socage. In general, the peasants appreciated such a prospect, and made the utmost endeavours and sacrifices in order to obtain this status. In some districts the number of such free peasants was quite considerable. Such was the case at Piebalga, which two centuries later, during the period of national revival, produced a remarkable number of Latvian intellectuals. By the end of the 17th century, of 200 peasant farmers there about three quarters were exempt from statute labour. But this was an exception, because elsewhere their number was considerably smaller.

N nacā to tauto pestitais/
Tas Jumprauws dzimšens layks
 atgais/
 Ley seuw wyssa passaul beinoias/
 Dewam tada pedzim šena klaias.
Ne no wyru āsini nedz meša
 Bet no Swetu Garu patesa
 Ic Dewā wārdš cilwēks tappis/
 Vnd ir zedāis tās mēšas āuglis.
Tā Jumprauw tapa āpgrutenatā/
 Winias šistiba pallik ne awškartā
 Ac dāwanams ta spidāia šaist/
 Sauwu dziwoklu Dewos ne grib pas
 laist.

Part of a page from the Catholic hymn-book of George Elger, printed in 1673. Elger was born in 1585 at Valmiera, lived at Cēsis and was a lecturer at Daugavpils where he died in 1672. He wrote in the middle dialect, in the Latvian scripture language.

From a juridical point of view the situation of the Swedish-Livonian peasant, in spite of the attempts made towards the abolishment of serfdom, may be described as follows: the peasants remained attached to the soil (*glæbae adscripti*), even on the state domains. Besides being free to dispose of their personal estate, they had a title to the hereditary tenure of their real estate and the right of inheritance so long as they remained on the spot and acted up to their obligations. In practice there was agrarian legislation which protected their interests (*Bauernschutz*). The protection was strengthened by several royal decrees, the last and most important being that issued on 21 March 1696, a year before the king's death. Thus they were better protected, as far as their personal status and their possessions were concerned, than later when the Law of Release was enacted (see chapter XIII). On the other hand, the regulations issued by the Swedish government, which gave the south Livonian peasants free scope to trade in agri-

cultural products and thus increased the circulation of money in the country, contributed considerably to the improvement of their economic prosperity, which sometimes reached a high level, as is evinced by the reports of the commission which assessed the war damages caused between 1700 and 1708. In one case it was reported that from a "half-plough" farm 10 horses, 34 head of cattle, 20 calves, 56 sheep, 13 pigs, and 15 goats were captured and carried off by the Russians; in other reports mention is made of rich ornaments and silver objects; and again there were cases where the peasants made over to "their king" money presents amounting to sums as high as 650 thalers for war requirements. The great majority of peasant farms (96.5%) in eight districts, of which there exist detailed and minute data, were from one quarter to one full "plough" in size. Their inhabitants, for example, in the Piebalga parish fell under the following heads: farmers and their families—83.7%, farm labourers—12.6%, orphans—3.7%; the farmer did not usually do statute labour himself, being, instead, responsible under heavy penalty for its performance.¹¹

For obvious reasons the peasants of Swedish Livonia grew very fond of the Swedish king and the Swedish government. But the Livonian peasants had still to face many difficulties and obstacles, being impeded by local authorities and hampered by the Stockholm authorities, and they were impatient and unable to endure "as before" such treatment. Thus they crossed the Baltic Sea in order to submit their complaints to the king. This practice, hitherto unknown in Livonian history, was resorted to so often that, according to the words of a high Swedish official, Stockholm at that time was brimming with peasants from Livonia. After the death of the "Peasants' King" a delegation of lords of Swedish Livonia expressed their submissiveness and deferential wishes to Charles XII, his successor, using such significant words as, "Never did human beings who endured dangers and misery, with minds so full of joy, so rush to greet the rising of the sun after the seemingly endless night of terrible thunderstorms, as did the Livonian noblemen (on seeing the crown on the head of the young king) . . ." It is easy to understand why the entire Baltic German historiography looks upon the reign of King Charles XI as a nightmare, while from the Latvian point of view he appears as a pleasant dream.

The Swedish period finally gave Livonia—in the ancient meaning of its name—a centre of higher education. Such an idea had never been raised during the centuries of Hanse domination and the rule of the Order, and, in his historical memorandum to the former ruler of Livonia, Bishop J. D. Solikowski of Lwów, adds to the rest of his reproaches the following exhortation:¹² "While, on the one hand, your patrons, archbishops, bishops, and Masters of the Order have gained fame through great works, building so many churches, monasteries and castles, they have, on the other hand,



Wabres
CONTRAFAIT
 des Bauers
 in Liefland/
Steppinſch Krauklis
 auf Teutſch
Stephan Kabe
 genaud/
 Wäher
Se. Königl. Majeſtät
 von Schweden
 durch einen Umweg hinter das
 Moscowitiſche Lager vor der Stadt
 Narva aeführt/
 wodurch
 Seine Königl. Majeſtät
 den 20. November
 1700.
 einen herrlichen Sieg
 erhalten.

Stepinš Krauklis, a Latvian peasant, who contributed to King Charles XII's victory over the Russians at Narva on 20 November 1700, by leading the Swedish king and his army on a by-pass behind the Russian encampment.

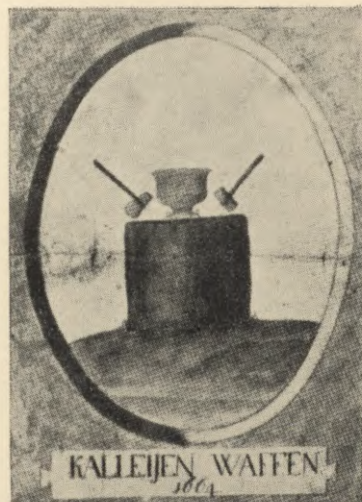
Eid der Treue/vor die Lettische
 Artillerie-Bediente/

In Lettische Sprache überſetzt.



Eid schis Kehniga Pils, ſakts/
 Riga/ pahr wiſſu Dohnu/ no tiſſcheem
 Genaidneckeem usbruhkts un apſchechts tap-
 pis/ ſo paſchu ſirdigi gelbeht mums no wiſſa
 Spehka/ ſawa Ammahita und Deenitas pehz/
 pecklahjabs; tad mehs Under-Oppezeres/
 Cunftapeles/ Lehr-Cunftapeles/ Under-Für-
 wärteres/ Lehr-Fürwärteres/ Under-Minee-
 rers/ Mineerers- Selti/ Ammatneeki/ Andlan-
 gers/ ſwehram ar ſcho/ pahr ſippraftu Ap-
 ſtirprinaiſcham/ ka mehs ſchinni Laikā ar ween-prahigas Girds
 kohpa-turrehtees/ pehz wiſſu muhſo Spehtu to Prettikauſcham/
 par ſo mehs nolikti un pawehlehti eſſim/ paſtrahdahi/ muhſos ee-
 liktōs Weetōs ſew mohdrigi/ wihrſichti/ ſirdigi un tikkuſi tur-
 rehtees/ muhſeem preeckſch-zelteem Warſneckeem un Under-Op-
 pezerereem eckſch wiſſahim notikkamahim Pawehleſchaham peeder-
 rigu Paſlauſſiſcham parahdiht/ teem nenecka pretti-runnahtees/
 wiſſu-maſati/ no ſawas Pahrgaltwibas/ pretti-ſpreckees/ nei kahdu
 Grubrumu neds Behdas bihtees/ bet ſawu Weeku un Affini
 lab-prah/ par muhſu zeemiga Kehniga Labbynu/ nodohr/ un
 lihds pehdigu Affinu- Lahſihetu ſawas eeliktas Weetas apglahht
 gribbam/ wiſs pehz wiſſas Teefas un labbā Prahta. Bet to ſas
 muhſo ſarpa/ ka pretti-turigs/ ne-ustizzigs/ un ſawā Ammatā ne-
 apdohmigs eckſch wiſſu-maſatahim Weetahim parahdabs/ to paſchu
 gribbam mehs/ lai buht kahds buhdams/ ne ween par Wiſtineetu
 turreht/ bet arriſan tam/ tik drihti/ ka tas ſamannihds tohp/
 paſchi muhſas Kohkas peckht/ ka tas pee peederrighu Sohdu war
 peeweckts tawt. Scho wiſſu buhs mums turreht/ un pehz tahnu
 darriht/ tik teecham/ ka Deews mums pee Wehſas un Dwech-
 ſeles palihds.

Text of oath taken by Latvian artillerymen in Swedish army in the 17th century.



Window paintings in the Lipāiki Church, showing the coats-of-arms of the Šmēdīni and Kalēji families, Kurish freemen, descendants of Kurish kings. The social status of the Latvian farmers in the Order State was not uniform. The highest position among them held the liegemen of the Livonian Order. They did no statute work, but instead gave military service. After the collapse of the Order State they gradually merged with other farmer classes and only the Kurish freemen retained their privileges. The freemen served in the cavalry and were exempted from taxes and other obligations.

1. Lohzēllis.
Deewam/Burwim un Gerohschu-Aymahnetajam ne buhs
 eeredsehtam tapt staryohreem Karry-Kaudim/bet nomaitatam.
 2. Kas to Wahrdu Deewa ta Kunga/jeb dsehris jeb ne-dsehris/
 saimo/tam buhs/bes wiffas Söehlastibas/mirrt.
 3. Kas Deewa Wahrdu/to swehtu Waffar-Ehdenu un to
 swehtu Ehrstibu Smeeklä nemm / tam buhs tapt bes wiffas
 Söehlastibas ar Sohbinu nokautam.
 5. 6. Kas to Wahrdu Deewa ta Kunga/ lahdedams/ swehredams/ melodams/
 jeb wildams/welti walko/ jeb no nifna Geradduma/ jeb peedsehrumu/ negohdigi
 Nuttē nemm/ tam buhs tā/ ka ta Noseegshana tohy atrasta/ sohbitam tapt.
 13. Kad kahds flifts Saldahts per Pathareem jeb Basnizā peedsehris nahf/tad buhs
 tam/ augoschā Deenā un Nakti/ Kaska-Oselt eeslehgatam stabweht.
 15. Neweenam Maraktenteram buhs Wallas buht Basnizas-Laitā Allus/Wih-
 nu/ jeb Brand-Wihnu frohget/ pee Apsohdishanas tabs treschas Dattas to wiffo/
 kas winnam irr.
 26. 27. 28. Kas kahda leela Karry-Waldineeka/ jeb augsta Walditaja wianu Soh-
 du aisenem/tam buhs nomaitatam tapt/ ta pat arridsan tam/ kas saweem Wirs-
 neekeem pretti-turrabs.
 29. Kam no ta augstaka Karry-Waldineeka jeb General-Kunga kahda Drohschi-
 bas-Grahmata irr eedoheta/to ne buhs neweenam aiskahrt/ pee sawu Kasku.
 34. Kad kahds Saldahts sawu Under-Ofizeeru / Corporatu jeb Rotmeisterei
 draude ar Duhri/ jeb wifstīn pretti turrabs/ tad buhs tabdam nomaitatam tapt.
 35. Kas sawu Wirsneeku un Walditaju ar Sohbinu eewaino / tas irr sawu
 Kasku noseedfīs.
 36. Itturam Saldahtam buhs turreters pretti saweem Under-Ofizeereem wiffur/
 arridsan eekshan Osbrehm un Sa-eeschanahm/ kaunigi un ka klahjahs/ zittadi
 taps wiasch sohdihs.
 37. Kas pretti teem nolassiheteem un ispaudehteem Wis-seegshanas-Rikkumeem
 harra/ tam buhs tapt ar tahm paschahm eeksch Rikkumeem nospreestahm Sohdi-
 bahm aisenemtam.
 39. Kas preeksch leela Kunga jeb augstaka Karry-Walditaja Azim/bes Patwehle-
 shanas/ un dusmigā Prahta/ Sohbinu iswell/ tam buhs sōeich-reiss zaur Rihf-
 keem tertzet.

with little reason and a lack of common sense failed to provide for the establishment of so much as a single college or a single academy in that country. But when such institutions are lacking and when the patrons of the country place all their hopes of the future and likewise the chances for their class solely and singly on the power of their arms, then, if there are no writers, learned men, scholars of juridical and political sciences in the country, all this huge military power, unguided by reason, breaks under its own weight. When passions become incited, there are none, as is shown by numerous examples from the ancient world which fill the works of literature, who might master the flames of passion and quench them by pouring on them a gush of sound judgement, gentleness, and wisdom. According to the poet's words, those who have acquired good knowledge and learning from written works grow more gentle in their manners and drop their brutal nature . . ."

For all this effusive eloquence, the subsequent temporary wardens of Livonia, the Poles did not contrive to create such a centre of learning either, though there existed a number of projects, like those repeatedly mentioned by Father Possevino. Being keen on enlarging the spiritual horizons, he kept on exhorting King Stephen to create in conquered Livonia a centre for the advanced study of linguistics, similar to that which existed at Alcalà de Henares in Spain. This Spanish centre had been established some hundreds of years earlier by the well-known Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros with a view to providing a religious education for the Catholic clergy in the whole area, which was an area varied in its ethnical composition and consequently as varied in its linguistic character. Owing to the king's death, however, these plans were not realized and the Jesuit Academy at Vilna in 1579 took over the functions of the planned polyglot university.

It was just before the battle at Lützen which cost the life of Gustavus II Adolphus (1632) that he signed, on the battlefield, the decree purporting the foundation of Dorpat (Tartu) University which, after the initial resistance shown by the Livonian aristocracy to this Swedish institution, and after a certain period of decline at the beginning of the Russian rule, finally developed into a true centre of higher learning for the whole of the Baltic. It became not only a propounder of the achievements of Baltic German culture, but it also provided a scholarly education for numerous Latvian and Estonian intellectuals, and later, during the period of russification, it attracted many Russians. The second centre of higher education in the field of technical and commercial sciences was founded in 1861 in Rīga during the period of the great reforms. After 1918 the way

was open for the foundation of national universities in the three Baltic States.

During the last years of Swedish rule a net of parochial schools developed around Dorpat University which were associated with the name of Charles XI, the Peasants' King. About the results of this action we know from a very informative passage in one of Glück's reports where he states that to all these newly founded schools the peasant children rushed in crowds (*catervatim*).

The 17th century may be looked upon as the first century, or even as the Golden Age of the unfolding of Latvian literature, which developed rapidly in the ecclesiastical and religious sphere, which was then the only one to which it had access. Three great writers: Mancelius, Fürecker, and Glück at once raised it to a level which we may call classical, and the like of which was not subsequently achieved until the 19th century, when the national renaissance began. These outstanding pioneers, not to speak of others, could not at that time be classed as Latvian nationals considering the social status of the Latvian people. They were, and had to be, of German stock and were either born in the Baltic country or had come from abroad. Nevertheless, they would never have attained such power and wealth of expression, combined with a broad literary horizon, had they not come into active and lasting contact with the country and its inhabitants; had they not lastingly and deeply inhaled the invigorating and soulful atmosphere of the contemporary Baltic lands; or had they not found and described, with unflinching instinct and artistic intuition, part of the Latvian people's soul, which was enduring and proud and yet, at the same time, ironical and sentimental, even in deepest misery, suffering, and humiliation. We see how completely all this differs from the curious and "too literary" interest on the part of the humanist townspeople of previous centuries. Nor is this by any means the only case when authors, like these three last mentioned, have grown up among country people whom they approached with manliness and understanding, which drew from the Latvian people an eager response. In order to set off this difference in a clearer way, we will, in the next chapter, compare the two contemporaries, Mancelius and Einhorn—both were of first importance in the religious and moral history of the Latvian people—to see which of them found the road leading to the future.

With the growing interest of the Swedish government in the education of the Latvian people, there was a desire to prepare and publish a translation of the complete Scriptures in the Latvian language. This huge work, which has been of such decisive influence on the whole process of development of Latvian literature in general, is closely linked up with the names

of J. Fischer (1636—1705), Head of the Lutheran Church of Swedish Livonia, and Ernst Glück (1652—1705), Pastor at Marienburg (Alüksne). The former was one of the most arduous fighters for the development and extension of the Swedish educational system, but his greatest work was the promoting, morally and materially, of the publication of the Bible in translation. "Fischer's administrative capacities, combined with Glück's literary talents, are those which make it possible for these immortal spiritual values to come into being for the Latvians."¹³ The complete Latvian text of the Bible, dedicated to King Charles XI, was published at two different periods: the New Testament in 1685, and the Old Testament in 1689. It is a literary achievement of the highest value, and was accomplished in only eight years. Luther's translation of the Bible took him thirteen years to complete, even considering the fact that he was translating into his mother-tongue, while Glück was born in Saxony, and had first to learn the Latvian language as he also learned Estonian and Russian when he settled in his adopted country.

Indeed, from a purely literary point of view this translation is a veritable masterpiece for its power and dramatism of expression and rich language. But for the obsolescent forms and words, it has preserved its literary value and importance up to the present day. But due mention must also be made in this connection of those who prior to Glück had been developing and perfecting the Latvian language, among them Mancelius and Fürecker (see chapter XI). When Glück, this ardent promoter of school instruction in his parish and its environs, during the siege of Marienburg (Alüksne), fell with his household into the hands of the Russian Field-Marshal Sheremetiev, his foster-daughter, presumably a Latvian girl, was taken away from him. After a somewhat adventurous career she became Catherine I, Empress of Russia. Knowing how to appreciate the talents of a Livonian pastor, Tsar Peter took him to Moscow. Here Glück opened a model school for children of the Russian noblemen, which was often visited by the Tsar. He also founded a private weekly paper in Russian, and extended his activity to other fields. It may be noted here that an Estonian translation of the Bible was published at the same time, *i.e.* in 1686.

In the last years of Swedish rule, at the outset of the Northern War, the following book was written and published by an anonymous author (supposed to be Blomberg): *An Account of Livonia, with the Relation of the Rise, Progress and Decay of the Marian, Teutonic Order. The several Revolutions that have Happen'd there to these present Times, with the wars of Poland, Sweden and Muscovy, contending for that Province etc.* (London 1701; there exists also an edition in French, published in Ut-

recht 1705). This is not the place to review this curious book. We will only note that the author saw and fully understood the fate of the Latvians "in those long and bloody scenes in Livonia". Quite obviously he was thoroughly acquainted with the past of the country, for he not only collected all available information concerning the period before the invasion by the Order, as set out by ancient and mediaeval authors best known at that time, but he also collected information from the chronicles of the 16th and 17th centuries. Though his interests are primarily focussed on the ruling class and on "high politics", he also devotes some pages to the local population, citing, *e.g.* Saxo Grammaticus (letter 2) and dwelling for some length upon the fate of the Old Prussians (letter 16). Let us quote here only those passages which refer to his contemporaries in Latvia. He observes a patriarchal way of living, which at best is manifest among the lords and their peasants (letter 15): "All those Inhabitants of Livonia that have been subdued by the Germans . . . are of a very strong and sturdy Nature, robust and fit for Hardships; are bred up to Labour and indefatigable toil, and therefore when they are come to sufficient Years, are able to endure excesses of Heat or Cold. They live in mean Houses made of Wood; they were formerly all of them Slaves to their Masters, who had power of Life and Death over them, and had nothing of *Meum* and *Tuum* so that all their Acquisitions belonged to their Lords. But those that lived under the Kings of Sweden's Dominations, have been exempted from the Bondage, and when they have committed Crimes, they are tried before their ordinary Judges. But their Servitude continues still, in those Provinces under the Duke, and the Boors are looked upon by their Lords as their Chattel, wherewith they may act *ad Libitum*, as I mentioned before.

There much has been said of those poor Peoples Slavery here, yet 'tis not so intolerable as some may think, for 'tis the Interest of their Masters to support and cherish them in all necessaries of Life. When they have performed their Task, and finished the proportion of Work which has been allotted 'em then what spare time they have, is their own; and they having been always used to this sort of Life, are very content and chearful under it . . .

I find their Conditions in many things better than that of the Peasants in Germany, who are every Day afresh persecuted with Troops, that Quarter upon them; constant Taxes, and hard Labour. The Boors here when any Wedding or Christening happens, take the liberty to invite their Landlords and Ladies, and they are so highly transported with the Honour which is done them, that they never fail to present some of their

Manufactures, or a fat Ox, as an acknowledgement." But whatever the alleviation of the burden of the actual conditions by patriarchal relations may have been, let us end with the words of the anonymous author: "It may be said of these Countries as 'twas formerly of Poland, *Est Coelum Nobilium, Paradisus Clericorum, Aurifodina advenarum, et Infernus Rusticorum.*"



* The coat-of-arms of Livonia of the Swedish period, bearing the initials CRS (Carolus Rex Sveciae).



XI

THE DUCHY OF KURLAND

The small Duchy of Kurland, wedged between countries which constantly fought one another, was an islet, independent or almost independent, in a restless sea of invasions. Indeed it might be considered a political curiosity but for the fact that it lasted two hundred and thirty years (1562—1795). This is ample proof that the Duchy's existence was not due to a whim of history or to a mere incident in the mutual balancing of powers of its neighbours. In other words, there were definite and weighty reasons for its survival, despite the great changes in the balance of power in eastern Europe, mainly brought about by the Polish-Russian war in the early 17th century and by the Swedish-Russian, or Great Northern War early in the following century. We may safely assume that the reasons for the Duchy's survival are to be found in its internal structure as well as in the international situation; our endeavours to clarify them will bring us closer to the solution of the major political problems on this part of the Baltic coast.

A study of the changes in the European political system in the 17th and 18th centuries reveals, on the one hand, the growth of Absolutism

* Title cartouche of a map of the Duchy of Kurland, published in 1747; the author was the Court Architect of the Duke, Barnikel. The cartouche is crowned by the Ducal coat-of-arms, the drawings in both sides symbolize Kurland's natural resources: forests, game and the sea.

and the formation of large or very large political entities which sooner or later were to absorb the smaller ones; and on the other hand, the survival of numerous political units in Germany, Italy and elsewhere in the form of more or less independent vassal states. Poland, the suzerain of the Dukes of Kurland, had a queer system of political liberalism which gave free rein to an undisciplined and wanton individualism of the nobility. It is really a wonder that despite this individualism Poland could hold out against the Russian autocracy and the military might of the Swedish Vasa House as long as it actually did. The history of the Duchy of Kurland is therefore one of perilous navigation in the waters of these opposing interests. It seems but logical that the Duchy of Kurland should cease to exist, after more than two hundred years, in the 18th century, during the era of "enlightened" Absolutism. The struggles of the Dukes against the Kurish nobility which were almost unceasing and at times very serious were characteristic of the general development of the Duchy throughout its existence; this was due to the influence of Polish political methods. Richter, an eloquent apologist of the Baltic nobility, says: "The confused state of affairs in Kurland was a consequence of the existing aristocratic or even oligarchic regime which, as in Poland, lacked order."¹

In an effort to maintain itself, the Duchy pursued a foreign policy based on an involved and, in the last analysis, extremely insecure system of repeated declarations of neutrality. Duke Jacob, in particular, had a liking for this system which reminds us of the unsuccessful endeavours of Latvia in recent years. Dynastic marriages, so important in this era, were also practised as a means of securing political support in Poland and Germany, and, finally, in St. Petersburg. However, all these steps proved inadequate; they failed to prevent foreign troops marching through the territory of the Duchy, the billeting of garrisons in Jelgava, the ravaging of cities and the countryside, and the deportation of the Dukes themselves. Jacob and Biron were forced into exile, and Ferdinand went voluntarily. The Dukes had also to face the threat of serious competition for the throne of "God's Little Land" from such pretenders as Count Maurice de Saxe. Domestic policy had two major problems to face. One was the question, never settled, of the administration of the Kurland bishopric in Piltene. Piltene originally belonged to Magnus, a "shadow" king of the Danish House. The region later became a bone of contention with the Poles and a source of many a legal dispute. The other problem was that of the nobility who were secretly hostile to the Dukes and at times, up to 1795, openly opposed to them.

There were, however, brief periods of prosperity whose splendour (*e.g.* during the first blessed period of Jacob's reign) extended far beyond the geographical boundaries of the Duchy. But the troubled conditions pre-

veiled until the neighbouring countries had settled their accounts. Sweden's downfall marked the rise of a new state west of the Duchy—that state was Prussia whose might was growing incessantly. When Poland and the rest of the zone between western Europe and Russia were partitioned, Prussia was strong enough to be *der Dritte im Bunde* (the third partner in the deal), as a German poet put it. Poland fell like a ripe fruit. Russia and Austria, ruled by queens, and Prussia, ruled by Frederic the Great, fixed their mutual frontiers. This was the beginning of a new period, the era of vast empires which was later known as the Concert of Europe. The age of the petty courts had come to an end, and Peter, the last Duke of Kurland, died in exile in Bohemia.

The factors which played the principal, almost the exclusive part in the domestic policy of Kurland, were the nobility and a few politically gifted dukes. Cities were few. The peasantry had no representatives and its rôle in politics was passive. Like their brothers in Livonia, the Kurish nobles were very active in defending their class interests, and the interests of the state and of the people were not necessarily well served by such activities. The treatment of the peasants by their landlords will be discussed later. Let it suffice to mention here the nobility's haughty and overbearing conduct towards the burghers in the capital and other cities, as evidenced by contemporary decrees concerning clothing and the way of life. To defend their privileges, the Kurish nobles adopted methods that were designed to maintain the existing social and legal *status quo*. They openly opposed any attempted innovations that might harm their interests. They sought protection for these interests at the German, the Polish and, eventually, at the Russian Courts. As the interests of their social class in that golden age of nobility were on the whole the same in all countries, family ties and good contacts abroad guaranteed the continued existence of the Kurish aristocracy, which ably defended the interests of its class not only for its own particular benefit but for aristocracy as a whole.

The Duchy was ruled by two dynasties: the Kettlers who reigned for 175 years, and the Birons who reigned for 58 years (1737—1795). However, the Birons, were forced to leave their throne for long periods. As regards the Duchy's constitution, the reign of the Kettlers may be divided into two periods: (1) the time before 1618 when a statute was adopted prescribing that Duke Frederic should receive confirmation of his status from the Landtag and the Polish king; and (2) the period ending with the death of the last of the dynasty of the Duchy's founder and last Master of the Livonian Order.

In our study of the destinies of the Latvian people, political events in the Duchy are important, but they are not of prime importance. Yet this picture is significant when it covers a long period. We shall deal with



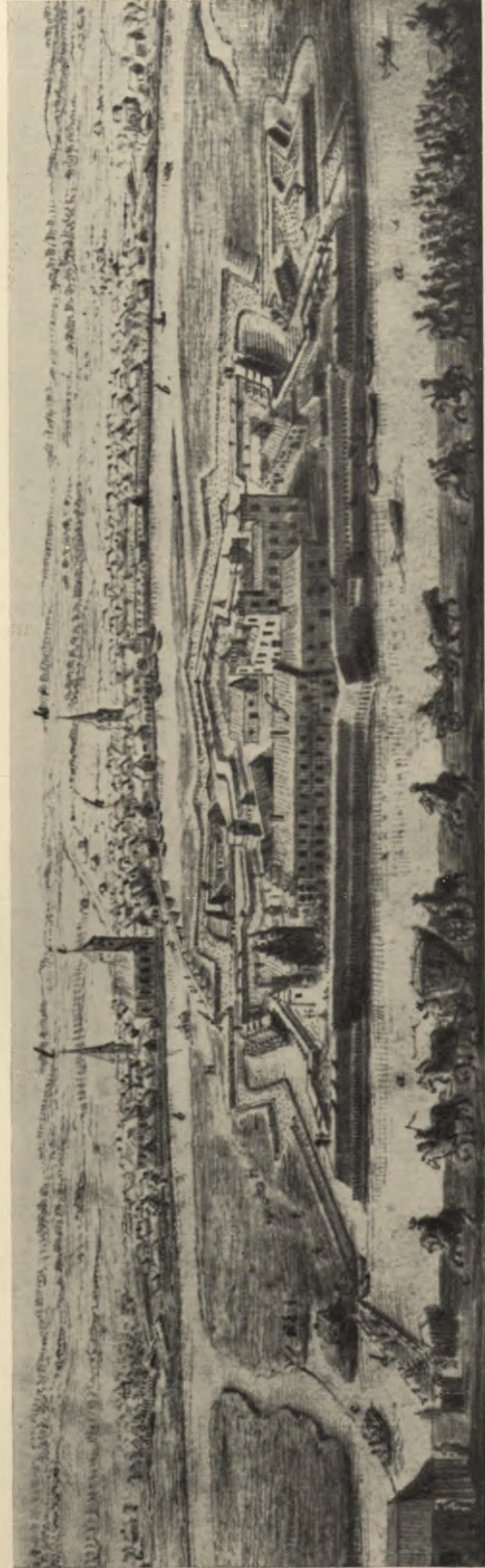
The crossing of the Daugava river on 9 July 1701 at Rīga. In the foreground Major General Karl Magnus Stuart, the most outstanding fortification officer of Charles XII of Sweden, Governor of Kurzeme 1701—03. (a) city of Rīga, (b) the Daugava river, (c) the Cobron Fort on the left bank of the Daugava facing the city, (d) Swedish units crossing the Daugava in boats.



The Pamuša Manor in 1702. (A detail of battle picture on the Mūsa (d) river). The picture shows the timber buildings of the Pamuša Manor, grouped around the living house (a). The drying-kiln has been built at some distance from the house to insure fire protection. Split-rail fence around the buildings.



Liepāja around 1702. (a) The Baltic Sea, (b) the Lake of Liepāja, (c) the harbour canal, (d) place of silted-up old outlet of the lake, (e) in the right corner — old destroyed forts at the outlet, where Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden landed, (f) at the harbour canal — the forts built by the Swedish Major General K. M. Stuart, (g) in the centre — the city of Liepāja, (k) left-hand upper corner — the city of Grobiņa.



Jelgava around 1702. (a) the Lielupe river, (b) Driksa, a branch of Lielupe, (c) in the foreground — the highway to Rīga, (d) bridge across Lielupe, (e) ferry by the bridge, (f) the Castle of Jelgava (cf. illustration on page 246) on an island formed by Lielupe and Driksa, (g) new fortifications round the castle buildings, built by K. M. Stuart, (h) the city of Jelgava on the left bank of Driksa, (i) the German Church, (k) the Latvian Church, (l) the Catholic Church.

three of Kurland's ten dukes. All three deserve the attention of a student of general European history. Their names are Gotthard Kettler (1562—1587), Jacob Kettler (1642—1684), and Ernst Johann Biron (1737—1741 and 1763—1769).

The Duchy's major political developments were briefly as follows. When Gotthard Kettler, the last Master of the Livonian Order, became the first Duke of Kurland, he found that certain areas of the Duchy's territory were not under his jurisdiction. The Grobiņa district, with the port of Liepāja, had been mortgaged by the Order to the Dukes of Prussia. Not until the beginning of the following century was the mortgage released, and the Grobiņa district joined once again to the Duchy. The Piltene area was a similar case. Its lord was Magnus, a would-be king of Livonia. After his death (1583) the area was claimed by both the Danes and the Poles. The dispute between the two ended only when Piltene was incorporated with the Duchy early in the 17th century.

Territorial questions were thus eventually settled. Internal administration and state power, however, were not infrequently subjected to serious strains and harmful influences as illustrated by the case of the two brothers Barons Nolde. They were condemned to death in 1615 by Duke William, who as a result was forced into exile. The arrogant Kurish nobility adopted an irreconcilable and frequently threatening attitude towards the Dukes. The saying "nobody is a prophet in his own country" describes their lack of respect for one of their own number as they referred to the Kettler dynasty, which had recently immigrated from Germany. The nobles were almost invariably backed by Warsaw who viewed with envy the gradual consolidation of the Duchy. Poland never renounced her aim of incorporating Kurland. The internal strife went on for years. Violent at the outset, it subsided during the last years of the Duchy when the nobility, seeking their way to St. Petersburg, gradually acquired the submissive mentality of courtiers. Chronologically, the "Golden Age"—the reign of Duke Jacob, Gotthard's grandson,—came in the middle. Jacob knew well how to develop his country's economic resources and was clever enough to make use of the psychic attitude of his industrious and intelligent people, achieving for his Duchy international prestige which was greater than its ability to resist the crushing blows of powerful neighbours.

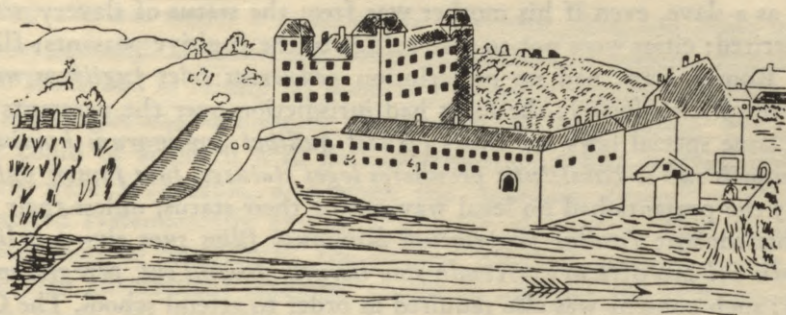
During the reign of Gotthard, the first Duke, we note the promulgation of various legislative and administrative acts regulating relations between the central government and the nobility, and further regulations concerning the peasantry. In 1570 Gotthard conceded and published Nobility Privileges (*Privilegia Nobilitati concessa*) which were reaffirmed in 1581. This act gave the nobles not only vast prerogatives in relation

to the central government, but also an almost absolute power over their peasants. The latter were made the full property of their lords and a direct object of their power. Former fiefs of vassals became overnight practically unalienable private property, subject to inheritance and other ownership laws. The nobles were exempted from taxes and from other obligations towards the central power, except that of doing military service. They had the right to engage in commerce, distill spirits, brew beer, hunt, fish, build flour mills, run taverns and the like. In this "Paradise of the Nobles", as Kurland was called, not only economic but also—as we shall see below from contemporary documents,—moral resistance was shown by the peasants to the barons, as their position compared unfavourably with that of their more fortunate brethren, the crown-land peasants. Yet according to the "Privileges", the country was a "social paradise", and Par. 5 claimed that, "freedom, justice, good habits, etc." (*Immunität, Herrlichkeit, Gerechtigkeit, vernünftige Gewohnheit, löbliche Gebräuche, Willkür, etc.*) prevailed.

Lacking actual political power, Duke Gotthard devoted his energy to religious and educational matters. The Church Statute of 1570 (*Kirchenordnung*), referred to in chapter IX, reflects the Duke's Christian ardour and his dissatisfaction with the existing conditions; he bitterly reproached



The castle and part of the town of Jelgava in 1703. Jelgava Castle, which, like Rīga Castle (see p. 142), was erected at the time of Manheim, Master of the Order, on the site where in 1265, a timber castle had been built by Master Konrad von Mandern, was pulled down in the 18th century when the building of a new castle was begun.



Kuldiga Castle in 1729. The castle, which was built between 1242 and 1245, was at first called Jesus Castle. Later the new name was adopted from the Kurish castle at Old-Kuldiga.

landlords who oppressed the farmers. He made a decision calling for the building of 70 churches, as well as schools and poor-houses. Not all the plans were still-born by any means, although few were carried out to the full.

The reigns of Gotthard's two sons, Frederic and William, were full of tension and strain, and during William's reign the conflict with the nobility came to a head. This conflict was ended when Poland intervened in favour of the nobility and brought about its complete victory which was given legal form (*Formula regiminis* and *Statuta curlandica* or *iura et leges in usum nobilitatis curlandicae*) in 1617. Both documents were prepared by a specially appointed Polish committee.

The first of these legislative acts was the Constitution of the Duchy. It gave practically the entire executive power to a six-man supreme Council, including four members from the nobility without whose consent the Duke could not make any important decisions. Jurisdiction remained with the nobility, the *Hofgericht* being the supreme court. The second act was a code of civil and criminal laws, arranged in 240 paragraphs (this code remained in force for 250 years, from 1617—1865), which were extremely hard on the peasants of private, baronial manors. This was natural to the ideas of the time and was possible in a country where the nobility occupied an exceptionally powerful position. A German historian, referring to the Duchy's agrarian laws, described it as a country of classical Roman Law. Indeed, the content and terminology of the Code make it appear as the unambiguous expression of complete serfdom. The right of ownership over peasants originally applied to slaves proper and prisoners of war (*prima potestas privata est dominorum in homines proprios sive rurales*); a child born in the territory of a landlord was to come into the

world as a slave, even if his mother was free; the status of slavery was to be inherited; cities were not to give refuge to the fugitive peasants; flight, under Roman Law, had no prescription (*adversus tales fugitivos nullus sit præscriptionis locus*); the lords had jurisdiction over the peasants and might issue special laws for them (*potest quilibet dominorum hominibus suis propriis sub se constitutis peculiare leges statuere, iure tamen publico salvo*); the peasants had no legal way out of their status, unless their lord gave his consent (*nullus propriorum hominum filios suos sive pro literis discendis vel pro officio exercendo sine licentia domini sui, peregre amandabit*); such consent was also required in order to attend school. The Code served a ruling class which had created favourable conditions for itself and which was determined to enjoy and retain its privileges. The Code can be regarded as proof of the exceptional rights of the nobility. The picture would be much gloomier if the conditions had not been somewhat attenuated by the patriarchal relationship between lords and peasants. This was the practice in Kurland where the legal system naturally excited the envy of the Livonian nobles, especially in the period when the Swedish government curtailed their privileges. Livonian police laws, accordingly, show the influence of the Kurish Code, although they are somewhat milder.

By comparison, the position of the peasants of crown lands and the Duke's private estates was much better, both in the theory of the law and in practice. During the 17th century this land covered one-third of the total area of arable land. It was administered by the Commercial Board which gave the peasants some protection against leaseholders and government officials. The farmers had the right to submit complaints. Land management methods changed during the two centuries of the Duchy's existence for, at the outset, the bulk of the land was worked by individual leaseholders but later it became centrally administered. A Baltic German historian describes the over-all situation as follows: "The peasants' age-old rights to the land they tilled were never entirely abolished; they existed in the peasants' minds, and were respected by the Duke's government. The crown-land peasants retained certain rights of inheriting their farms according to custom and tradition, if not law."² As elsewhere, conditions grew worse at the end of the 18th century, and the peasants began to suffer greater oppression.

Two decades in the middle of the two hundred-year period of its existence brought to the small Duchy prosperity and fame. Under Duke Jacob, an outstanding organizer, it won international prestige, as may be seen from treaties concluded with western European countries, including England and France. A favourable factor was the opportunity to

develop overseas trade; a considerable merchant fleet was built up and colonies founded. Mercantilism was at its height, and within a few decades Jacob succeeded in raising his country's industry and economy to a high level, as taught and required by this doctrine of mercantilism. He showed what could be achieved with national resources, when geographical conditions were favourable, and when the resources themselves were administered systematically and with a unity of purpose. First he turned his attention to agriculture, the natural basis of national wealth. The Duke, like an efficient landlord, sought to improve the management of crown lands. He introduced modern methods of cultivation, drainage, seed selection, and the like. As a result, Kurland, a traditional grain exporter, also became an exporter of animal products, such as meat, butter, fat and wool. Farm yields rose considerably. At the same time Jacob spared no effort to create and promote various industries which also added to the country's wealth. He founded an iron industry, based first on domestic bog-ore, but later, as the requirements grew, on imported Swedish ore. A steel industry developed in the capital, and other branches of industry gradually came into being, such as gunpowder plants, arms factories, glass and soap factories, paper and textile mills and workshops for the manufacture of sails and rigging. Sawmills appeared in the forest districts. Industrial statute workers were chiefly recruited among crownland peasants. Specialists and skilled labour were first imported, but later local inhabitants were trained and largely replaced the foreigners. Realizing Kurland's advantageous geographical position, in particular the importance of the ports of Liepāja and Ventspils, Duke Jacob built an impressive merchant fleet. During the period of prosperity, this fleet numbered 60 big ships to be convoyed by frigates. The exact figures were as follows: 44 armed and 15 unarmed men-of-war, 60 big merchant ships, and in addition a number of smaller vessels. Denmark had only 20 men-of-war at that time, Sweden 30 and France 18. A contemporary source³ states that the Kurish shipyards built altogether 59 men-of-war armed with a total of 1,416 cannon. This number was equal to 58% of the Invincible Armada and 37% of the British Navy of Cromwell. Like Tsar Peter of Russia, Jacob maintained close relations with the Netherlands. He also travelled extensively in western Europe to study and, according to his own statement, he cherished hopes of making his Duchy "a second eastern Netherlands." The Dutch were anything but pleased at this new competitor and called him the Skipper Duke (*Haertogh Schipper*). His ships sailed under a flag which had a black crayfish on a red field. They were built in his own shipyards, which also constructed vessels for England and Venice. Foreign trade was promoted by special agents, *i.e.* consuls. Jacob had diplomatic and consular agents in Stockholm, Königsberg, Danzig,



Duke Jacob of Kurland.

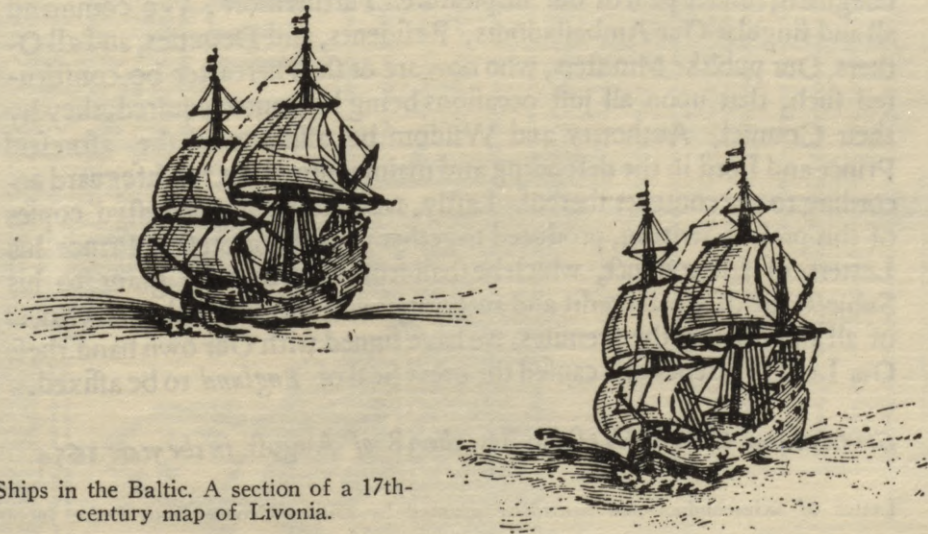
Stettin, Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsingør (Elsinore), Bergen, Oslo, Trondheim, Hamburg, Medemlik, Amsterdam, the Hague, La Rochelle, London, Newcastle, Bordeaux, Nantes, Lisbon, Madrid, Marseilles, Genoa, Venice, Vienna, Regensburg and elsewhere.⁴ The culminating point of this imposing economic policy was the foundation of two colonies on the Atlantic sea-board. One was the island of St. Andrew with adjacent areas at the mouth of Gambia on Africa's west coast, and the other the island of Tobago in the West Indies. These colonies were partly settled by Latvian colonists, and they produced tropical products such as sugar, coffee and spices, not only for the domestic requirements of Kurland, but also for export to Poland, Russia and Sweden.

Intensification of agriculture and expansion of trade and industry, as well as work in the new industrial plants and on improving communications, certainly involved an additional burden on the Latvian peasants. However, the general upward trend of the national economy was bound to improve, and in the long run so was the economic position of the rural population. The quick beat of economic life also brought ideas of freedom and a spirit of enterprise and daring. More than a few peasants acquired skill and became foremen, master workers and independent craftsmen, occupying positions in the army, navy and the colonies. They brought new ideas and views, and a new spirit to their countrymen. This spirit was chiefly nourished by the sea which had been barred to the Latvians by the Hanse and the Order. But now the Latvians used to the full their new opportunities. They worked hard to achieve personal success,

as is shown by contemporary documents. One of these reveals that by the middle of the 17th century Jacob offered to send to the Pope 24,000 Latvian sailors.⁵

These documents also suggest the existence of a kind of cordial understanding between the Duke and his Latvian subjects. When Sweden invaded Kurland, the Latvian peasants rose to fight for their Duke. They did not flee, as farmers in some districts of Livonia had done at the approach of Russian troops a century or so earlier. In 1660, when Jacob returned from exile after the Peace of Oliva, he was met in Rīga, some ten miles outside the Duchy's territory, by a crowd of "his peasants". In turn Jacob seems to have favourably considered—in the spirit of the day, to be sure—a solution for the economic and social problems of the farming population. A French traveller relates that in the Ducal Palace at Jelgava he had admired a large-size mural which depicted Latvian national costumes worn in the different areas of the Duchy. The Duke had this painting constantly before his eyes.

Duke Jacob commanded high authority and respect in his country, and tried to level out the old grudges with the nobility. His personal influence helped him to succeed. However, the strained relations with Poland continued. Both parties had secret aims: the Duke was consolidating his country and nurtured plans of throwing off Polish supremacy; Poland, in turn, worked to turn the protectorate into an integral part of the Polish Kingdom. We do not know what this clash of interests would have led to if a new military conflict had not arisen between Sweden and



Ships in the Baltic. A section of a 17th-century map of Livonia.



Our *Liver* Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of *England, Scotland & Ireland, &c.* To all & singular Our Admirals, Generals, Governors, Collonels, Captains, and Officers, as also to all and every Our Ambassadors, Residents, Deputies, and Publike Ministers, and all Others herein concerned, We by these presents declare and signifie, That wheras the most high Prince and Lord *James* in *Livonia*, Duke of *Curland* and *Semigall*, To the end he might provide for the peace and safety of his People and Subjects, and timely secure them from the troubles, and calamities which might hereafter ensue, hath by the noble Gentleman *John Bretislaw Mislík*, Baron of *Hirssof*, his Agent and Minister, beseeched Us to grant him Our Letters of *Safeguard, Exemption* and *Neutrality* in full and ample form. We being moved with the Justice and equity of his request, have freely given and granted the said *Safeguard, Exemption* and *Neutrality* as desired, whertore our Will and Command is, That all & singular imployed in the services of this Commonwealth of what quality and condition soever they be, do quietly permit and suffer the aforesaid Prince and Lord *James* in *Livonia* Duke of *Curland* and *Semigal*, together with all his Dukedomes, Territories and Dominions, and all thereto belonging, as also his Subjects and Inhabitants to live and act, without impeachment or Molestation, and freely to use and exercise their Trade and commerce, both at Land at Sea, and in all places to treat them as Friends, and without let, or hurt to suffer them to use and enjoy the benefit of this Our safeguard, under pain of our displeasure. Furthermore, We command all and singular Our Ambassadors, Residents, and Deputies, and all Others, Our publike Ministers, who now are or shall hereafter be constituted such, that upon all just occasions, being hereunto required, they by their Counsel, Authority and Wisdom be assistant to the aforesaid Prince and Lord in the defending and maintaining this Our safeguard according to the contents thereof. Lastly, we comand that attested copies of this present writing, produced together with the aforesaid Prince his Letters of safe conduct, which he shall from time to time grant to his Subjects, be of equal credit and authority with the original. In witness of all and singular the premises, we have signed with Our own hand, these Our Letters patents, and caused the great Seal of *England* to be affixed.

Given at Our Court at Westminster, the 28 of August, in the year 1654.

Letter of safe-conduct and neutrality granted by Oliver Cromwell to Duke Jacob of Kurland in 1654.

DECLARATION



*Protection Rei publicae Angliae, Scotiae, & Hiberniae. De Omnibus et singulis iuris Rei publicae membris & Subditis, pro-
seruam Admiralis, Thesaurarius Generalibus, Praefectis, Tribunis, Capitanis, necnon Capitulis Residentibus, Populatis, & Ministris, &
Publicis alijs, quibuscumque quorum interest, per presentes significamus, Quod cum Celsissimus Princeps ac Dominus*

*Jacobus in Scotia Curia & Scygallica Dux, Rex per suos ad Nos, Illustres diversos temporibus obitus regnerit, illi
liberam eius ultramque Linciam Navigationem et Commercia terra maris, exercere, potestatem in solam formam concederemus. Nos
certis rationibus ad id ducti, Concessimus, & vigore presentium Concedimus praefecto Principi ac Dominis, Jacobo in Europa, Cap-
itania & Scygallica Duci, hanc amplam facultatem potestatem & libertatem obsequendi, & Commercia exercendi, tam eis quam*

*ultra Eandem in quibuscumque Terraribus, & Dominij Partibus qua tenent Principibus huius Rei publicae Confulendo, hactenus concessa, sicut aut deinceps concedetur,
Salvo praeter his Rei publicae Capitis & Status. Quare mandamus, & volumus ut Omnes & singuli in Nostra Re publica et sub ea capazung, traditio-
nis & dignitatis sint, praedicti Principes ac Dominij Partibus, necnon ad nos per litteras libere agere, et commercia sua praedicta modo exercere permittant, & illis ut ante
eo ubi habeant, & hoc Nostra Regia littera maxime et incommode uti praesens concedant, sub penae Indignationis Nostrae.*

*et singulis aspernas memoratis Partibus, Officialibus iam constitutis, vel impoiterum constituendis, ut illa, omnia, Decretum, iustitiam & honestas dicto Principi ac Domino, In-
cho in Curia Curia & Scygallica Duci, regali in vigore & affectu tenent hoc privilegium, quocumque Contentis mutari, & aptis Consilio pro vicibus gestant auctoritate,
& prudentia prout.*

*Denique C. mandamus ut hoc Nostrum Excerptum in Capis Ordinalis cum supra dicti Principibus Scygallica Conductus Subditis suis
Cumque pari cum Antiquo & Originali auctoritate & sibi quodlibet. In quorum omnium & singularum scilicet & auctoritatem has Veritas Nostras Potentia
propria manu signaverunt, sigillum ipsum Anglica Sigillum apponi fecimus. Dab: in Palatio Nostra Praetoria Regi Soli diebus Aprilis. Anno millesimo
Sexcentesimo Quingentesimo Sextimo.*

Publi-



Commercial and shipping treaty, concluded in 1657 between Oliver Cromwell and Duke Jacob.



An old farm house in Kurzeme. Early Latvian farm-houses were built of round or square timbers and thatched with straw, reeds or wood bark. The middle of the house was occupied by a section known as the *nams*, i. e. a room with a hearth. On either side, separated from the *nams* was a heated living room.



An ancient wooden ladle, carved of one piece, preserved in the Peniķis family (a Kurish freemen family). In the background, the family's coat-of-arms, painted on wood. Such boards with coats-of-arms were displayed, fastened to poles, in the court-yards of the freemen's farms.



Map 22. The Duchy of Kurland, its colonies, and the sea routes of the Duke's ships.

Poland, which ended in the humiliation of Poland and seriously threatened the Duchy's existence. After the Peace of Oliva conditions in Kurland changed. The country had suffered serious damage and had to renounce much of Jacob's lofty foreign policy. The Duke himself, however, after his return from exile displayed admirable energy in his endeavours to reconstruct his country, making the best of a difficult situation and reviving the creative factors which had been scattered or lost during the war.

In order to understand the international problems connected with the Duchy's short period of collapse, we must, however, briefly consider the political horizon from the specific point of view of this small political unit which, seemingly helpless, still managed to summon sufficient strength to survive the clash between the growing demands and aspirations of powerful and restless neighbours.

During the Russian wars, which brought so much horror to Livonia in the 16th century, Kurland remained untouched. Ivan IV of Russia informed Duke Gotthard that this time, for strategic reasons, he did not intend to touch "God's Little Land." Further, the Swedish—Polish War at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries was chiefly waged in Livonia. However, when Charles IX and the Polish Hetman Chodkiewicz clashed on 27 September 1605 at the battle of Salaspils, a unit of 300 Kurish

nobles, headed by Duke Frederic, fought on the Polish side; fully armed, they swam their horses across the Daugava and, as Chodkiewicz stated in his report to the Polish King, made a charge against the Swedes "at the decisive moment, thus showing their loyalty to Your Majesty." The subsequent conquest of Livonia by Gustavus II Adolphus did not directly affect Kurland. The Polish Prince Radziwill did not dare to cross the Daugava in order to rescue besieged Rīga, and the Swedes, after taking Rīga, were weakened by the effort and unable to extend military operations beyond the territory they had already conquered.

In 1655, Charles X, who is reported to have said of Jacob that "he was too strong for a duke, and too poor and weak for a king," invaded Poland with the undisguised aim of completing the Swedish circle round the Baltic Sea. Taking advantage of Poland's heavy engagement against the Cossacks, he conquered Warsaw and Cracow. However, as was later to occur under Charles XII, his success gave rise to an anti-Swedish coalition, headed by Denmark. Brandenburg deserted to the enemy, and Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich marched on Rīga. This time, totally encircled, Kurland could not remain untouched. Despite Jacob's desperate attempts and in violation of the Swedish General Douglas's word of honour, Kurland's capital was treacherously assailed, captured and looted (1658). The Duke was taken as a prisoner to Rīga and later to Ivangorod. He was allowed to return only after the Treaty of Oliva (1660) to find that little was left of all he had tried to build up over twenty years. However, with much energy, he at once started the work of rehabilitation. But his colonies overseas were lost for ever by a treaty of 17 November 1664 with Charles II of England.

The decline of the Kettler dynasty coincided with Russia's increased pressure in the Baltic area, a pressure which became stronger after the Great Northern War with its fatal issue for Sweden. However, Poland had not yet recuperated, and the Russia of Peter I, weakened by her exertions during the war, was unable to extend its control beyond the Daugava which again was to mark the frontier. Developments stopped half way. In other words, Kurland remained unmolested for almost another century. Russian infiltration was, however, intensified. Among the many dukes of the 18th century who were involved in petty local intrigues and plots—manœvered at a distance by the Russian, Prussian and Polish courts—stood Duke Biron. In the story of his life, so rich in sudden changes, leading to the summits of fame and to the abyss of misery, is revealed the agony of the Duchy, which eventually became a playball of the Court at St. Petersburg which was then dominated by Empresses and favourites. The reign of Jacob's son, Frederic Casimir (1682—1698) marked the decline of the Duke's economic power in the country. After

his death there was confusion, and disputes broke out concerning the succession to the throne. Parallel to the growth in influence and power of the nobility foreign infiltration increased. When Ferdinand, the last Kettler, died in 1737, there were dozens of pretenders to the throne of the small but alluring Duchy. Ernst Biron, backed by Anna, Empress of



Duke Jacob's fort in Gambia in 1732.

Russia and a widow of an earlier Duke of Kurland, naturally won the race both for political and sentimental reasons, and, as Anna's favourite, he also became in fact the absolute ruler of Russia. His lofty mind and grandseigneur habits are reflected in the magnificent buildings with which he adorned his native country. One was the grandiose Ducal Palace at Jelgava, designed and built by the famous Italian architect Rastrelli who also constructed the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. When Empress Anna died, Biron's innumerable enemies agreed to exile him to Siberia. Empress Elizabeth had him subsequently transferred to Yaroslavl. His exile lasted over twenty years, and during that time the Duchy was without a ruler and subject to the intrigues of the nobility who never tired of invoking feudal rights in defence of their privileges. Biron was recalled from exile by Peter III (1761), while Empress Catherine restored his ducal rights in 1763. In the international political game this meant above all that Russia wished to counterbalance the Polish influence in Kurland which remained formally tied to Poland as a vassal state. The last years of Biron's reign were filled with the struggle against the nobility.

The last Duke of Kurland, Ernst Biron's son Peter (1769—1795) was forced to continue this fight relentlessly. One of the results—unfavourable for the Duke—was the Act of 1776 by which fiefs were recognized private property. The Russian government took advantage of internal dissensions and intensified its infiltration of the country. When Poland collapsed, Peter, naturally, had to resign. The pertinent document, addressed to the Russian Empress stated *inter alia* that Kurland's incorporation with Russia "will give it lasting happiness . . . and to ourselves a long-hoped-for rest." Of the endeavours of Kurland's last duke we note the foundation of his Academia Petrina (1775); repeatedly reorganized it became eventually, in the 19th century, one of the best grammar schools in that part of Europe. This Alma Mater, the Jelgava Gymnasium, has given education to many prominent Latvians, Germans, Lithuanians and Poles.

The economic and social position of the Latvian peasants deteriorated throughout the 18th century along the lines worked out by the preceding century. This trend prevailed up to the changes brought about by the French Revolution.

The difference between the status of peasants of crown-lands and those of baronial estates remained. Still, the Kurland peasant lived in better conditions and was better off than his brothers in Livonia. This was true not only of the crown-land peasants but of the baronial peasants in Kurland, whose burden of taxes and obligations was considerably lighter, and whose statute work duties were registered in a more orderly manner than was the case with the peasants of private manors in Livonia. The differ-

ence between Kurland and Livonia in this respect was partly due to the fertility of the former's soil, especially in the central part of the Zemgale plain. Moreover, Kurland suffered much less from war and devastation than did Livonia which during three consecutive centuries (16th—18th) was almost constantly a battle ground.

Latvian culture and literature in Kurland developed along different lines than it did on the Daugava's northern bank. We have quoted above passages of texts which come from Kurland, and now we shall therefore limit our study to typically Kurish authors, pointing to some characteristics of a few writers.

In the two preceding chapters we treated the conditions in which Latvian literature originated at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. We shall now deal, in brief, with two masters of the Latvian language who raised it to unparelled heights of literary idiom: G. Mancelius (1593—1654) and C. Fürecker (died in 1684). Both were Germans, born in Kurland of pastors' families in which one can trace a certain Latvian literary tradition. This is especially true of Mancelius. Both since childhood had been in close contact with the Latvian people, whose language they knew perfectly. Both were true sons of their land, which is reflected in their works and style. We have clear and precise biographical data on Mancelius who liked to add to his name the appellation "Semigallus". He studied in Germany, served as a pastor in two places in Kurland and as Pastor Primarius in Tartu (Dorpat); in 1632 he became professor at the newly established University of Tartu. In 1636 he became head of this university. In 1637, following a call from the Duke of Kurland, he became Jacob's Court Pastor and held this position until his death. It is significant that the Duke evidently gathered to his court persons who not only bore the deserving name of a Mancelius, but who were also familiar with local conditions and who were friends of the Latvians.

Fürecker's life is shrouded in mystery. Except for a few data in his published works, we have not a single accurate piece of information about his life and work. We possess only a few vague references to all kinds of trouble and sickness in his last years.

Before considering Mancelius's literary works which, as a philologist said a century or so later, "already magnificently reflect the splendour of the Latvian language" (*e quibus egregie iam lettica lingua refulget*), we must try to place him in his true position in Latvian literature. In the foregoing chapters we saw hurrying past our mental eye multifarious descriptions of and judgements on the Latvians. They all originated with foreigners. Even if gathered and compiled with much love, this material would produce a picture of the Latvian people which would not only be incomplete but also twisted, caricatured, like one in a distorting mirror,

wretched and misleading; a horrific contrast to the *dainas* (folksongs) with their high morality and artistic taste. Mancelius's great and lasting merit is that he was the first to conjure up before our eyes and to show us through the lens of his stern virile style contemporary Latvian characters. He shows them to be calm and proud, often ironical, staunchly enduring difficulties which beset them; he shows their belief in their absolute national distinction from the landlords; and he shows us their defects. He shows everything in the true spirit of the day. We see a strong and hardy race. Mancelius thus gives a simple explanation of their age-long resistance which theorists of the often praised *Kulturträgetum*, who talked lightly of conditions in the country and other things of minor importance, failed to understand.

We cannot give much space to quotations, and so we will only quote a few passages from Mancelius's sermons. Here is a concluding passage of one of them which refers to the Muscovite wars of the 16th century: "In this war men still show mercy, but then you could not obtain mercy even if you fell on your knees and begged the dog-guard and the rag-clad monster-spindle (the Muscovite). You had to die an unknown death." We see a man of Zemgale retaining his dignity in misery and misfortune.

Another passage describes popular customs and refers to Midsummer (in Latvian *Jāņi*). Mancelius writes: "Now my good friends, let us, with God's aid, begin the Jāņi-day. Let us not be as yesterday when men and women made merry, gathering various flowers and herbs in the forests and fields, coming home and adorning gates and all buildings inside and outside with oak leaves and flowers, believing that thereby they could chase away wizards and witches. They fastened special flowers to the wall as a token of luck: if the flower withers during the night, the owner of the house will die during the year, and if the flower remains fresh and blossoms he will live. Having done such rich work, they light a big Midsummer fire, and dance around it, drinking the whole night as if at a wedding."

For Latvians Mancelius's principal works are his dictionary and collections of sermons.⁶

Mancelius discovered and developed Latvian prose. Fürecker did a similar service for Latvian poetry; he was the first Latvian poet. As was the spirit of those days he wrote Latvian church songs. Already Fürecker's first translation and particularly his well-versified original songs broke the ice which had gathered around the imperfect and clumsy earlier "songs". A contemporary clergyman stated that the Latvians were quick to learn both the words and the music for Fürecker's songs in church. Their taste, refined by the *dainas*, made them easily grasp the spirit and the pietist form of these spiritual songs. Fürecker's first songs were published

Evangelium am Sontage Trinitatis, Joh. 3.

To swāhter Evangelium/ka Nicodemus ar Christo run-
nais gr/ aprarta taß Evangelists Jahnis sawā Ghras-
mata tresschā Weetā/und stann tee Wahrdis jehssa Wale-
loda tah:



Nur by weens Zillwāhr no
teem Wariseereem/ Wahrda Nicode-
mus/weens Wiriseneex teem Juddo-
Laudeem/taß nahzeph Jesu/Mackty/
und saktja us to: Meister/ mehß sin-
nam / ka tu esh weens Mahzetais no Deewu nah-
Ander Theil. A zis/

The title page of G. Mancelius's book of sermons, printed in 1654.

in 1672, during his lifetime, but many others were included in the hymn-
book after his death. His other works included translations of fragments
of the Bible, a dictionary and a Latvian grammar. The grammar, a com-

prehensive study, was published in 1685, after the poet's death, as the work of Pastor H. Adolphi.

The path to Latvian poetry, discovered by Fürecker, was followed by others. In 1697 J. Wischmann compiled the first Latvian "poetical art".⁷ At the same time we see the first tentative efforts of several young poets, including one of Latvian origin. Then came the calamitous Great Northern War which threw the country back to conditions which prevailed in earlier decades. Not all were as fortunate as Glück had been.

Aside from the publications mentioned above stand the works of P. Einhorn (died in 1655), who was for a long time Superintendent General of the Church in Kurland. Because of his specialized interests he may be considered a pioneer in the work which led to the discovery of Latvian folklore, particularly popular beliefs and traditions. His first two works appeared in Rīga in 1627. In the fashion of the day, they carried lengthy titles; outspoken in their aims, highly polemic in style, they were meant to fight "the ridiculous superstitions of the simple people". Actually they reveal that the age-old cosmogony of the Baltic peoples was most widely spread among the Latvians—as late as the 17th century! P. Einhorn's third work,⁸ published in Rīga in 1630, was intended to be a guide to the clergymen under his supervision. This small collection contains numerous characteristic notes which have a deeply interesting historical background. Speaking of the Latvian "Mothers", Einhorn says: "Even to-day they invoke their gods and goddesses; he who doubts it should listen to what they say, especially when going to work in the forest, fields or gardens, or when setting out on a journey; listen how they invoke and worship forest gods and goddesses, the Mother of the Fields, the Mother or Goddess of Gardens, the Goddess of the Road; one should listen to the songs they sing to their gods in the way real hymns are sung (*peculiares hymnos Deorum*)."⁹ This passage is not an isolated case. Einhorn's other works refer to a peculiar "science" which the Latvians—like the old Etruscans—had developed, and which comprised predictions, beliefs, observations of domestic and wild animals, and the like.

The preachers of the Christian faith, *i.e.* the pastors to whom Einhorn addressed his sensible advice, often failed, in his opinion, to choose the right method to fight these old traditions. Threats and violence—swearing, name-calling and ear-boxing produced a contrary effect. As Einhorn states, "the people became stubborn" and thus their character was rendered worse. The Latvians "had nasty ideas" of the Germans, they were "cunning, mendacious, treacherous, evil-minded, derisive, unfair, arrogant and cryptical; outwardly they feign to be humble and submissive, but this is just simulation, derision and insolence, since as soon as they have turned their backs, they would utter the most wicked remarks about the Ger-



Peasants from Kurzeme about 1740. The woman is shown wearing a characteristic folk-costume, a high headwear, broadening at the top (similar to the Nica fillet), and about her shoulders a large shawl, fastened in front with a "great-brooch". The man wears a coat reaching to the knees, which is of the "Polish cut", and on his head, a broad-brimmed hat.

mans and speak of them with an irony which is astounding." A passage of Mancelius's sermon is characteristic; having listened to a sermon of a German pastor, the Latvian is reported to have said of it: "God alone knows what this German ass is talking about!"

The conclusions drawn by Einhorn as the supreme Church administrator of the Duchy are by no means more encouraging. Churches were few, most of them in the cities and castles. According to the report on visitations in 1566, 1572 and later there were only a few wooden chapels in the country. Little wonder that the Latvians with their artistic, moral and religious feelings, as expressed in the *dainas*, preferred their own "hymns of gods".

It will not be superfluous to mention the vitality of these old beliefs or cults. Dr. Kleijntjens⁹ puts forward much evidence in support of this assertion. Thus in I, page 355 (c. 1673) we find the story about the old lime-tree (*extraordinariae proceritatis tilia*) in Kurland, which was used as a place of worship, and on page 358 are mentioned similar places of worship in the Lubāna region; finally we may quote another passage on page

391, which refers to the year 1725, and after, *i.e.* about a century after Einhorn: *Iam crassa in quibusdem Livoniae angulis veri Numinis inter agrestes reperitur ignorantia, ut praeter Penates, Dryades, Nereides et caetera monstra deorum, pecoribus etiam suum cuique speciei assignantes, praepositos colent deastros. Auditus est illic praeses equorum Usins, dea pecudum Biruta, genius suum quidam Tenis orcinianis commentis celebrari.*

Einhorn's outstanding work is his *Latvian History*.¹⁰ It is an invaluable manual of Latvian mythology, broadly conceived and abounding in comparisons with classical mythology and enriched with ideas of the humanistic literature, Einhorn being an admirer and late follower of humanism. This book, one of the richest and most comprehensive sources on the subject, also shows the late survival of the ancient and crude conceptions of the world held by the Latvians. Since the pertinent problems were dealt with in the initial chapters of our book, it only remains to mention the learned pastor's theories of the origin of the Latvian nation. They follow the usual pattern of "theories" which were current in the era of Humanism, especially in Italy and France. Einhorn's theories try to explain "what type of people are the Latvians, how they came to this country, how did all this happen and what is their present situation?" The problem has been set with admirable clarity! Somewhat uncritically and heedlessly, as was the fashion of his time, Einhorn proceeds along admirably broad paths of research, but at times loses his direction in the tangle of parallels and comparisons with the origins and prehistory of other nations.

Einhorn has included in his book a few remarks of other Germans on the education of the Latvians. We reproduce one because we believe it to be characteristic of the ideas prevailing in the 17th century: "Others, finally, consider it undesirable, not because they begrudge it or think it impossible, but because they fear a great danger. They argue: if the Latvians were sent to schools and were made free, they would achieve knowledge, and would read and understand the chronicles and history of this country and would learn there that this land belonged to them since times immemorial, and that they had been the masters here, that the Germans deprived them of this land, oppressed them, treated them ruthlessly, and the like. Then they would try to free themselves of this servitude and strive to regain their old position in their country. Then they would certainly reach a secret understanding, start an insurrection, annihilate the Germans in terrible massacres, and drive them out. They did this under the Order when they repeatedly tried to attack the Germans, using cunning and displaying great skill, and they would have reached their ends, if their evil design had not been disclosed by their own people, as we hear

and read in the local chronicles. When, for instance, in modern times, the span of a lifetime ago, a German read to them passages of the Livonian chronicle, explaining to them in their own language that this country had formerly belonged to them, and that the Germans had reduced them to serfdom and dependence, they discussed the question among themselves and reached the conclusion that it was desirable to inform their brothers so that they could assemble from all parts of the country, assail the Germans and drive them out . . ."¹¹



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* Wrought-iron trellis with Duke Johann Biron's initials, from a window of Jelgava Castle.



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XII

THE RUSSIANS AND THE BALTIC

In March 1697 the Tsar of Russia, Peter I, set out on his way to the Netherlands through Swedish Vidzeme and the Duchy of Kurland. The Swedish Governor, E. Dahlberg, received him and lodged about 250 persons of his retinue. The reception was perfectly correct and in keeping with the Tsar's way of travelling incognito. However, something offended this Russian autocrat as we learn from what he is reported to have said later, and three years afterwards his supposed indignation was so strong that it came near to being a *casus belli* in the whole of northern and eastern Europe. War did indeed break out a little later in this area—the Great Northern War which lasted for about twenty years. The Grand Dukes of Muscovy, like Peter the Great himself, had all been brought up in the Eastern tradition with a hatred and contempt for Europe as may be seen

* Map 23. Russian expansion towards the west. Crosswise shaded area—Russian territory in 1725. Diagonally shaded area—Russian territorial gains in the period 1725-1795.

from countless diplomatic and commercial reports. It was, then, all the more surprising when it was learnt that Peter I's journey was not only one of a diplomatic but of an educational character. When he arrived in the Netherlands he apprenticed himself to Dutch seamen, who virtually ruled the world's oceans at that time. According to statistics of 1676, the tonnage of the various commercial fleets of the world was as follows: the Netherlands 45 %, Britain 25 %, the Scandinavian Countries 7.5 %, France 6 %, Italy 6 %, Spain 5 %, and the German States 5 %.¹

The time fixed for the journey was most opportune; it coincided with the peace discussions at Ryswick (30 October 1697) and when the clouds for the next conflict, the War of Spanish Succession (1701—1713), were just beginning to gather. It was, in fact, the only moment during the reign of Peter I when he could have visited Europe at peace. The great states in the west were too much absorbed by the question of settling their own conflicts, for these touched upon their vital interests, and the political stage of eastern and northern Europe thus remained free from their influence. The first place here, hitherto, had undoubtedly belonged to Sweden who ruled over the eastern shores of the Baltic and the more important strategic points on the southern shores of this sea, and who vied with the Dutch and the English for trade supremacy there. A privileged situation such as Sweden held was liable to call forth the envy of those nations which it had pushed back from the shores of the Baltic. Hostility between the brother-nations, the Swedes and the Danes, was of long standing; the blow dealt to the pride of Poland by the loss of Livonia was still a recent event, and Brandenburg's far-reaching projects of expansion were not yet definitely known. Surely this was the right moment for the leaders of Muscovy, who had not forgotten the attempts of Ivan IV and Aleksey Mikhailovich, to expand towards the Baltic particularly as their push towards the Sea of Azov in the year 1697 had been crowned with success; and in addition an inland fleet had been built up.

The decisive position of Sweden and the tradition of its great military strength prevented Russia from starting a war; coalitions were, therefore, formed in the same way as coalitions in the west were formed against France. Many years later, after the final defeat of Charles XII the latter had the arrogance and courage to say when he heard of the death of Louis XIV: "Louis XIV is dead but Charles XII is still alive." The three nations that were united by natural ties to fight against Sweden were Denmark, Poland and Russia; the main scenes of action were the territories of Denmark, Poland, Livonia, Ingermanland and Finland, but towards the end of the war Sweden was invaded. After the Treaty of Nystad in 1721 Livonia was given up to Russia: only then did western Europe realize

how great the importance of this *tête de pont* had been, for it had developed in the course of centuries as a bulwark against eastern expansion. And now it was gone and Russia was rapidly concentrating her strength.

The two spheres of the European conflict thus hardly touched each other; the wars they were involved in already demanded all their strength. British diplomacy had always kept a watchful eye on any Continental power which looked as if it might grow too strong; and so in the final phase of the Northern War when Sweden was approaching political and military exhaustion, and when Russia was threatening to become the sole and commanding power in the Baltic Sea, then Britain came to act as an intermediary between these two powers. The Russian army, be it noted, was in Denmark, Mecklenburg and Sweden. A whole series of peace treaties was concluded between the various European states: England concluded a treaty with Sweden on 20 February 1719; Prussia with Sweden on 1 February 1720; Denmark with Sweden on 3 July 1720. Finally the Treaty of Nystad was signed on 10 September 1721 between Russia and Sweden; this treaty was concluded after England had demonstrated her strength in the Baltic, which, however, did not prevent the Russians from making direct attacks on the Swedes in the years 1719, 1720 and 1721 before the treaty was signed.

The main events of the Northern War, the final act of Sweden's military power, were a very rapid conquest of Denmark; the heavy defeat of the Russians at Narva (30 November 1700) from which Peter, according to his own words, learnt much; the brilliant victory of the Swedes over the Poles and Saxons near Rīga (the battle of Spilve on 19 July 1701); and the complete invasion of Poland and Saxony, which ended with the Treaty of Altranstadt on 24 September 1706. At that moment the Swedish King, who was only 23 years old, seemed to be the man to shape the destiny of eastern and Central Europe. But then the tide turned. Charles was defeated at Poltava, fled to Turkey, and finally died at Halden in Norway on 30 November 1718.

Livonia suffered tragically during this war. Indeed it was one of the main reasons for it, as its position along the Baltic coast was an area over which the great powers felt they must have control, and so the country became the main battleground. According to a secret treaty of 1699 the King of Poland was entrusted with the task of starting the war by invading Vidzeme in 1700 with the object of capturing Rīga. But in this he failed. The Tsar, having concluded a treaty with the Turks, began an invasion of Estonia which ended with his defeat at Narva on 30 November 1700. King Augustus of Poland was utterly defeated by Charles XII near Rīga (19 July 1701) who showed his genius and courage once again. The

same year one of the finest of the Vidzeme castles was destroyed—the castle of Koknese. Only half a century earlier this castle had been besieged by Tsar Aleksey who had called it “far too strong . . . the younger brother of our Kremlin . . . the son of the fortress of Smolensk”. One hundred and fifty years earlier one of the humanists of Livonia had celebrated “its thick walls on the green banks of the Daugava”.

After his initial success in Denmark and Estonia, Charles had the choice of either attacking the Poles or the Muscovites. He quickly decided upon the first. He invaded Poland and dethroned his inveterate enemy Augustus II. Charles remained in “these parts” (Poland, Saxony) for seven years; the Tsar was “glad to see him stuck in this swamp of Poland”, as it gave him a breathing space and a chance to reconcentrate his strength. This mistake of Charles decided the fate of Livonia. After their first defeat at Narva the Russians, under the leadership of Sheremetiev, invaded Livonia; Sheremetiev caused great destruction and pressed the defenders hard (29 December 1701 and 18 July 1702)—a fact which called forth great rejoicings in Moscow. The Tsar gave the order to destroy the country completely so that the Swedes should find no support there. This order was carried out by Sheremetiev in a way so systematic and so complete that he was able to write to the Tsar in 1702 that the only undamaged places were the towns of Pernau, Rīga and Reval, and that all the rest had been turned into a desert. The number of local peasants taken as prisoners of war became so large that the Russian Field Marshal had to consider how to provide shelter and guards for them. At the same time in Alūksne the foster-daughter of Pastor Glück was taken prisoner; it was she who was to become after a remarkable series of adventures the morganatic wife of the Tsar and later the Tsarina of Russia—Catherine I.

On 13 July 1704 Tartu fell and on 5 August “the strong and famous town of Narva on the Varangian Sea” also fell, so the report reads. After several defeats in Kurland, the Russians became the rulers of the capital of that Duchy (5 September 1705). Similar operations developed in Finland too, for according to Peter I’s plan Sweden was to be throttled by the invasion of one of its province so organically important to her. Then came the battle of Poltava which made the Tsar the supreme ruler of the whole of eastern Europe and a figure of tremendous importance. In 1709 the Poles assumed that Livonia would be theirs, yet in fact, during the same year, the Russian and Prussian politicians were talking about a partition of Poland itself, and when in 1710 the siege of Rīga commenced no one listened to the demands of the Poles. Immediately after the capture of the town by the Russians one of the representatives of the Tsar wrote with great satisfaction that the riches of Europe would now flow through

this town to Russia, and Archangel would no longer be the only Russian harbour. Thus Livonia, flourishing till of late, was laid waste, snatched from western Europe and annexed to the eastern Empire of the continent.

The work of destruction in Livonia seems to have exceeded the destructive efforts of the Poles at an earlier period. On top of this there followed the plague which killed 60 % of the inhabitants of the countryside, and the majority of the townspeople were forced to wander from place to place begging. The nobility fared no better. Available figures for 1714 show that of all the land belonging to the nobility only 12 % was cultivated, but a census of 1725 shows that 39 % of all the land of Livonia had to be cultivated anew. Of course the few farm hands left had to bear the burden of harder work and heavier taxes. In 1750 taxes—allowing for various changes—were three times as heavy as those in 1624.

The guarantees given to the nobility of Vidzeme by competent Russian representatives at the fall of Riga (4 September 1710) were confirmed by the Treaty of Nystad which demanded of Sweden the surrender to Russia of Vidzeme, Estonia, Ingermanland, the south-eastern corner of Finland and all the islands from Kurland to Viborg. But the Russians also guaranteed to the nobility all their privileges granted by Sigismund Augustus. The ninth paragraph of the treaty promises *de maintenir tous les Habitants des Provinces de Livonie, d'Estonie et d'Oesel, Nobles et Roturiers, les Villes, Magistrats et les Corps des Métiers, dans l'entière jouissance des Privilèges, Coutumes et Prérrogatives, dont ils ont joui sous la Domination du Roi de Suède*; paragraph XI promises justice to those affected by Charles XI land reduction (cf. paragraph X on religious confession, and paragraphs VI, XVI—XIX on trade).² Not only were these promises of Peter I kept but new promises were added based on Russian methods of settling the relations of the landed aristocracy with the peasantry; methods that were used in the Muscovy of those days. These promises of Peter the Great were of decisive importance in the social development of the Baltic Provinces; perhaps they were kept because the Tsar feared an irredentist movement in these provinces which were so valuable to him and which had cost him so much. Thus in 1719 the Governor, Prince Golitsin, issued a proclamation in the name of the Tsar announcing that "deserters and refugees are to be punished by marking their foreheads with a hot iron and cutting off their noses and ears". Other Russian practices soon followed. In 1713 the nobility of Vidzeme were given permission to introduce corporal punishment to be applied at their own discretion when dealing with their peasants; the regulations issued between 1724 and 1736 gave them still greater freedom in

such matters. In 1760 the nobility were allowed to assign peasants for deportation to Siberia; in 1762 an "ukaz" was issued which showed clearly that no law existed which would permit a landowner to be punished for taking the life of his serf—a peasant. In 1765 Catherine II allowed the landowners to deport them directly without first asking for permission from the Russian authorities; and in 1767 another "ukaz" threatened them with corporal punishment and deportation to Siberia for life if they addressed their complaints directly to the Tsarina.

The concessions granted by Peter I to the Baltic nobility may be summed up as follows: (1) at the end of the year 1720 a "restitution" commission replaced the Swedish reduction commission; (2) the area of private manor land which had been decreased through the regulations of Charles XI to 1,021 "ploughs", in 1738 once again attained an area of 3,331 "ploughs", *i.e.* it increased 3.3 times; (3) the relation of the area of state-owned lands to private manor land was 6:1 in 1687, but in 1758 the relation was 1:5; (4) as the Swedes had tried to defend the peasants against the nobility through state owned lands this policy automatically began to lose ground. The whole thing was just one more complete victory for the Baltic landed aristocracy.

Two of the Russian Tsars are called "great"; these are, Peter I and Catherine II. The inhabitants of the shores of the Baltic, the Estonians and the Latvians, remember the reign of these two "great" rulers as the darkest in their history.

Regulations such as have just been mentioned at first aroused feelings of aversion among the members of the landed aristocracy as they provided such a contrast to the humane Swedish government. However, after a time the nobility began to take pleasure in and became accustomed to the idea of unlimited power, and thus in the second half of the 18th century the condition of the peasants in Latvia and Estonia sunk to their lowest level. Of evidence given by foreign observers let us mention that of Le Clerc:³ "Several revolutions in Estonia and Vidzeme have only intensified the arbitrariness of their masters. The landed nobility is everything, they are the state, they are the mother country . . . (their landtags) are concerned with the question of their own freedom, with their own privileges, with the administration of questions concerning only the nobility. All civil and military posts are occupied by the nobility alone; it is the duty of the people to feed their masters . . . The people of Vidzeme are melancholy, phlegmatic; wild, without any upbringing, poor, oppressed, debased, they suffer from the conditions of their life and the severity of the climate; they are in the hands of masters who can sell them, separate them from their wives and families, they fear everything except death . . . yet at the

same time they are not untalented and the women possess spirit and beauty."

Already at the beginning of the 18th century Muscovy started to interfere in an effective way in the politics of the European continent. She reached the shores of the Baltic (Petersburg was founded in 1703) and set foot firmly in Livonia and the important harbour of Riga; towards the end of the 18th century Russia came to be a decisive element in Europe and helped to counteract any influence the French Revolution might have had in the east. Thus gradually two opposing political centres developed; symbolically they could be seen at the "battle of the Nations", in 1813, at Leipzig, where the revolutionary Emperor of France, on the one hand, opposed the three Emperors with leanings towards restoration on the other. The last obstacle that prevented the conservative powers in the east from crystallizing, consolidating and finding real contact among themselves was Poland, an obstacle which was soon to disappear from the stage—it had become superfluous, morally disturbing and offensive. Poland—free and wonderfully liberal in the structure of its state—was now to vanish from the map of Europe. The documents referring to the two last partitions of Poland are in some places so significant and "modern" that we must mention them here.

The official reasons for armed intervention given by the three powerful neighbours of Poland are always the same: disturbances and revolutions in the state. Thus the Treaty of Grodno (13 July 1793),⁴ on the second partition of Poland, begins with an enumeration of facts that are characteristic not only of that period: "Riots and disturbances have arisen in Poland as a consequence of the revolution that was carried out by her government on 3 May 1791 in an arbitrary manner (and they) have as result called forth direct threats to the peace and security of the neighbouring states . . ." And finally: "inviolable peace, union and real friendship will bury the past in utter oblivion . . ." But regardless of this, this *paix inviolable* did not even last for two years! The next treaty on the same matter (Grodno, 5 October 1793) foresaw (art. VIII) the right in "all cases of necessity, by first giving a friendly warning to the Polish government and with its approval, to introduce their own (*i.e.* Russian) armed forces into the territory of the Polish Republic and to station them there, also to provide a rear-guard to stay in the country, in numbers so large as necessity requires."⁵ That was really the end of Poland and it happened a year before Kosciuszko's riot was suppressed when he, as the legend tells us, exclaimed "*finis Poloniae!*" (October 1794).

The official document of the third partition (23 December 1794—3 January 1795) is again instructive as it characterizes the conflicting forces of the time. It refers to "the absolute inability of Poland to create a

strong and watchful government". While the leading figures of the present government "are deeply permeated with the most perverse principles" which "dangerously threaten the peace and security of their neighbours..." But these were the official reasons given for the partition. We gain some idea of what the "great" of those days thought about their own move against Poland when we read a text written by K. Jurgela in which he records a conversation between the French historian Jean Le Rond d'Alembert and the disciple of Voltaire, Frederick the Great, on the question of the first partition of Poland in 1772. When the former on behalf of his King had defined the act as a violation of international rights and moral principles the latter answered with touching candour: "The Empress Catherine and I are a couple of criminals, but I wonder how the Empress-Queen (*i.e.* of Austria) who is so full of religious devotion was able to settle the matter with her father-confessor."⁶

Two centuries before, in a wave of tragic inspiration, Skarga foretold *Finis Poloniae*: "Your squabbles and your fights will lead you to slavery, your freedom will perish and become the laughing-stock of others, you will be the slaves of your enemies and they will place an iron yoke on your neck."

There could be no doubt as to the fate of the Duchy of Kurland, which had for a period of nearly a hundred years been *de facto* the vassal of the Russian imperial court—this, too, was destined to fall like a ripe fruit, for the local landed gentry "were prepared in time to sell this beautiful and luckless province to Russia (*à vendre plus ou moins lâchement à la Russie cette belle et malheureuse province*)", as we see from a secret report written in 1787 by the agent of Count Mirabeau, Baron Nolde.⁷ Now let us turn to some diplomatic documents; to the acts of subjugation of the Duchy of Kurland and Zemgale (its official name), and that of the district of Piltene; to the letter of abdication of the last Duke of Kurland, Peter (these documents are dated 17/28 March 1795); and to the answer of the Empress (15 April 1795) and her "ukaz" concerning the incorporation of the Duchy (6 May 1795). Some phrases taken from these documents will make clear to us the psychological environment in which these events, which were so decisive for the countries on the shores of the Baltic, took place. One of the arguments that appears here is the Polish riot. Mention is made of the fact that "it is impossible for us, for we are too small a state, to exist independently and without the protection of a greater power" (it is the landed gentry that calls itself a state); again it is said that there are "continuous threats to political existence", yet there is "the general and individual happiness that the knowledge of being subjugated to the will of a great power gives..." The answer

of the Empress, in German too, promises, "in giving the word of honour of an Empress," not only freedom of religion for all, but also guarantees to everyone that their legal rights, prerogatives and rights of property will be observed, and all are also to enjoy the rights of Russian citizenship.

As usual, great conflicts of a morally political kind fall in the sphere of social problems, and so it was in this case, the dreadful wars that raged on the European Continent in the 17th and 18th centuries reflected the antagonism of the landed gentry to the absolute power of monarchy, which for purely fiscal reasons, using this word in its widest sense, took the line of defending the peasantry (*Bauernschutz*). This was in accordance with some theories, which at that time were either just being put forward or had attained maturity and acceptance, as had Pufendorf's theory of natural rights.⁸ *Bauernschutz* as a policy was followed by the Swedish kings in Livonia during the last years of their reign, particularly by Charles XI. Thus simply because the Swedish rule sympathized with the peasants many of the nobility supported the enemies of Sweden in Livonia. The well-known Vidzeme emigré R. von Patkul, who was a master of conspiracy, and who served both the Polish King and the Russian Tsar, behaved in a way which typified the attitude of the Livonian landed gentry at that time. Their hopes and intentions were to return to the conditions which existed before 1671, when serfdom, or to use a term of the Roman Law *emphyteusis*, existed. The Tsars of Russia, but particularly Peter I, in accordance with their far-reaching political plans which were, as an historian has pointed out, "to stretch the frontiers of Muscovy to the Baltic Sea . . ." "with their mentality in regard to social questions" made no scruples at all to give to the landed gentry of Livonia the privileges they so persistently demanded. Peter the Great granted such privileges in 1710 and 1721 in order to be able to develop to the utmost his imperialistic plans and commercial schemes. For the peasantry of Vidzeme this meant that their position did not benefit from the "liberal" ideas of the time. Pufendorf and the Age of Enlightenment brought no improvement. Indeed the ideas of the 18th century if they rippled the surface of the social waters, never penetrated down into the depths. It was, then, during the first half of this century that serfdom lay most heavily on the peasants of Vidzeme. Two documents give us an insight into the question: (1) the project of the rights of land (*Landrecht*) drawn up by the commission of the Landtag, 1733—1740, better known as the project of Budberg-Schrader, and (2) the so-called Declaration of Rosen in 1739.

The contents of the latter document are decisive in tone and outlook. Here are some characteristic passages. The Juridical Council of the Russian



This picture shows a peasant from the vicinity of Rīga taking his produce to market. The harness is characteristic of the Baltic area—the side poles are fixed to, and joined by a wooden arc.



Latvian peasants from the Madliena commune. While the men's costumes show the influence of later periods, the character of the women's dresses is determined by very old, possibly prehistoric traditions—a wreath on the head, and a woollen shawl round the shoulders, fastened with a large disc-shaped silver brooch, adorned with red glass pearls (Cf. the young girl's dress in the right-hand corner with the pictures in Plates XV and XVIII).



Peasants from the commune of Biriņi. Biriņi is a rural commune near Rīga and the farmer's costumes, man and woman alike, are largely under the influence of city fashion. Examples of articles alien to the Latvian national costume are the women's aprons and jackets. (The drawings reproduced in Plates XXIX and XXX were made at the end of the 18th century.)



The celebration of *Jānu vakars*, also *Līgo vakars*—the Midsummer's night—at the house of the merchant Muiželis, a Latvian magistrate, in Kipsala (a suburb of Rīga) in 1793. On this night the people "are said to decorate themselves and their cattle with wreaths, and the wreathed women dance in the streets, singing folk-songs, moving from house to house, strewing flowers and putting wreaths on the inhabitants' heads."



A Latvian milkwoman from the outskirts of Rīga.



The Cimpuļi farm at the far end of the Rīga town pastures near Sarkandaugava in 1792. The farms on the outskirts of the city supplied the people in Rīga with farm produce, sold at the market or delivered to the customer's house.

state put some queries to the Landtag and asked for explanations, namely whether the landed gentry regarded the peasants as the property of their masters, and how far their rights went, also, whether they had the right to apply corporal punishment. The acting Landrat gave the following answers: "The rights of the masters (*Erbherrschaften*) to exercise their power over the peasants exist from the times when these provinces were conquered by the sword of the Teutonic Order and passed over into its possession; the peasants were deprived of any kind of freedom and they were bound to the land not as free citizens of a republic, but as serfs or feudatory dependents and as such they were distributed and allotted to feuds; thus from the time when the republic was founded in the days of the Order till the present they have remained bound to the land, and as serfs have passed from owner to owner, in cases of inheritance, purchase of estates, or according to other contracts, or when the rights passed from one lord of a manor to another (*jure domini seu alienati seu rivendicati*). It is pointless to give particular evidence for the serfdom of the peasants, and the rights of the landed gentry (*ius dominii*) are clearly and obviously proved by praxis, by perpetuated legal orders on the surrendering of the peasants (*Ausantwortung*) and by the Privilege of Sigismund Augustus."⁹ Historical truth is not a strong point with Baron Rosen. The interpretation of the historical development of the question in both documents is by no means precise but this hardly affects the main lines of the project which can be summed up as follows: (1) the peasants are serfs (*homines proprii*) and may, therefore, be inherited and expropriated; (2) the masters have the power of life and death over their serfs (*ius vitae ac necis*) and unlimited right to administer punishment at home (*Hauszucht*); (3) the rights of the masters (*dominium*) extend to the personal property of the peasant, too, and they have the right to dispose of such property as they choose; (4) the master can in the same way increase his demands for service due to him.

As may easily be understood this "declaration" called forth a storm and even a whirlwind of controversy in the historiography of the Baltic. Apart from some Latvian historians, some German historians, too, e.g. the well-known Prutz,¹⁰ sharply criticized the declaration and even A. von Tobien¹¹ himself, who was generally looked upon as the mouthpiece of the Vidzeme landed gentry, was forced to admit that "the notorious declaration of Rosen of the year 1739 is in contradiction to the project of the civil code which was drawn up at this time and erroneously represents the peasant of Vidzeme as forced into the steel armour of the Roman Agrarian Law . . . the situation was adapted to the Russian bureaucracy's conceptions of rights, for unconditional serfdom is a principle with the Russian aristocracy." We must add, however, that the Russians were the

ones who objected to the project. H. von Bruiningk,¹² on his side, interpreted it as a document which "only expressed the ideas of a badly-informed office." On the whole this document signed by a high civil servant is and will remain in the history of the Baltic as an expressive and characteristic monument.

The first of the two documents, the project of Budberg-Schrader, regarded by the Baltic German historians as expressing the real social ideas and opinions of the landed gentry, originated from the wish and intention of the landed gentry to stabilize and define legally their own position in the eyes of the Russian government, and they based their rights on the pact of the occupation of Rīga. Corruption, negligence, bureaucratic procedure shaped the fate of this document in the Russian offices in a significant and characteristic manner; the manuscript which was composed in 1728 was finally buried under the dust of the archives in the year 1764. The project of Budberg-Schrader is a compilation of former juridical norms based on traditions. Thus in Book IV among decrees of the law of property and the law of contract (*Sachrecht-Schuldrecht*) there is also a chapter on the peasant and his surrender in case of escape (*Von Bauren und deren Ausantwortung*). This project, too, called forth considerable controversy. The opinions of the Latvian historians¹³ on this question may be summed up in the following points: (1) the peasants are—and that is the dogmatic conviction in the spirit of the age—not only *adscripti seu glaebae addicti*, i.e. undetachable from the soil (*res soli, Schollenpflichtig*), but they are the property of their masters (*proprii, Leibeigene*); (2) a situation juridically petrified expresses itself in life in various ways, depending on the relations between the masters and the peasants, on the rights of custom which have been in force for a hundred years, and which psychologically and morally are based on the spontaneous and instinctive conviction of the Latvian peasant that the yoke imposed by strange masters is after all only a yoke; therefore this situation could never be fused together in his conscience and mind with his conception of right and justice. This document pleads solely for the social and economic interests of the landed gentry; it does not even consider the peasant except as the property of his master. It is therefore idle of Baltic German historians led by Baron von Bruiningk to attempt to show much difference between this project and the Declaration of Rosen.

Catherine II, a partisan of the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment and the spiritual friend of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Diderot, inherited the throne of Russia in the year 1762. She travelled all over Russia and also Estonia and Vidzeme. Records of these travels of the Empress remain

which tell us something of the information passed on to her concerning peasant life. This information painted a rosy picture—the villages so described have come to be known at “Potyomkin Villages”. Yet in spite of this the “high ruler” managed to form her own opinion about the necessity of certain reforms and the urgency of improving the conditions of the peasants. Anyhow, the basic tone of the speech of Governor General Browne in 1765, in the Landtag, gave the impression that he was expressing definite and clear instructions from higher quarters (the Empress had decided “to end the wild tyranny and the unbridled despotism”) and when the Landtag made an effort to drag the matter on, he stressed that “Her Majesty has ordered that an end should be put to the tyrannical severity and the licentious despotism of the nobility towards their peasants—which she had occasion to witness personally during her travels. If the landed gentry is not disposed to prepare the necessary bill, the government will be forced to do it.”¹⁴ It was clear that there was nothing left for the Landtag, but to obey, and in the meantime to resort to passive resistance and sabotage and “to enter Petersburg by the back door”, *i.e.* influence the members of the Russian court among whom the Baltic aristocracy till the very beginning of the 20th century had many friends. The proposals of Browne as far as they concerned the peasants were (1) to acknowledge the rights of the peasants to movables, acquired by them; (2) to determine for all time what the duties of the peasants were; (3) to do away with or to at least check corporal punishment. In their answers the representatives of the landed gentry resorted to the usual arguments, well-known to us from Swedish times, “that the nature of the peasants is of this kind” that “serfdom with all its indispensable consequences has taken deep root among the peasantry”; also “that the peasants are serfs in the complete sense of the interpretation of this by the Roman Law, as far as this is permitted by the Christian faith, but serfdom is at the base of the position and privileges of the landed gentry.” An argument of this kind could not satisfy the representatives of the government and after certain negotiations, agreement was reached on the following formulae: “Although everything that belongs to the peasant, including his body (*i.e.* his person), is the complete property of his master with which the latter can do as he pleases, nevertheless we, stimulated by noble feelings of real humanity and Christian love, decide that in future the peasant, if he does not owe anything to his master, can be the owner of property, which he has acquired or inherited, *i.e.* he can keep his cattle, horses, money, corn, etc.”¹⁵ The landed gentry agreed to yield to a certain degree on the question of punishment and the peasants were given a limited right to complain. All this was, however, done with the object of pacifying the government with declarations of a general nature

and without any intention of putting them into practice. Truly, the economic relations between the masters and their peasants can in no way be looked upon as complicated, as all the losses brought about by poor harvests, illnesses, epidemics and other mishaps and misfortunes in the life and the work of the peasant, such as dues not complied with, had to be borne by the peasant himself, regardless of the reasons. All this together with the long-term debts, so usual in the life of the peasant, resulted in his becoming the debtor of his master and the consequences were obvious.

In order to make clear the conditions which existed in practice we must add to the norms of rights a few remarks on the changes in peasant economy at that time so that we may compare them with previous times. After Vidzeme had been annexed by Russia a new branch of industry developed in that country, *viz.* the distillation of spirits which gave the landed gentry an increased income, not only from the wide market of Russia, but also from the consumption of the spirits in the country itself; it was the landed gentry only who had the right to keep inns in the country or to lease them. This led to moral disaster among the country inhabitants. Statistics are eloquent: in 1757 in four districts of Vidzeme there were 933 inns belonging to the estates and only 29 schools. In Vidzeme in 1794 about 400,000 barrels or 48 million "*stops*" of spirits were produced amounting to the value of 7,200,000 roubles—taking into consideration the number of inhabitants that amount leaves us with 96 *stops* per head. The production of this "liquid bread"—for spirits were distilled from corn only, potatoes at that time still being a rare product, properly speaking only a kitchen-garden product,—made the duties and the service of the peasants much heavier; it was in vain that the governors by issuing regulations (1730, 1741, 1757, 1762) tried to prevent the exploitation of the peasants and pointed out the undesirable results of this industry. There was little hope that the situation would improve, for in spite of all attempts the landed gentry continued to increase the dues, by as much as three times in the first three quarters of the 18th century, and the unhappy country people according to the expressive remark of H. Prutz could only "pace heavily, apathetic and worn out by their life."¹⁶

Yet not all the landed gentry allowed this to happen; there were individual attempts by the lords of some manors and intellectuals to take up a stand against it by attempting to enforce private regulations on their own peasants. One of these men was the Baron of Aizkraukle, Karl F. von Schoultz.¹⁷ The laws he issued for the peasants on his estates called forth such a storm of indignation and anger in the Landtag that Schoultz, who was renounced by the others, lost his title of counsellor, was obliged

to take back all the unsold copies of his "laws" (published in Latvian in 1764) and to make a special explanation before the Landtag. Let us cast a glance at the contents of these "laws" that were the cause of so much anger. A short survey of the contents will give us an opportunity to see what the best intentions of the times were, and what was possible. The first part analyses the right of the peasant to possess movables upon which the lord of the manor has the lien and the right of pre-emption; only in cases where the peasant leaves no heirs do these movables become the property of the master. The second part refers to the immovables of the peasant which are in fact the property of the lord of the manor. Those who are unable to pay their rentals can be forcibly evicted from their homes and placed as servants in the homes of others. In order to make up for the mistakes of earlier days the farmsteads are to be re-surveyed; the sons of farmers are to be allowed to divide the farm of their father among themselves, on the condition that the parts are not to be smaller than $\frac{1}{8}$ of a "plough". The third part considers the standardizing of the rentals and dues in the "land record books". The peasants continue to be serfs (*homines proprii*), but the masters have neither the right to sell them nor to detach them from the land, this can be done only with the approval of the peasant, and the Land Court has to be informed. The peasant has the right to bring an action against his master, but in the case of an unfounded charge the legal costs have to be borne by the peasant and in cases of poverty every thaler of the costs is to be paid by two pairs of strokes with a rod. The lord of the manor had the right to punish insubordinate serfs with a whip. Such were the main lines of the "liberal" attitude of those days. The unsuccessful attempt of Baron Schoultz reminds us of the attractive and noble figure of Pastor J. G. Eisen. He came from Germany and after observing the life of Estonians for twenty years he published a report on serfdom in Estonia in 1764—the publication appeared with the help of the Imperial Academy in Petersburg. The report gained the attention of the Empress, and Eisen was admitted to her presence. This fact, coupled with other reasons, induced Catherine to travel to Vidzeme. Eisen was the author of another work on the same theme, which, however, remained unpublished. Both books of his are colourful and expressive in depicting the life of those days, they testify to his sharp gifts of observation and show what chances of development the province had; they express, too, a deep belief in the moral strength of this oppressed nation which was forced to keep silent, and in the rôle this nation was bound to play the moment it gained a chance to show its true character.¹⁸ Pastor H. G. von Jannau, too, saw and recognized that the disparaged qualities of the peasant were not innate, but had only developed through his intolerable position. According

to him many social changes were needed, and it was particularly necessary to raise the standard of national education.

Through the dust of polemics raised by the demands of the Russian government and the disputes in the Landtag we are able to discern the real motives of both parties; the main object of all the fuss, *i.e.* the peasant, gained little from it and if someone ventured to remark that "all this fuss was made merely to prevent change in the social and economic life", then the peasant of Vidzeme expressed his peaceful and fatalistic final opinion: "(in this country) everything happens according to the permission of the Almighty and the will of the master."

Let us quote here a few words from the well-known book of the German Pastor A. Hupel (1777):¹⁹ "The people here are better ware than the negroes of the American colonies: a servant can be bought for 30-50 roubles, but a tradesman, a cook, or a weaver costs up to about 100 roubles. The same is the price for a whole family, a servant girl seldom costs less than ten roubles and children can be bought for four roubles a head. Country people and their children are sold or bartered for various things, for horses, dogs, etc." As late as 1789, *i.e.* when the old regime in France collapsed, we find the following advertisement in a Riga newspaper (*Rigische Anzeigen* of the 15 January No. 24): "four families of serfs to be cheaply sold; prospective buyers are asked to inquire at the representative of the Government, Castle Street 51."

In such a moral climate sadistic excesses of absolute power were only to be expected, we read about them in the chronicles of the times and in the rolls of the courts, and they were the cause of Merkel's very loud and touching appeal to the world. However, turning to other sources we find mention of some desperate attempts by the peasants towards the end of the century to rise against their oppressors. Peasant riots of this kind occurred more and more often (1777, 1784, 1797, 1802) and the Governor General was forced to inform the Empress in the year 1784: "I can only affirm that rebellions have spread over the whole province and I am not aware of a single district where there are no disturbances."

We can conclude the enumeration of these scenes with a sad description of Vidzeme by a foreign observer who made his home there—Count de Bray, who reflected upon the vast districts of the country covered with crippled woods growing in marshes, the sand-covered plains, and some red moss-covered swamps. He speaks of them as tiring to the eyes as they leave a feeling of depression. This is the home of a very old race, which has lived in the shadow of social injustice for many hundreds of years. De Bray ends his book, so full of modesty and fine observations, with the following wise words:²⁰ *Mais la servitude du paysan, le défaut*

de culture morale qui en est la suite, et l'uniformité qui résulte d'un mode de possession, et d'action qui partout sont les mêmes, répandent une teinte mélancolique sur la surface de ce pays, et le privent de cet air mouvant et animé, qui donne tant de charme à l'aspect des pays libres, où les professions diverses sont en évidence, pourvu toute fois qu'une nature trop sévère, ne les ait d'ailleurs condamnés à la stérilité. Déjà la Livonie jouit d'un amélioration sensible relativement à l'état du paysan, et cet amélioration a été provoqué par la noblesse elle-même, et réglé par les Oukazes du plus généreux des Empereurs (in this sentence we hear the representative of his class expressing his views). Espérons qu'un jour on ira plus loin de part et d'autre, et que non seulement la liberté des personnes, mais celles des choses, telles que celle du commerce, de la circulation des denrées etc., élèveront ces intéressantes provinces au plus haut degré de prospérité où elles puissent parvenir!

H. Prutz who has been mentioned above and who had tender feelings neither for the psychology of the "master nation"—the Baltic Germans,—nor for the Latvians and Estonians, after reading De Bray's book concluded: "To be master for ever has not been the destiny of any nation, but it is right (the Baltic Germans made a fatal mistake in wanting to be masters for ever) to come to these nations, to bring them a new and higher civilisation and to be united with them in true fellowship." Undoubtedly new methods of material culture and technique were introduced to the people of the Baltic littoral —, and also the Christian faith. But in what manner was it all introduced? And how was the old Indo-European civilisation destroyed? This so-called "higher culture" brought neither happiness nor blessing to the oppressed and the serfs, nor to the oppressors themselves—it lacked that happiness and blessing which gives life and movement and makes "free countries charmingly attractive."

One of the effects of the Northern War was that it checked the development of literature for many years to come. Decades were to pass before it could flourish again. At the end of the 17th century, literature had begun to develop in the Duchy of Kurland and Vidzeme under Swedish rule. Symbolically the age found expression in one of the earliest Latvian texts of the 18th century, *i.e.* an ode translated from the German: *Calm after the Thunderstorm*. This ode was published, be it noted, only in 1753, forty years after Riga was occupied by the Russians. The author of it was Pastor G. F. Stender (1714—1796), or Old Stender as he was called.

He was born in Eastern Kurland into the family of a pastor, he studied theology in Germany (Jena, Halle), was a teacher, then a pastor in Kur-

land, in 1759 he was teacher and professor in Germany, then professor in Copenhagen, and after a short stay in Petersburg, after 1766, he returned to Kurland as a pastor where he remained until his death. Of his many works the most important for the Latvians are: a Latvian grammar (*Lettische Grammatik*) 1761, a Latvian dictionary (*Lettisches Lexicon*) 1789, his *Fairy Tales*, his poems in Latvian, a collection of stories on natural science, and theological writings such as the so-called Small Bible. His writings on philology are the basis of the work of several generations, and his importance in the development and furthering of the language is great. His poetic works and his prose works, and also his works which popularized science are of no less importance for they are the first of their kind in Latvian. His poetry is of a didactic or sentimental character in keeping with the spirit of the age. Stender was unable to understand the spirit of *dainas*, but in them he saw *the beginning* of Latvian national poetry; yet we, in the 20th century, see in them *the final stage* of an old artistic culture. Stender then points out their likeness to the primitive songs of the old Germans, and he even discerns a beautiful colouring and some lines in those Latvian songs which take us back to heathen times. On the whole Stender is a follower of the Age of Enlightenment in his literary and philological views.²¹

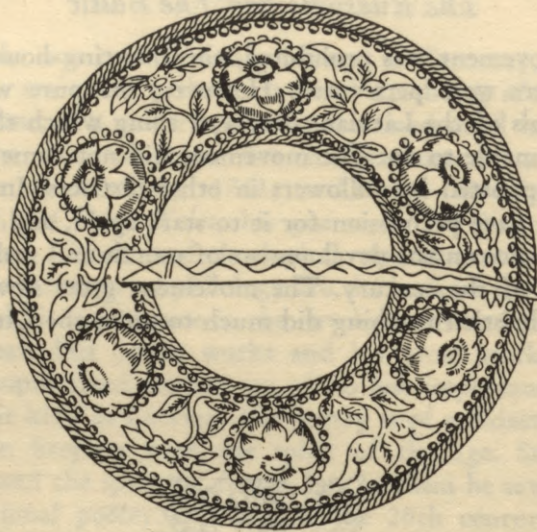
Of the spiritual heirs to Stender—all of whom come from Kurland,—only a few deserve mention here. The eldest son of Stender, A. G. Stender (1744—1819), the so-called Young Stender, was the author of the first Latvian play (1790). Pastor K. Hugenberger was a translator. Pastor K. G. Elverfeldt (1756—1819) was the author of the first Latvian melodramas and an ardent advocate of the Latvians who resisted constant efforts to germanize them.

A religious movement of the 18th century remains to be mentioned here—a movement among the peasants themselves. It was called “the Parish of the Brethren”, or the “Herrnhut Movement” (taking its name from the estate of Count Zinzendorf in Saxony, who was the spiritual leader of the movement). Had it been only a form of sectarianism it would have been unimportant, but as the religious basis of it began to display social and national peculiarities, we have to examine it closely. It is one of the many manifestations of the Reformatory Movement in Bohemia which came to Saxony and from there to Vidzeme. It began in the early thirties of the century. When the school of Herrnhut preachers was founded in Valmiera, in 1738, the movement developed at such a pace that the members of the local gentry began to fear it in spite of its religious and moral character; they feared that it would develop into an organization led by a few Latvians and that the masses would join it. As the barons disliked it, it was soon a topic of discussion in Petersburg.

In 1743 the movement was prohibited, the "meeting-houses" were closed and some leaders were persecuted. However, the pure words of Christ touched the souls of the Latvians deeply, a thing which the German pastors had been unable to do. The movement did not come to an end, but was secretly supported by followers in other districts. In 1764 the Empress Catherine gave permission for it to start again, and it continued its beneficial influence on the development of morals and real Christian feeling to the end of the century. The movement grew slowly but persistently and its Christian teaching did much to unite the Latvian people.



* Silver brooch with pendants and red glass beads, 18th century.



XIII

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Catherine II's grandson, Alexander I, in his youth sympathized with the French authors of the pre-revolutionary period and also with those of the Revolution itself. While still in his teens he read *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and at the age of 22 (in 1795) he confided thoughts and ideas to his friend Count Czartoryski which were dangerous for a future ruler of Russia to hold. "He said to me," wrote a Polish emigrant in his recollections, "that he hates despotism in whatever form it may appear; that he loves freedom and observes with great interest the development of the French Revolution; although he condemns the fierce terror, yet he wishes success to the Republic and is delighted about it." And later, as Emperor, he invited his closest collaborators to discuss projects for future reforms. Remembering Robespierre and others he called these assemblies *Notre Comité du Salut Public*. However, he was not the only man in Russia who held such sympathies. Among the "golden youth" of St. Petersburg, many adored "the fire on the holy altar, to which the Russians will come one day to light their torches which will be carried into the darkness of their fatherland." But in the next generation, in the year 1825, when Alexander I had died, the Decembrists for holding similar ideas had either to ascend the scaffold or go to Siberia.

* The "great-brooch" from Nica, 18th century. This disk-shaped brooch, which was used for fastening the shawl, gradually developed from simpler disk-brooches of a smaller size which appeared in Latvia in the 13th century.

We can, then, well understand the anxiety caused by the young Alexander's sympathies for the French Emperor—a son of the Revolution.¹ Their meeting at Tilsit occurred under this star and was followed by severe political consequences for all the nations of eastern Europe. With the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, a name given to that country by Napoleon, as the partition of 1795 was still too fresh in the Tsar's memory, the Poles themselves gained a breathing space and gathered new hopes, although in the game of Napoleon they served only as a means to isolate Prussia. To Napoleon the Poles were always merely *pour meubler un champ de bataille*. As the Swedes were unwilling to co-operate in the French-Russian threat against Britain, the Finns had to pay for this unwillingness with a war against Russia which after heroic fighting was ended in the year 1809 when Finland was incorporated into Russia after more than six centuries of Swedish rule. The Tsar treated the Finns liberally granting them wide autonomy, and he personally opened their Landtag. At Tilsit the Emperors agreed to divide eastern Europe into spheres of influence. If we examine on the map of Europe the growth of the Napoleonic empire up to the war with Russia, we see at once what a great strategist the man was; he had created a whole ring of political and military areas to defend France: the federation of the Rhine, bridge-head fortifications from Mecklenburg to Saxony, and down the Apennine Peninsula to the Kingdom of Naples; and Sweden neutralized. Nevertheless this wisely calculated plan was of short duration, for what proved fatal to Napoleon was that Britain and Russia remained outside. Without inquiring into the causes of the disagreement between these friends of Tilsit, we can state that only five years later Napoleon committed himself to an attack on Russia which was one of the most important events in the history of eastern Europe. Poland though disillusioned remained faithful to the eagles of the French Emperor, and was once more destined to submission; she was given no voice at the Congress of Vienna. In the year 1818, in which the Parliament was opened, Poland was comparatively well treated by Alexander I; but during the last years of his reign she gradually lost what little freedom had been left to her, and after the rebellion of 1830—1831 she came under total suppression.

On the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea no changes of the frontiers or political conditions can be noticed after Finland had been incorporated with Russia. Some military operations took place in Lithuania and Kurzeme, and internal politics had naturally been influenced by the France of the Revolution and Napoleon. To begin with the family of the French king, headed by Louis XVIII, brother of the executed Louis XVI, in an attempt to escape the terror of the Revolution found a lasting asylum in Jelgava, the capital of the old Duchy of Kurland (1798—1801, 1804

—1807); many souvenirs of that time are to be found in the museum of this town.²

Here is a short survey of the events which occurred during and after the year 1812. The clash began when Napoleon crossed the Niemen (Nemunas) on 24 June. The main body of the French forces advanced towards Vilna, where some traces of Napoleon can still be found; then they moved on to Smolensk and Moscow. A comparatively small group, the Prussian expeditionary corps commanded by von Grawert and York, moved into the Baltic provinces and that is the reason why this period is known by the Latvians as "the Prussian time". Field-marshal Macdonald, Duke of Tarento, was the commander-in-chief. After some local fighting at Bauskã, Iecava and elsewhere, the Russians were driven out of Kurzeme and retreated to the eastern bank of the Daugava (as they did in 1915). This move so frightened General Essen, the military governor of Rīga, that he ordered all the suburbs of the city to be burned down, which left the inhabitants, mainly Latvians, homeless and in utter misery. This was particularly tragic for such precautionary measures were quite useless and unnecessary, as the comparatively small expeditionary corps which was merely sent to cover the left wing of the army had not moved beyond the Daugava. On 10 November Essen was replaced by Marquess Paolucci, a native of Genoa, whose descendants held important political posts in Italy. Paolucci made use of the French army's defeat later in the year and began immediate negotiations with York in an endeavour to split him from the Frenchmen. And this Prussian after some hesitations, while Macdonald's forces retreated on 18 December, signed the Treaty of Tauroga (30 December 1812) with his enemies. This treaty was followed by the occupation of Tilsit which was a turning point in the history of Prussia.

When Napoleon's march on Moscow began in 1812 the Latvian peasants did nothing, but after the capture of Vilna (28 June) they rebelled. The aristocracy of this country was in a rather delicate position, between two fires: as Russian patriots their duty was to organize the peasants for the defence of the province, yet the peasants themselves could not be trusted, as they cherished hopes of liberation by this French Army. At Vilna the Emperor wished to recruit Lithuanian troops, as E. Labaume tells us in his recollections. His idea was in fact to add new Lithuanian regiments to his army for the invasion of Russia proper. "He offered arms to all peasants willing to revolt against their masters and he tried, as was tried at the beginning of our revolution, to provoke a civil war between the country populace and their landlords. These plans found some followers in the towns visited by the Emperor, but no actual revolts occurred in the palaces and villages."³ In Kurzeme General Grawert, the commander of the Prussian expeditionary corps, was forced to issue an official proclamation to

PROCLAMATION

By the Prussian
High Master General.

We have heard to our great surprise that some people in Kurzeme have unwisely decided that the time has come when they no longer have to obey their masters as they did before, and that the war that is being waged here and the Prussian soldiers stationed here have separated them from their masters and rulers, and from all issued laws and other duties. To those people the message given in this Proclamation will make it known that all matters in this country will remain unchanged until another high order is issued. Therefore strict instructions are given to the people of Kurzeme to remain quiet and obedient, to obey their masters with a good-will and to take care of the houses and fields, as becomes an honest and God-fearing people. Whoever does not act in this way, but violates this command by opposing his ruler or his deputy, the supervisors and judges, will receive his rightful judgement and shall be punished harshly and severely by the Prussian soldiers according to their customs and law. This manifesto has been written in the Prussian Camp at Pētermuiža on 5 July 1812.

von Grawert
the King of Prussia's General
over all Prussian Soldiers

Prūšchu augšta Generālkunga
Sluddinašana.

Ur teļu brieņošānu dīrdēhs irr, ka daschi ne Kursemmes laudim neprahīgi sadohmājuschi, ka taggad tas laiks efoht atnāhjis, kurrā teem saveem Baldincekem wairs ne buhs tā, kā lihdschim, klaufiht; ka tas farsch, kas taggad schinni semmē zelts, un tee Prūschu kareawihri, kas schētan nuht, winaus afschirschoht no saveem Kungeem un Baldincekem, jeb no wisseem lihdschim ezelteem likumeem un nolikteem darbecem. Bet schēem nu zaur scho grahmatu, kas winneem sluddinadama, rohp ta sīna dohta, ka wissa buhschana schinni semmē paleek kā bijusi, kamehr zitta augšta pawehleschana taps dohta. Tadehl nu teem Kursemmes laudim rohp zeeti peefazzihts un peefohdinahs, ka teem flusseem un meerigeem dubs palikt, joprohjam ar gohdabihlaschānu saveem Kungeem klaufiht, laukus un mahjas kohpt, kā gohdigeem un decwabihigeem laudim peeflahjāhs, un kas no winneem tā ne' darritu, bet scho pawehleschānu pahrkahptu, kas saveem Baldincekem, jeb winnu Weetneekem, Waggareem un Teesneesseem prettineeks buhtu, tas to nepelnitu soh-dibu dabubhs, un no Prūschu kareawihreem pehz winnu bruhes un likuma zeeti un gruhiti taps nostrahpehts. Schi sluddinaschānāe grahmata irr norakstīta Prūschu lehgeri Pehtermuischā tai peektā seena mehnescha deenā schinni 1812tā gaddā

(G. W.)

von Grawert,

Prūschu Kehnisa Generāls wahr wisseem
Prūschu kareawihreem.

An announcement issued by General von Grawert, Commander of the Prussian Forces. The announcement is in fluent Latvian language of the time. It is noted that the peasants' name of July—the month of hay-making—is used. In this respect von Grawert's announcement is in striking contrast with an announcement issued 100 years later by Field Marshal von Hindenburg, which is worded in very poor "indigenous language" (see p. 326).

the country population calling upon them to remain quiet and obedient to their masters as they were before (5 July 1812), "because he intends to keep in power the previous social regulations and nothing will be changed as regards the relations between the peasants and their masters." That quotation is taken from the proclamation itself which closes with a real Prussian threat. The proclamation put an end to the whole business of the "voluntary militia" which was started without particular enthusiasm and closed without glory. Nobody can tell what the results would have been had the conflict lasted longer, or what confusion there would have been in the country. Many peasants of Kurzeme acting as transport drivers were sent to all parts, and many of them travelled thousands of miles in Russia and Prussia.

Let us go back a little to examine the literary influence on the re-birth of Latvia. The authors named in previous chapters Eisen, Schoultz, Jan-nau, etc., did their best to protect and defend the peasants of Vidzeme at one of the most difficult moments in their history. They were men of the Age of Enlightenment, but those who wrote or who were beginning to write during the last quarter of the 18th century carried within themselves the new ideas of the French Revolution—ideas of men like Rousseau who, as we have already seen and as we shall see later, was widely read among the people in the Baltic countries.

In the middle of the 18th century an interest in the Old Prussians began to grow in East Prussia, more particularly in Königsberg. Due to this, the historical problems of the Baltic people came to the fore. At Königsberg J. Hamann, who belonged to the circle of philologists and philosophers, in his *Kreuz-züge des Philologen* underlined as early as 1762 the importance of the poetry of the Balts and thus he opened the way for his friend J. G. Herder, who has been called recently "the great discoverer of the East European nations," which is something of an exaggeration. Not only was Herder born in East Prussia and in that way organically bound to the genius of the country, but through his Baltic correspondents he kept in touch with the languages and national traditions of those people. Further he had a good opportunity to see the conditions in Vidzeme with his own eyes when he lived in Riga during the years 1764—1769 where he was a teacher, a man of letters and a pastor. Some recent historians have ascribed the beginning or at least the deciding stimulation for his love of "the soul of the people" and their national peculiarities, to his experience of certain national festivals in our country, e.g. the celebration of the Latvian Midsummer which is still a half pagan festival. His collections of folksongs, of which the *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* is outstanding, are rather characteristic. He did not merely translate some of the Latvian folksongs but generally tried to understand the Latvian

nation, and some of his observations are deep and genuine. He watched the Latvians' love of singing and poetry, their great ability to improvise (about which an author of the 17th century, Menius, might have said, "as seldom done by another nation"), the extraordinary emotion of their love songs, into which they "pour all the possible tenderness of a lover's melancholy and describe the whole endurance of a sensitive heart in such an artistic way that we cannot but be deeply moved by their songs." To Herder the German language was like a church-bell, the Latvian—like a hand-bell; the Latvian genius was an idyllic one, etc. All these observations were written during the time when the Latvians had no property of their own, and no freedom, when the aristocracy of the country was at the peak of its domination and had the right of life and death over the peasants, while Riga, as Herder goes on to describe, under the Russian sceptre was almost "like Geneva, enjoying similar freedom in a province of barbarism and luxury, darkness and refined taste, freedom and slavery." Indeed, the gulf between the suppressors and the suppressed became wider and wider, yet the sounds of a new era could be heard in the air.

After Herder we must turn to his young friend G. Merkel (1769—1850), a native of Vidzeme. Characteristic was his answer to Herder's slightly impatient question, as to what he would like to achieve in life. He answered: "liberty and rye bread (*liberté et pain bis*)." Merkel was born the son of a Voltairean pastor, he was a self-taught man and an eager follower of the Genevan prophet Rousseau. Indeed he was educated by his father in a way that reminds us of the descriptions of Rousseau's own education. He became a journalist with a brilliant and passionate style. His historical work *Die Letten* was a bomb-shell. The first edition was published in Leipzig in 1797, and the second in 1800. A complete translation in Latvian did not appear until 1905. *Sapienti sat!*

In his *Memoirs* Merkel tells us what made him decide to write the book: "in a circle of literary men and artists in Riga the conversation turned to the brutality of some of the landlords in their relations with their peasants, and to the unbearable conditions existing on some manors. I listened silently and then suddenly asked: why does nobody write about all this? Is there no one? These things should be made known and stopped!" In answer to this question put by *l'enfant terrible* there was silence. But Merkel took with him into the solitude of the countryside a spark which grew into a flame. This book and also his next one *Die Vorzeit Livlands* provide one of the fiercest attacks which has ever been made on the Baltic German aristocracy, and the controversy raged throughout the 19th century. In vain have Baltic German historians tried to underrate the significance of his work.

He was the first author who vigorously championed the national rights

of the Latvians. The fact that he was no Latvian himself added strength to the cause. Merkel's book could not contain the whole truth, in fact the truth was caricatured, yet it achieved the necessary purpose of effecting a moral shock. It is interesting to ask how it was possible to circulate such a book in Vidzeme even if it was published in Germany. This may be explained by the fact that the book was dedicated to Count Repnyn, Governor General of Vidzeme, and one of Merkel's last books was dedicated to Tsar Alexander I himself. The author was well known as an eager sympathizer of the Russian government, but even more well known as a fierce antagonist of Napoleon.

Merkel's words echoed round Europe and awoke sympathy for the peasants of Vidzeme even in the circles of the court at St. Petersburg. It was in fact the prelude to a new era, and it put forward an ideal programme which had been cultivated in the spiritual laboratories of the Age of Enlightenment. Already in Vidzeme a small nucleus of "democrats" was being formed from amongst the landed nobility headed by Count F. von Sievers and others, such as A. von Transehe-Roseneck who had been to America and who had met George Washington, and Count Mellin, who was born in Switzerland, studied at Bologna, and afterwards became a personal friend of the Grand Duke Paul who later became the Tsar.

In 1797 Sievers introduced a bill in the Landtag which suggested certain improvements in the conditions of the peasants. The bill was handed to Tsar Paul, but he wished first to hear the opinions of experts and so it was pigeonholed. Sievers renewed his attempt when the new Tsar, Alexander I, ascended the throne in 1801. He found an opportunity to meet him personally during the Tsar's visit to Vidzeme in 1802. The sounds of revolution in 1789 penetrated into far-away Vidzeme and was heard by the Latvian peasants, about whom Merkel wrote that "the chains of slavery have cut into their very souls." An indirect cause of the revolt at Kauguri, in 1802, was an article published in the newspapers claiming that liberty had been achieved in France. A report by the Governor General, Prince Golitsin, to the Minister of the Interior, Count Kochubey, is revealing: "I have forbidden the publication of the proclamation of 20 February 1803 concerning the emancipation of the peasants and also its translation into Latvian and Estonian in order not to make the heads of the peasants hot. Although the landlords conceal from their peasants what is going on in the Landtag, yet the peasants in Riga speak openly of freedom. In case of revolt I shall use force. Unfortunately we live in an age when people philosophise too much, and talk too much of the people's rights. The whole of Europe is plagued with the idea of liberty which seems to be infectious. What we do need is not liberty but powerful



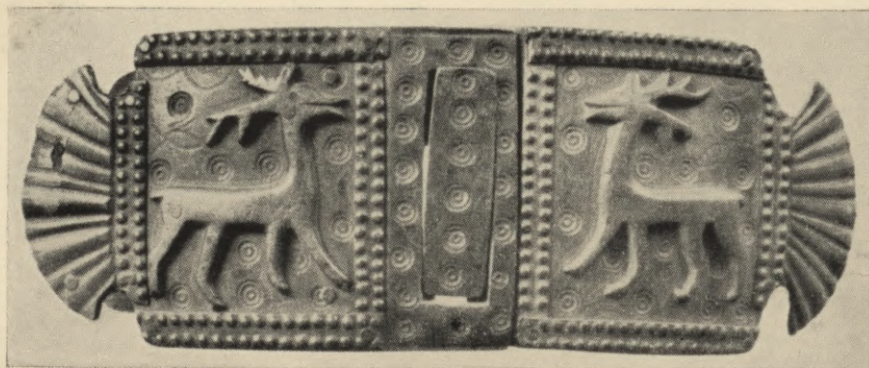
Russian troops, faithful to their traditions (cf. Sheremetiev's report, p. 267 and the burning of Rīga in 1941) are burning the suburbs of Rīga in 1812 during the Napoleonic War (see p. 284).



The Rīga Castle square in 1824. Castle guards of the Russian garrison. In the square, a Russian victory column. In the background the Churches of St. Jakob and St. Mary.



Kokles of the 17th-18th centuries. A *kokle* is an ancient Latvian string instrument, often richly decorated with carved designs, characteristic of Latvian popular art.



A brass belt buckle of the 18th century. The buckle with the conventionalised representation of an elk is a typical example of popular art in Kurzeme. The elk is in the Duchy of Kurland's coat-of-arms (cf. vignette on p. 242). Such belts were originally part of the uniform of forest rangers, but later became a popular ornament for men's costumes in Kurzeme.



Latgallian pottery. Horse figurine pipes. Since the 16th century Latgale has been known among other Latvian provinces for its rich and characteristic pottery, including clay whistles representing conventionalised and imaginary animals and birds.

government." A chain of local revolts broke out in 1777, 1784 and 1797 and went on after 1802.

Behind all these social and political conflicts was of course an economic motive, which will appear more clearly later when we come to examine the "liberalism" of the Russian government on the one hand, and the anxiety of the nobility on the other. For example the Landtag was terrified lest the government should interfere, in agrarian legislation particularly, in the interests of its treasury, as Sievers pointed out. But government intervention could only be held at arm's length if the rural economy was in a healthy condition, which it most emphatically was not, as may be seen from the fact that during the period 1796—1800 alone 84 major estates were sold against eight which were sold in the period from 1765—1770. A crisis was obviously at hand.

The "liberalism" displayed by Sievers's group must be assessed within the framework of the ideas of the 18th and early 19th centuries. For instance, read this phrase of his from a report of 1803: "There were also some young unbridled fools and beggars who suggested giving freedom to all serfs . . . in order to pamper to the heart of the Tsar with such Jacobin methods." Merkel rather sharply called Sievers the keeper of the Tsar's purse. However, the reforms advocated by the "Jacobinic theorists" were actually carried out some fifteen years later.

Agthe⁴ has attempted to define in general terms the leading motives which produced the great economic and social changes of that time. In order to pay their debts, which had increased considerably, the proprietors of the great estates were forced to exchange obsolete methods of farming for new methods in order to produce as much as possible for the market: "they sought the chance to capitalize their properties." To do this more and more land had to be brought under cultivation which meant simply taking the land from the peasants. Thus their motive for resisting the order of 1804 was strengthened for it meant that the landlords lost the right to dispose of all the agricultural produce. In other words, Adam Smith's economic theories were practised by the landowners of Vidzeme.

We will not enter into details of the law of 1804, which may be found in the works of H. von Bruiningk, A. von Tobien, A. Agthe, A. Švābe and others equally well known. Here we shall merely mention one or two main points in it, namely the personal and possessive rights of the Latvian peasants. According to this law the Latvian peasants were still bound to the soil (*glæbae adscripti*), but they were no longer serfs (*homines proprii*) who could be sold or bartered without the land to which they were attached. Compared with the 18th century it was a great step forward, a peasant was no longer looked on as a thing (*res*) but considered as a person. Speaking of the rights of possession an objective historian cannot

fail to notice, among other peculiarities not seldom met with in this country, one really curious and odd fact: in the Russian text of the law it reads "On the piece of land which has been given to the peasant by the landowner . . . this piece of land has to remain in permanent possession (*vladeniye*) of the peasant and his heirs." But in the German text which has become the basis for succeeding local agrarian legislation, particularly in the case of the law of 1819, in the introduction after the words "which has been given to the peasant by the landowner" are inserted the words *für dessen Nutzniessung*—for their use (of the land). This totally changes the meaning of the term "possession."⁵ It is absolutely clear without any further comment that the Baltic gentry wielded strong influence at the court of the Tsar and so they were permitted to "interpret" the laws in whatever way seemed right to them. Obviously this had considerable consequences when it came to interpreting the liberation of the peasants under the so-called Fundamental Law of 1819.

The attempts to solve these problems in 1804 were unsuccessful as neither masters nor peasants were satisfied with the attempt to legalize the feudal *status quo*, which had been established in the previous century in order to make it fit the needs of the time. Until 1809 when a compromise order was issued—the so-called *die Novelle*—passed under protest from the landlords and increased discontent from the peasants, especially in Estonia, time was wasted by commissions appointed by the government to improve conditions of serfdom. But meanwhile the debts of the landowners increased. Yet in spite of the delays new agrarian legislation was introduced and such legislation remained in force for almost the whole of the 19th century. The liberation of the peasants in Estonia occurred in 1816, and in Kurzeme in 1817, but in Vidzeme it was delayed by the gentry until 1819. The gentry of Vidzeme was afraid they might lose several million roubles through revision and rearrangement of the old feudal system. The Governor General, Marquess Paolucci, had to use all his Italian eloquence to persuade the landlords that the liberation of the peasants was the only way "to establish unlimited rights over their soil." The new laws stated that⁶ "the gentry resigns all the right to bind peasants to the soil and the peasants gradually gain their personal freedom (some groups were not freed until 1832). In compensation the landlords receive, commencing with the day of the publication of the law, complete property rights over the peasants' land including the right to dispose of it as they may." From a legal standpoint this was a revolutionary, almost a Jacobinic, act, as, indeed, it was from the social point of view as well, for with one stroke of the pen liberty was given to approximately 900,000 peasants in the present boundaries of Latvia, excluding Latgale. Yet this freedom was called with justified irony "the freedom of the bird" (*Vogelfreiheit*).

All these peasants were now landless, and their future was to be regulated by "free contracts" (par. 13) with the absolute masters of the land.

Once again these events show plainly the amazing ability of the Baltic gentry to save at a critical moment what could be saved; by surrendering to the consistent requirements of the time and the financial pressure of the Russian government, they made a considerable profit to be enjoyed by several generations still unborn. To quote the slightly cynical words of the Landrat von Samson spoken in the Landtag of 1843, "by emancipating the peasants in 1819 the landlords of Vidzeme did not display nobility of soul but made a good bargain (ein gutes Geschäft)."

The search for new ways to improve agricultural production and so to raise incomes was remarkably accelerated by the agricultural crisis which lasted from 1820 to 1830 and 1840, particularly during the first ten years, *i.e.* immediately after the Napoleonic wars. The catastrophic fall in prices of agricultural products, especially corn, endangered the whole rural economy of Vidzeme, which was far too rigid. As has been stated by many historians, the main product of Vidzeme at the end of the 18th century was corn, which was cultivated in the old three field system whereby in one field the winter crop, usually rye, in the first year was followed by a summercrop. Barley and oats were planted in the same field in the second year, and the third year it was left fallow. The new spirit of the age with wars and other unforeseen conditions required a further increase in taxation, which could not be covered by the old elementary methods of agriculture. New sources and new methods had to be tried in order to increase incomes, and so spirits were distilled for the Russian market, and more flax was grown. But it was not sufficient. One interesting way in which the landowners in Prussia, Silesia and Saxony attempted to increase their incomes was by the breeding of the merino sheep. Owing to the rather refined requirements of these animals their owners were forced to improve their pasture land. However, this only lasted for about twenty years until 1824, and the heavy burden of debts on the country estates continued to grow. The cultivation of potatoes and other vegetables produced better results, but it meant something like an agricultural revolution. Great importance was attached to the cultivation of potatoes in Prussia after the famines in 1771—1772 and 1774. From there they were introduced into the Baltic regions and after one hundred years, at the end of the 19th century, one fifth of all cultivated area in Estonia was turned over to potatoes. In Latvia the cultivation of clover became extremely important. The three field system was abandoned and five and even ten crops became practicable by combining corn, vegetables, potatoes and crops grown for industrial purposes.

While the landowners were consolidating their land for production in a free market, the tenants of small farms were under constant threat of eviction. According to Agthe, up to the middle of the 19th century one fifth of the land of the small farms was absorbed by the large estates; in Vidzeme alone 49,560 hectares were taken over between the years 1819 and 1840; in Kurzeme this process went on even more rapidly. The peasants in their distress revolted and emigrated. According to his new contract, the peasant was "free," but between 1819—1849 he lost his land and was compelled to work once more for his old master. This period is called "the time of servitude." But the peasant disturbances due to lack of organization came to nothing. It should not be forgotten that all this happened at the end of Alexander I's and the beginning of Nicholas I's reign, during which time the Russian aristocracy reached the height of its power. The troubles in 1822—23 were rapidly put down and Russian troops were stationed in all the dangerous districts. There were constant and desperate disturbances for the next twenty years, particularly during the famine of 1840—41. But the *Jacqueries en Livonie*, as H. Kruus calls them, were suppressed with methods and means worthy of Nicholas I. All was quiet again, but there was no peace. The peasants began passive resistance by emigrating and seeking the protection of the Russian Church in various districts of Vidzeme, but not in Kurzeme. The total number of those who were converted to the Orthodox faith during 1845—1849 was 100,000.

In this Baltic region the Russian government could not make up its mind whether to support the landowning nobility or the landless peasants. To leave everything to the nobility would be to consolidate dangerously a strange element in the body of the state, which was already exerting too great an influence, and which was the main cause of the deterioration of social conditions on the frontiers. Yet on the other hand, to show the slightest sympathy for the peasants, even if the sympathy were to be disguised in the robes of the Russian church and the Father Tsar, was unthinkable. Nicholas I could never forget the awful days of the Decembrist conspiracy at the beginning of his reign. The Baltic gentry sent many emissaries to St. Petersburg who knew well how to play on the emotions of the Tsar. In fact no radical steps were taken to ease the situation, but the government kept the peace as well as it could while carrying on with a steady russification of the region, especially of the political administration, which had become a profitable and attractive service for the Baltic barons, as they came to be called at the end of the 19th century. Many of them were employed in various capacities all over the Russian Empire. According to H. Prutz's statistics,⁷ which are in themselves impressive, in 1871 in the Russian armed forces the Baltic

Germans made up 2% of the rank and file, 24% of the lower and 58% of the higher officers, and 78% of the generals! Numerous must have been these "prodigal sons", as they were called by von Rutenberg, who were employed in the diplomatic service and the high courts during the time of the Tsars. For the Latvians and Estonians this meant an alliance of the two forces of oppression.

Returning to the social problems in Vidzeme at the end of Nicholas I's rule and at the beginning of Alexander II's, about 1840—1850, we see the government and the Baltic gentry beginning seriously to consider the situation. In the year after the revolts in Dorpat (Tartu) in 1841 a mixed commission was set up by the government to discuss the problem. This commission declared the importance and necessity of guaranteeing to the peasants besides their personal freedom certain rights over their land, *i.e.* the creation of a certain acreage for the peasants which in fact should belong to the landlords but would be given to the peasants for permanent use. This proposal was accepted in spite of furious opposition from a reactionary group in the Landtag, and the decision was sent to St. Petersburg. But as so often happened in such cases, it had to pass through several other committees; on the way it became an appendix to the law of 1819, and the principle of the peasants' land was omitted and only some insignificant corrections and restricted guarantees concerning contracts and feudal duties were made.

Immediately after the discussion of 1842, began the movement of 1845 which gained the support of the mass of the peasants who petitioned only for the protection of the Tsar in return for a promise to join the Russian Orthodox Church. Naturally, the Orthodox clergy supported this from the very beginning. Dissatisfaction broke out once more and this time the Tsar, impressed by the events, blamed the Baltic nobility and appointed a new commission to investigate the trouble. One of the five representatives of the Baltic gentry on this commission was Baron Hamilcar v. Foelkersam. His project, based on the principles declared by the commission of 1842, was accepted, and in 1849 confirmed by the Tsar as a provisional law for six years. In 1848 the old order in western Europe was seriously threatened, and the revolutionary influence spread to the east. The agrarian law of 1849 created two new categories of property: (1) land belonging to the landlord but which had to be either leased to the peasants or purchased by them (*vaku* land); (2) quota-lands, to be given to manorial servants. This was the first legal basis for the creation of peasant farms which eventually became, in fact, their own property. It was indeed a significant step in the future development of agrarian legislation. However, six years later the gentry of Vidzeme gathered their whole strength in an attempt to cancel the law of 1849, but due to the

outbreak of the Crimean War and internal changes in Russia the attempt was unsuccessful.

The reforms of 1860 and after, which belong to the age of Russian liberal reforms, brought some new and definite relief to the Baltic peasants. The first was the right to move freely from place to place (1863). Previous to this, such movement had in fact been rather restricted in spite of laws to the contrary. Next followed the abolition of *corvées* and the replacement of statute labour either by payment in money or kind. The Russian government put pressure of the Landtag of 1865 in order to get their consent to the abolition of contracts of servitude. This came into force in all three Baltic provinces in April 1868. At the same time the Russian government put pressure on the Landtag of 1865 in order to get ment as applied to peasants. Then came reforms of local self-governments: from 19 February 1866 the rural communes were released from the guardianship of the landlords and could freely elect their elders, councils and courts. This did much to further the political education of the Latvians. From the economic point of view these reforms led to an increase in the purchase of farms from the large landowners, which in turn resulted in the development of a strong Latvian agrarian class.

It is interesting to note when similar reforms took place elsewhere. In Europe, serfdom, a tradition which had lasted since the 15th century, was swept away in the period from the middle of the 18th century until the first quarter of the 19th century. In the German countries a law of Frederick the Great issued in 1763 limited the burdens of the peasants. In the state's household domains this change occurred during the period 1777—1808, but on the estates of the landlords not until 1807. Further relief of the German peasants followed as a consequence of the revolution in 1848. In France, serfdom fell together with other feudal establishments during the Revolution; in Denmark between 1784—1807, and in the Netherlands 1798—1814. In Poland serfdom was abolished by Napoleon's constitution of 1807, but a real improvement in the conditions of the peasants there did not occur before 1846 and again in 1864. But further east serfdom lingered on not to be abolished in Russia until 1861, in Roumania in 1859—1864, and in Japan it lasted until 1871.

All the countries around the Baltic littoral have always been influenced by the west—particularly so in this case,—but in Sweden and to an extent also in Norway serfdom in the true sense never existed.

Turning once more to the Latvian peasant we see that after these reforms he had to face the economic problems which his old masters had faced and solved a generation earlier. But among certain educated circles a new interest made its appearance—an interest in the folklore and his-

tory of the country. Interest in such things was shown particularly by clergymen. Indeed interest in all national questions grew stronger.

This interest expressed itself in the foundation of different historical societies such as the Latvian Literary Society in Jelgava (Lettisch-Litterarische Gesellschaft, 1816), and later was founded, in Rīga, *Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* (1834) which has done fine work. Then there was the first more or less systematic attempt to collect folk-songs—an attempt inspired by Herder. Such collections are: Bergmann (1807-1808); the well-known Büttner collection (1844); and the Latvian editions by Sprogis (1857—1860). Similar interest was displayed in archaeology and history. It will suffice to mention here the works of F. Kruse,⁸ and the linguistic and ethnographic treatises by A. Bielenstein.

The first Latvian newspapers appeared at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. In 1797—1798 Pastor Watson from Lestene published a quarterly periodical. The first Latvian weekly newspaper was *Latviešu Avīzes* which was founded in 1822 by the same Watson. More newspapers and journalists appeared during the period of the great reforms.

It would be in place here to mention besides the writings of the Baltic-Germans some works by contemporary foreign observers of Latvian life and their ideas on the future of the country. Let us begin with Count de Bray,⁹ who has already been quoted in chapter XII. It is quite surprising how little attention has been paid to him and how little use has been made of his astute observations on the Latvians and Estonians, with whom he was familiar for many years. Having described a Latvian house he says: *ils choisissent autant qu'ils peuvent, pour construire leurs maisons les bords d'un lac ou d'une rivière; ils aiment qu'on les établisse dans le voisinage des grands bois et des marais.* We can clearly perceive the practical wisdom of these people and their wide perspective of the remote past. Now for a quotation concerning their national spirit: *Les hommes, surtout les Lettoniens, sont généralement d'une belle taille, et ont une physionomie tout-à-fait européenne. En général la nation lettonne est belle et propre à tout.* If one of them were bred in favourable conditions he would develop *avantageusement, au physique et au moral.* Do not these quiet words express a stern condemnation of the "bearers of culture" and their senseless ways with the Latvians, which have lasted for centuries? Also of great value are Count de Bray's observations on the importance of folksongs in Latvian life, particularly in the life of the women (*elles sont les poètes et les musiciennes de la nation* etc.). His descriptions of the characters and appearance of the Latvians and the Estonians, of their ancient traditions, of their moral clarity and honesty, of their bad relations with the Germans and want of liberty are all vividly depicted.

Now let us quote a Scotsman, Leich Ritchie Esq.¹⁰ He devotes the first three chapters of his book to the Latvians. Conditions in Latvia made a sad impression on this author who was so accustomed to liberty and the wide horizons of his native country; yet he possessed a "clinical eye" with which he diagnosed the social diseases. "Slavery, the great barrier against civilisation, has been overthrown; and I venture to predict that fifty years hence the traveller in the Baltic provinces of Russia will find a free and flourishing peasantry." His description of a rustic wedding in Vidzeme is characteristic, and he makes a number of pleasant observations on the Latvian countryside with its dark pine woods dotted with light birches "gleaming with a spectral whiteness through the mysterious gloom." Among these forests are wide fields with "numerous farmsteads and cottages scattered over the face of rather a picturesque country." With great visual power he describes ancient inns with their immense stables, in one such inn he spent a night: "At the inn where I slept I found a clean and comfortable bed . . . I was lulled to sleep by the songs of a large company of peasants assembled in the kitchen. Some of them sung in parts, while the others contributed the chorus. The music was in general simple and mournful, and many of the voices were singularly sweet."

A German observer, J. G. Kohl (1842),¹¹ left many descriptions of his travels in Europe particularly of rarely visited places (Ireland, Scotland, Dalmatia etc.). He was interested in Latvian problems, and there are quite a number of pages in his book dealing with them. Here we will briefly mention only the main points touched upon by Kohl. He was also struck by the keen difference in the costumes, customs and characters of the various districts. Significant and interesting from his point of view is the history of the Balts. The Baltic German historians of the 19th century seemed to him miserable anachronists; he and others thought the history of the Balts rather mysterious: "the interesting but almost unnoticed races of the Letts and Lithuanians are a perpetual and puzzling enigma. Lonely and unconnected with any of the surrounding nations, they occupy their little nook of northern land." Kohl wrote much about the character of the Latvian nation; in the political sense they appeared to him backward, as they had not enjoyed freedom for any length of time (poor social relations, almost morbid individualism). He raised the problem of the future of Latvia. For Kohl, as also for Merkel, Watson and others, a sure guarantee for the future of the Latvians was their intelligence and ability. Kohl then goes on to describe a Latvian home, a wedding, their dress and their love of horses. Last but not least he describes Latvian songs and poetry. There are many descriptions of the revolts of 1777, 1784 and particularly that of 1802 led by Konrad who was known in Rīga as "the Latvian

Buonaparte." In addition to these authors we must remind the reader of the writings of Sir Walter Scott on Latvian folksongs.¹²

But let us return to the representatives of the master nation and their care for "their Latvians." Soon after the liberation, the Germans began to discuss the Latvian question. They discussed the future of the country, their relations with the Latvians and ways in which they could tame and guide them. Some, of course, were ultra-conservative yet others were progressive and wished to be the friends of the Latvians. But always they asked themselves if it were possible or desirable to germanize these people. The majority, especially those nearest to the nobility, were against germanization of the Latvians and wanted to maintain their present undisturbed position of privilege, or as H. Prutz wrote during the First World War, "to fulfill their obligations as a master race." Others, however, were like the well-known churchman F. Walter, who assumed that there was no chance of the Latvians achieving nationhood, and so desired to strengthen the Baltic German position against the approaching flood of russification; they wanted to melt Latvians and Germans into some kind of unit. A few craftsmen, clerks, and servants of the large estates had already been melted into such figures, but the Latvian country folk made fun of them, and such types were often the subject of ridicule in contemporary literature. But some foreigners held a strong belief in a real Latvian future—one of them was Watson. However, Bishop Ulmann (died 1871) in his unpublished work *On Latvian Nationality*, in spite of his long contact with the Latvians, came to a rather pessimistic conclusion: "they form a small tribe and nobody really knows whether they will one day form a nation or not. Their whole progress has been helped by foreigners . . . the Latvian language will not flourish but will degenerate." The advocates of germanization held that a small ethnic group like the Latvians should make a sacrifice and flow into another larger and more powerful group: "We must welcome and not despise the foreign element amongst us if they accept our teaching," wrote Walter. These theoretical views of Walter honestly agreed with his action, for it was he who was responsible for the education of the future Latvian patriot J. Cimze, who was the founder of the first training college for teachers in Valmiera, in 1839, and rector there for 40 years.

Education in Latvia in the 19th century was in a miserable condition. The little that was taught to the children there was taught by the peasants themselves, and consisted mainly of readings from the Holy Scriptures. In the emancipation laws of the peasants in Kurzeme provision was made for one school to be built for every thousand inhabitants, and in Vidzeme there was to be one elementary school in every parish and one centre for higher education in each district. The peasants were to pay

for the upkeep of the schools and the landlords were to control and supervise them. Yet owing to the uncertain economic position of the country these orders were not carried out; the peasants were too poor, and the landowners were not prepared to take over such a financial burden, and so the whole plan remained on paper. There was some improvement in 1832 when a law was passed establishing counsels of the evangelical churches. Many well-known clergymen approved the propagation of knowledge among the Latvians, and under their influence some landlords established a few schools. In 1840 the Landtag appointed a central council for schools which was confirmed with some changes by the laws of 1849 and 1860. Bishop Ulmann was for a long time the chairman of this council. But Kurzeme did not obtain its own school council until 1875. Throughout the same period teachers' colleges were being established; as has already been mentioned the first one was founded at Valmiera in 1839 and continued its work up to 1890. In the eighteen fifties many new schools were opened, by which time the peasants had improved their economic position and Latvian teachers were available, some of them old pupils of J. Cimze. Cimze, apart from training teachers, had also found time to collect the melodies of folksongs and to arrange them for choirs. It may be as well to note here that the elementary and district schools played a large part in the development of national thought during the period 1860—1880.

At the beginning of the 19th century appeared the first Latvian authors: Blind Henry, A. Līventāls, A. Leitāns, E. Dinsbergis and last but not least the father of the Latvian short story, J. Neikēns.

There were at least two generations of Latvian authors behind the national literature when it broke out into full bloom.

It is interesting to see how the Germans greeted Latvian poetry. The writer of not an unpleasant criticism of Blind Henry's poetry said, "We are not particularly surprised when a blind Latvian writes poetry, we are surprised that a Latvian should write poetry at all." Hugenberg appreciated that "an invisible world did enlighten his mind." Indeed the terrible disease which struck the author in childhood enabled him to discover things which could not be seen by his fellow countrymen. His poetry, although in the taste of the age, reveals some original national motives; it is quiet and resigned, deeply Christian and morally fresh, yet understandably melancholy.

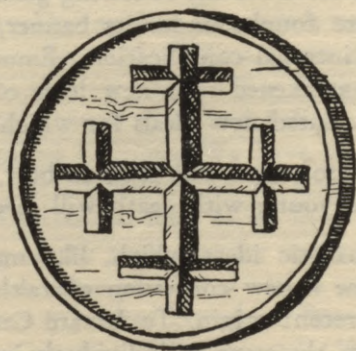
Līventāls and Leitāns were both inspired by Stender, both were Latvians by birth, and the spirit of the country is in their poetry; both in their old age participated in the national movement; and both were born to poor parents which enabled them to understand more easily the needs and

distress of the nation. Līventāls, a son of a farm labourer became the father of a professor. In his poetry there is a determined prophetic note:

After a hundred years the Latvian songs
Will be chanted by great crowds.

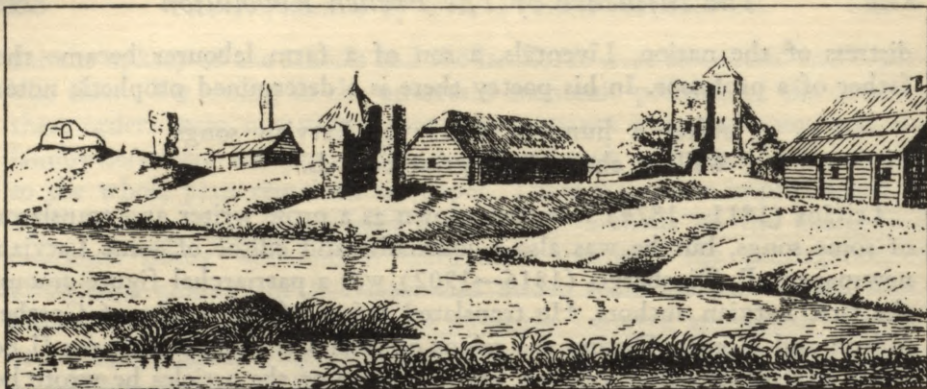
Leitāns (1815—1874) is better known as a prose writer and translator of some songs, but he was also a journalist and editor of some Latvian newspapers. E. Dinsberģis (1816—1902) was a patriarchal figure among the first Latvian authors. He translated a few of the works of Goethe, Milton and Homer. During the reigns of Nicholas I and Alexander II he was a newspaper correspondent, and for some of the articles he wrote he was sent into exile. He also wrote short stories, plays and epic poems, but his importance in Latvian literature is that he freed it from the guardianship of the Russians and the Germans.

J. Neikens lived only a short life. The years of his childhood and youth were passed during the period of national revival in the eighteen forties, and most of his work he completed during the eighteen sixties when Latvian poetry was reaching new heights (his *Ceļa biedrs* was started in 1863). With the help of Bishop Walter he became a pastor and used his wonderful gift of eloquence to educate the people of his parish. He organized the first local singing festival in 1864 at Dikļi and in literature he created the Latvian short story. Yet it was difficult for him to conceal the growing conflict in his personal life, for his wife was of German parents, and hard work and family troubles led him to an early death. Such were his misfortunes and such were the difficulties and dangers which faced the founders of Latvian literature.



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* Property mark. This form of cross is to be met with frequently in Latvia as early as the 11th century, when it appears on ornamented pendants and on shawls, decorated with patterns of interlaced small bronze rings.



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XIV

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The French Revolution shook the social foundations of the *Ancien Régime* and brought the *Tiers Etat*, which was already conscious of its economic power and cultural significance, on to the scene of world history. The revolutionaries felt called upon to take over the centralized state, the imposing product of the period of absolutism, and to develop it according to their ideas. In their turn, those of the 19th century, living in the golden age of the bourgeoisie created their own set of political problems. One of these concepts was to acquire the strength of a religious dogma which became a creed for the following generations, namely nationalism. New wars were fought under its banner, and it created fresh external conflicts and internal complications. Emotions deeply rooted in the human soul were awakened to a new lease of life, took the shape of new formulas and created new ideals for which

“Many hearts so warm will cease to beat,
Many lives so young with death will meet.” (Rainis)

The militant nationalistic ideas which, like magic formulas, stirred the peoples and became a new confession of faith in the 19th century are of comparatively recent origin. To Lazare Carnot the nations were “in the political system the same as individuals in the social system; as

* The town of Piltene about 1825. On the banks of a tributary of the Venta river among the newly erected Latvian wooden buildings can be seen the ruins of the ancient palace of the Bishop of Kurland or Piltene. This castle is mentioned for the first time in 1309. In 1585 it was already partly destroyed and in 1750 its last remaining wing collapsed.

individuals they have their rights — the law of nature requires respect for these rights... It is our principle that every nation, however small its country, be absolute master on its territory; that before the law it is the equal of the greatest and nobody can legally attack its independence."¹ And Jean Jacques Rousseau's great disciple, Immanuel Kant,² makes a clear-cut distinction between the views of the 18th and the 19th centuries stating that: "A state is not a property (*patrimonium*). It is a society of human persons which alone has the right to command and give orders to it." We see clearly how great was the inherent force of these theories and how clear was the light of their moral ardour. Even today, one hundred and fifty years later, after wholesale destruction and violence, despite the tragic contradiction between force and morality, and between right and might, humanity still strives to believe in such ideas, and the mighty of this world, in order to retain their power, must pay them constant lip-service.

But Mazzini presented a more emotional conception of nationalism. His "mission" theory is as follows: "Life is a mission. Virtue is sacrifice. Only sacrifice is sanctified. Nationality is a common thought, a common principle, a common goal... Nationality is the share which God gives to a people in the work of humanity. It is its mission, its task to be accomplished on earth so that God's thought may become real in this world. The work which gives it the right of citizenship in humanity."³

And G. Mancini⁴ expresses a similar conception when he says: "This vital spirit, the divine complement of the existence of a nation, this principle of its visible existence, what does it consist of? It is the awareness of nationality, a feeling which it has acquired from itself and which makes it capable of constituting itself as such within and without." Then a Latvian, Kronvalds,⁵ applied these ideas to the people of his own country when he wrote in 1872: "We are not merely men... we are also a nation, i.e. a community which has distinctive features such as language and customs, spiritual gifts and beliefs. We are members of a community and are called Latvians. We have the same rights as others to tend and maintain our traditions and we also have the right to exist, grow and prosper as Latvians as long as we live."

From the beginning of the 19th century to the early part of the 20th century we may discern three periods of action motivated by these conceptions of nationalism: (1) from Napoleon Buonaparte's time to 1848; (2) from 1848 to the Congress of Berlin; and (3) the period from 1905 to the Versailles Treaty.⁶

In the early 19th century, nationalism was the cause of numerous insurrections and rebellions, some of which gave rise to international complications (Greece). There were rebellions in Spain, Serbia, Greece and

Poland. In 1834 the *Zollverein* came into being and proved to be the foundation on which the future German Reich was to be built. In Ireland, too, there was a national rebellion under the banner of religion (O'Connell). These tidal waves of nationalism produced concrete political results, such as the proclamation of an independent Greece in 1829, and the founding of Belgium in 1830.

Starting from Paris in 1848, revolutions betraying national and social unrest broke out over the greater part of Europe: in Palermo, Milan, Venice, Rome and other Italian towns, in many German towns (the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848), in Vienna, in Prague, and in Hungary. But the old empires and the traditional way of life were strong enough to resist; the real political achievements of 1848 were smaller than might have been expected. The only tangible result was the Confederation of Switzerland. The first Italian war of independence (1848—1849) ended lamentably with the battle of Novara, the abdication and emigration to Portugal of Charles-Albert, and the collapse of the Roman republic at the point of General Oudinot's bayonets. Meanwhile the German confederation developed at a slow pace and waited on its master Bismarck. National separatism in Hungary collapsed. The Balkans were only gradually shaking off the heavy fetters of the Ottoman Empire; and in Eastern Europe, only the eyes of the observant could discern the sprouting of future shoots.

Let us, however, not forget Italy's second war of independence (1859—1861), the breaking of Austrian power in Northern Italy as a result of the intervention of Napoleon III, the end of the Pope's secular power, the occupation of Rome, and the eventual unification of the country.⁷ Let us also recall the fierce Polish-Lithuanian rebellion of 1863—64, which was followed by fierce Russian reprisals.

The inherent strength of the national movements is proved by the fact that as soon as an opportunity arose they compelled the men who shaped the map of Europe to change it. The Berlin Congress, after the Russo-Turkish war whose outcome was on the whole unfavourable to Russia, took place when Bismarck was at the height of his power: "in eight years (ending in 1870) he had humbled England, crushed Austria and France, and created Germany."⁸

Although brought to power by the tide of nationalism, he was full of contempt for the small nations (cf. Chancellor Bülow's simile of the hammer and the anvil). However, for the purposes of his diplomatic policy, he furthered the political emancipation of the Balkan peoples. The following are short chronological reminders: in 1861 Roumania was a union of the Dukedoms of Moldavia and Wallachia (United Principalities), in 1881 it became a kingdom; in 1878 Serbia helped the Russians

to vanquish the Turks, thus settling old accounts with them, in 1882 it became a kingdom; in 1878 Bulgaria was an autonomous dukedom, in 1887 it was united under Prince Ferdinand, and in 1908 became a kingdom; and Albania along with other small nations achieved independence in the early part of this century.

By the end of the second period Italy had been united, the German Empire forged and the system in the Balkans re-arranged.

Albania became free in 1912, followed by Finland in 1917, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in 1918, and, under different circumstances, Ireland in 1922.

This brief chronological survey suggests the following: (1) the 19th century released, furthered and gave ideological schooling to nationalism and thereby promoted the rise of politically-national states. Once established, these units could not be disregarded. (2) Nationalism reduced the number of small states in Europe by bringing about the unification of those in Germany and those in Italy. (3) Nationalism developed faster in western Europe than in eastern Europe.

In eastern Europe, specifically in countries controlled by or subject to Russia, national movements underwent a peculiar development. Of these countries dominated by Russia we can distinguish three geographical zones: (1) Poland and Lithuania, (2) the Baltic area, *i.e.* Latvia and Estonia, and (3) Finland.

In Poland and Lithuania the old ties of union were still felt, chiefly because the Lithuanian aristocracy was largely under Polish influence and only gradually did it come under the sway of Lithuanian nationalism during the 19th century. In the revolution of 1830—1831 Lithuania followed Poland.⁹ An account of Russian reprisals in 1831 is given by T. G. Chase: "Upon the recovery of the Russian troops, hundreds had been brutally slain at Asmena and other towns in the autumn of 1831. In 1832, the Wilno University was closed, and later its library and other wealth were transferred to Kiev. Participants in the revolt were deported and exiled to Caucasus or Siberia. Numerous landed estates of the gentry were confiscated and many were deprived of their status in the ranks of the nobility. Russian colonists were transported to and settled in Lithuania. The Russian language was proclaimed the official language of the country. The expression 'Northwestern Provinces of Russia' was substituted for the name of Lithuania in official documents. Monasteries were closed", etc.¹⁰ The two peoples drew far nearer to each other during the insurrection of 1863—64, for they suffered together under heavy Russian reprisals.

The repression of this insurrection was characteristic of the methods employed by the Russians. The fame of Count Muraviov — nicknamed

the Hangman (*viesbatel*)—spread far and wide and even the *London Times* mentioned him with disgust. On the other hand, such “liberal-minded” Russians as Tiuchev and Nekrasov referred to him with gratitude. The gallows at Vilna became a symbol in Lithuanian history. Thousands of Lithuanians were deported to Siberia and many emigrated to western Europe and America. Misery and terrorism reigned in the country itself. One more point may interest a foreign reader. One of Muraviov’s orders prohibited the printing of Lithuanian books and newspapers in Latin type; only prayer books in the Russian print were permitted.¹¹ The obvious aim of these measures was to nip Lithuanian nationalism in the bud. In this way the national rebirth of Lithuania was delayed for several decades. However, Lithuanians moved to East Prussia and continued their work there. *Auszra*, a periodical, which marked the coming of a new era, was edited by Dr. J. Basanavicius, a veteran of the Lithuanian national movement, and was published in East Prussia in 1883, i.e. twenty years after the publication of the Latvian newspaper *Pēterburgas Avīzes*.

Among the emigrants from Poland after the revolutions of 1831 and 1864 were Chopin, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, T. Lelewel and many others. And among the emigrants from Lithuania were T. Norbutas (Narbut), who wrote a *History of the Lithuanian Nation*, 9 vol., 1835—1841 (his son was one of the leaders of the revolution in 1863—64), and S. Daukantas, who wrote of the *Achievements of Highland and Lowland Lithuanians*.

Before we pass on to the story of the Latvians and the Estonians during the same years, let us first say a few words about the Finns.

The vastly superior Russian forces eventually overcame the tenacious Finnish resistance and in the peace treaty of Fredrikshamn (1809) Sweden abandoned to Russia its “bridge head” province which it had held for six hundred years. Alexander I immediately proclaimed it incorporated in his Empire for all time, to be separated again from Russia only by the will of the Almighty.¹² But to the Finns he spoke these words at the opening of the Landtag at Porvoo in 1809: “Called upon by Providence to rule a good and law-abiding people I wished its representatives to be gathered round me. I wished to meet you in order to give you new evidence of my efforts to promote the well-being of your home country, I have promised to maintain your constitution, your fundamental laws. Your summoning to this place is a pledge of this promise. This body of the Estates shall form the basis of your political institutions etc.”¹³ The Tsar also made his appearance at the closing meeting of the Landtag (18 July) and spoke words of historical significance saying, “now the Finnish people have been raised to the status of a nation.” These words

led Finnish patriots to call the official minutes of this meeting of the Landtag the Finnish Magna Charta.

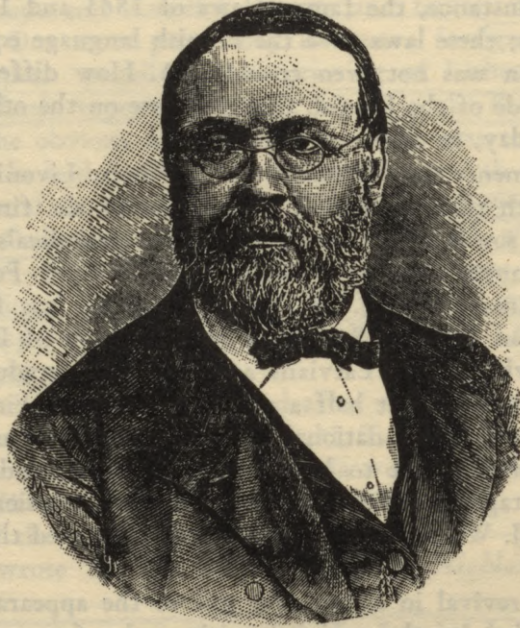
Strangely enough, even Nicholas I and Alexander III on the whole kept these promises given to the Finnish people up to the time of real russification. The whole 19th century was tolerable and even favourable for the Finns. For instance, the famous laws of 1863 and 1887 on the use of the languages; these laws gave the Finnish language equal rights with Swedish (Russian was not even considered). How different were conditions on one side of the Finnish Gulf to those on the other — the same is true even to-day, in 1950.

The developments in Estonia, *i.e.* northern Livonia, were closely wrapped up with those in Latvia. The home of the first distinguished patriots is in the south of the country. The first periodicals were published there: J. W. Jannsen's *Pärno Postimees*, later *Eesti Postimees*, began to appear in Pärnu in 1857. In 1865 *Vanemuine* was founded and in 1871 the Estonian Literary Society. The University of Dorpat (Tartu) was the place where most Latvians and Estonians graduated (the first two generations) for about half a century up to the First World War. The central figure of the national political, economic, and cultural life was C. R. Jakobsen, next to him, his collaborator, and later his most conservative antagonist, Pastor Hurt, deserves mention. The writers R. Kreutzwald, J. W. Jannsen, mentioned above, added their share to the national revival.

The national revival in Latvia was due to the appearance of an élite shaped and guided by the national spirit under favourable conditions. The national renaissance of Latvia is associated with the activities of our university graduates who began to unite in the eighteen sixties. At the same time the Latvian peasant was freeing himself from service to the landowners, and he began to buy land and to accumulate wealth. This new Latvian élite severed all ties with the Baltic Germans. Slowly, hampered by serious difficulties, these young men led their nation out of the social status into which it had been "pawned" by the German conquerors, to use one of Merkel's expressions. In 1856 appeared *Dziesminas* by J. Alunāns, which clearly shows what horizons were already opening to the Latvian intelligentsia in foreign and classical literature;¹⁴ in 1857 appeared K. Valdemār's *Über die Heranziehung der Letten und Esten zum Seewesen*, which reiterated the old Latvian fatal longing for the sea. J. Alunāns 1832—1869, a linguist and poet, who was well versed in the classical languages, did much to further the development of the Latvian language.

K. Valdemārs (1825—1891) was the spiritual leader of the national movement. His main interest was economics, yet he was also interested

in journalism, in the Latvian language and in Latvian history. Indeed, he was one of the first Latvians to attempt a study of the history of his country. His strong personality vividly impressed people in Dorpat (Tartu), St. Petersburg and Moscow. He gathered round him ardent



Krišjānis Valdemārs (1825—1891), the leader and inspirer of the Latvian national movement, particularly interested in economic problems.

Latvian patriots and organized their work, coping all the time with pecuniary difficulties and growing pressure from the Russian administration. Sensing intuitively the inherent gifts of his people, he was never tired of encouraging and stimulating them in his writings, speeches and in personal conversations. He urged the peasants to buy land and thus gain financial independence. He advised coastal inhabitants to engage in shipping and in a letter addressed to the Kurzeme fishermen he wrote: "... the sea is a fertile field for those who know how to plough and harrow it with the right implements, this field belongs to the able and to those wishing to till it, it brings freedom and the light of knowledge to everyone."

Naturally, Valdemārs, from the very outset, met with irreconcilable opposition from the Baltic Germans, the holders of economic and intel-

lectual power in the country. No compromise was possible. Valdemārs's murderous remark about the Baltic Germans' having "flint nails" expressed something which the Latvians had long felt deeply and painfully. However, in this unequal fight the "Young Latvians" needed help; they needed allies, at least during the early stages of their struggle. This explains the paradox in the Latvian national movement, namely that some of these patriots looked for support to the Russians. One of those who helped Valdemārs was Grand Duke Konstantin Mikhailovich, a leading figure in Russia's overseas commerce. He used to say that Valdemārs was the only man in Russia who had any real knowledge of shipping problems. This strange coalition could not last. With the approach of russification, the Latvians broke off their friendly relations with the Russians and manoeuvred as best they could between their two powerful enemies — the Russians and the Baltic Germans.

In 1862 a Latvian language newspaper, *Pēterburgas Avīzes*, appeared in St. Petersburg. At times there was only one man, K. Barons, on its staff. Its harsh voice was like the sound of a bugle, says Professor L. Bērziņš. But its life was short, for it was finally suppressed in 1865 and even prior to that date it had on several occasions been banned. Anyhow, it was a great thing to have a publication of this kind appear in the centre of the Russian monarchy where Baltic German influence was so powerful. In character it was quite unlike all earlier Latvian language publications, such as *Latviešu Avīzes* (founded in 1822), *Tas Latviešu Laužu Draugs* (1832) and even *Mājas Viesis* (1856). As conditions grew more difficult in St. Petersburg, the small group of active Latvians moved to Moscow. Meanwhile there appeared on the shores of the Baltic a new literary school. This school had been founded in western Europe by Macpherson's romantic poems (1760), and Herder's *Stimmen der Völker* and in a more critical and scientific manner by F. R. Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795). The Finns were the first of the eastern Baltic peoples to engage along this road. The first edition of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* bears the date 1835. The Estonians, kin to the Finns, were the next. F. K. Fählmann (1798—1850) and R. Kreutzwald (1803—1882) gave the Estonians their *Kalevipoeg* in 1862. At the same time Lithuanian folksongs stimulated linguistic study.

The preparatory work of collecting Latvian *dainas* was done by Bergmann, Büttner, Sproģis and Brīvzemnieks to mention only a few. K. Barons took over this collection and made it his life-work. He appealed to the Latvians to send him the texts of these songs, and his initiative met with a lively response.

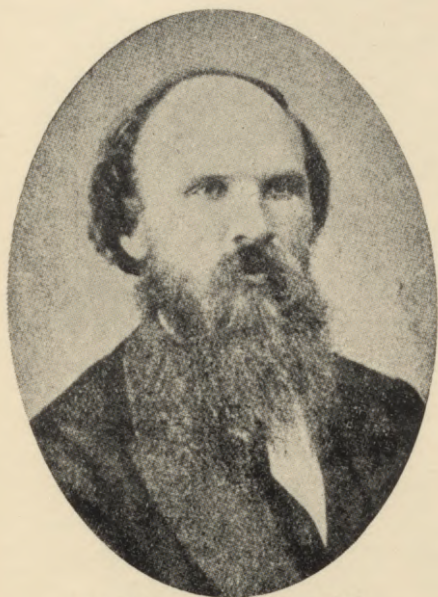
Auseklis (1850—1879), in Latvian literature, represents the romantic and mystic search for the nation's soul. His verses are full of pseudo-

mythology; his literary views may have at times a naïve enthusiasm, but the rebellious impetuosity of his nature and his forceful aesthetic visions left a deep impression.

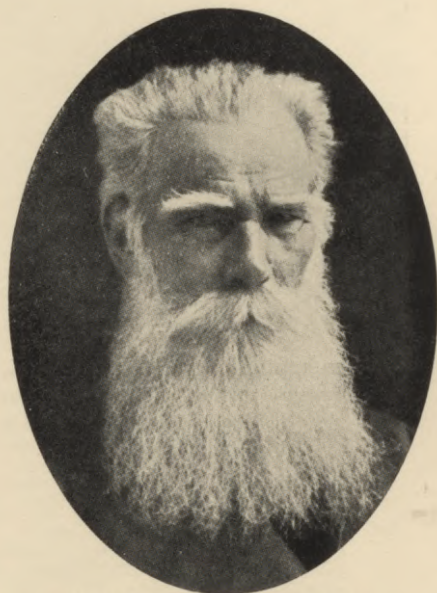
Let us now consider the changes which took place in the economic field and their implications for the national cause of Latvia. A rapid industrial expansion started in Riga and in other Latvian towns in the eighteen sixties. It led to an influx of Latvian country folk to the cities. This movement gained momentum after 1866 when the guild system was abolished in the crafts which from then on were open to the Latvians. Previously the Latvians could join the guilds only if they renounced their nationality. The number of Latvian industrial workers was constantly growing. In 1840 there were 46 factories with about 2,000 workers in Riga. In 1864 there were 90 factories with 6,000 workmen, in 1874 the number had increased to 142 factories with 12,000 workers, while in 1897 the number of industrial workers reached 148,000.

The economic importance of the Latvian peasant grew as he bought land. We can mark the following periods in this respect: (1) in the eighteen thirties and forties, the peasants, reduced to misery through the reforms introduced at the beginning of the century which gave them the so-called "bird's freedom," had little hope of improving their position; (2) new reforms, from the eighteen forties to the Regulations of 1865, failed to produce an increase in the peasants' purchases of land; land was bought at a very slow rate, the reasons being lack of credit and distrust on the part of the peasants, despite the fact that a special Credit Bank was opened with the support of Baron Fölkersam. (3) Since the eighteen sixties and especially during the early eighteen seventies (*e.g.* 1873), the movement gained strength and by 1905 about 87% of the farms belonging to the privately owned landed estates in Vidzeme had been sold to the farmers themselves. By 1901 the peasants in Vidzeme had paid in cash or bonds 76 million gold roubles for what centuries ago had belonged to them. In Kurzeme, the economic conditions in the eighteen thirties and forties were better, on the whole, but the social struggle became at times disturbing. In Kurzeme, in 1910, 99 % of the farms had been sold, while in Vidzeme it was 90% in 1912.

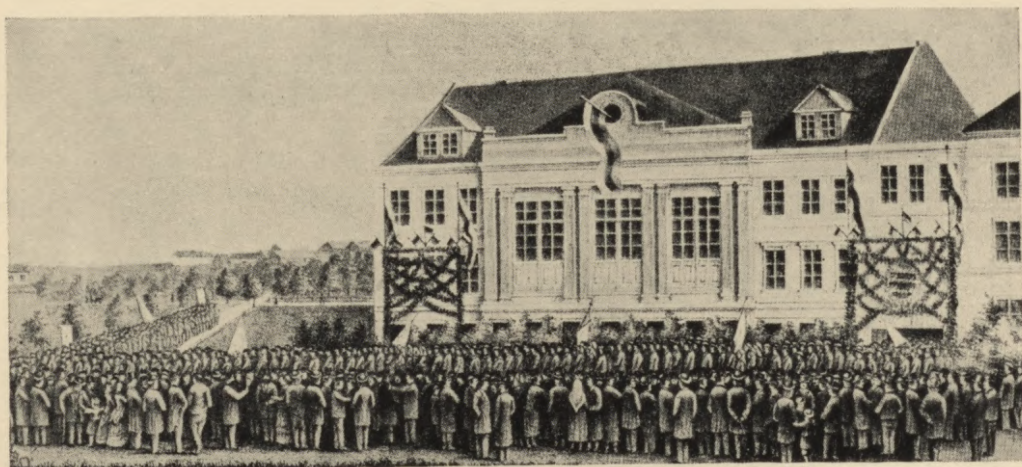
Latgale, Latvia's third province, has a history of its own. In 1772, after the first partition of Poland, it was incorporated with the Russian government (province) of Vitebsk. As a result, the condition of the peasantry was much the same as in Russia proper and improved throughout the 19th century at a slower rate than in Vidzeme and Kurzeme. In 1847 serious riots broke out directed against the Russian and Polish landowners. In 1861, in Latgale, as in all Russia, the peasants were emancipated from serfdom. The Polish Revolt of 1863 was supported by many



Atis Kronvalds (1837-1875), publicist, public speaker and man-of-letters who had a profound influence on the Latvian national revival.



Krišjānis Barons (1835-1923), collector and compiler of Latvian folk-songs (*dainas*). His collection appeared in the period 1894-1915 in six volumes.



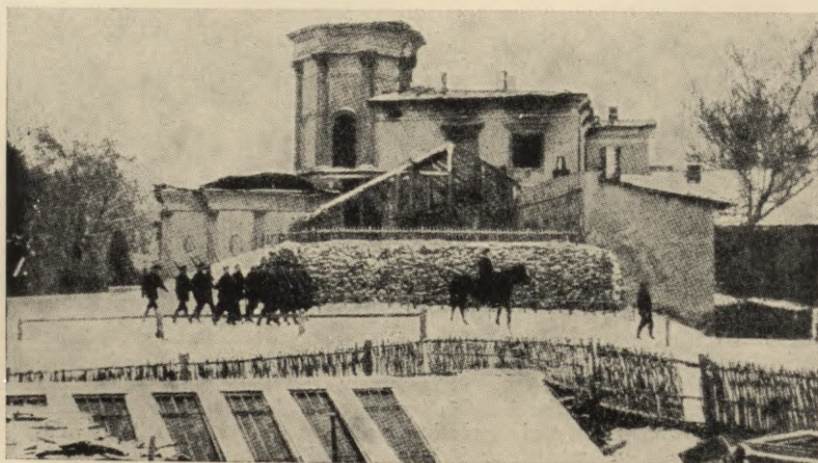
Procession of the choirs, participating in the First Song Festival, at the House of the Latvian Society in Riga in 1873. This Society, originally founded as a welfare organisation, played a very important part in the Latvian national movement. It arranged the national Song Festivals, did much for the development of the Latvian language and learning and fostered national spirit among the Latvians. Among its early prominent members were Atis Kronvalds, an orator of renown, and the poet A. Pumpurs.



Latvian revolutionary forces at Rūjiena in 1905. The revolution, which in Russia proper opposed the autocratic oppressive regime, had in Latvia a national significance and was directed against Russification and the privileges of the Baltic German barons. The rural districts eventually became the centre of unrest.



A representative of the revolutionaries hands a written declaration to General A. A. Orlov in his headquarters at the Koknese Castle. In 1905 several Russian generals were entrusted with the suppression of the rebellion in the Baltic. They had considerable numbers of troops at their disposal. General A. A. Orlov was the most ruthless among them.



Russian soldiers take possession of the Ringmundshof Manor at Koknese, burned by the revolutionaries. The hatred of the Baltic German barons, the age-old oppressors of the peasants, took the form of destruction of manors. In Vidzeme 72 were burned.

Polish aristocrats from Latgale. As a result, in an effort to do away with the Polish national movement in Latgale, the Russian Government adopted measures designed to strengthen the Latvian peasantry; the peasants were permitted to buy the land they tilled on an instalment plan which ran for a maximum for 49 years and was to expire in 1911. The events of 1905 speeded up this development, and in 1907 all farmers' land debts were cancelled. The peasants became the owners of their land, but the size of their farms was too small to provide an adequate living.

Under the guidance and initiative of K. Valdemārs a Latvian merchant fleet was built up. In 1914 on the eve of the First World War it consisted of 333 ships (274 sailing ships and 59 steamers). All this had been developed in 50 years, starting from scratch. During the war 90% of the ships were lost, but during the period of Latvia's independence the merchant fleet was built up once more.

All these geographical zones—Poland and Lithuania, the Baltic area, and Finland—were subject to russification. H. Kruus states: "Under Alexander II, the problem of russification was only an item for discussion in the press. No measures were taken. Conditions changed radically under Alexander III who was a partisan of the policy of militant nationalism as represented by the Procurator General of the Holy Synod, Pobiedonostsev, and the Moscow journalist Katkov . . ."15 The aim was to draw the border districts further under the influence of Russia both physically and spiritually. Y. Samarin's journey through the Russian borderlands resulting in his book *Okrainy Rossii* and Senator Manassein's notes on his official inspection of the Baltic area (1882—83) portrayed the prevailing ideas. Manassein inquired into the social and economic relations between the big landowners and the peasants. Even in a case like this, educated Latvians could do much to help their countrymen; Manassein's interpreter was a well-known Latvian lawyer, A. Stērste, who did his best to reveal the sad results of the age-long oppression of his people. As russification was intensified it became more and more difficult for the Latvian intellectuals to manoeuvre between the Russians and the Baltic Germans, for these two, realizing the threat to their position through the national movements, drew closer and closer together—in 1905 they acted jointly in suppressing the revolution in the Baltic.

Yet the first blow struck for russification was aimed at the Baltic Germans, as they were the strongest single factor at that time. The Baltic German administration was excluded from the management of rural and municipal schools (1884, 1887). In 1889 the University of Tartu came under Russian management, and the civil administration was then russified in language, law, police, and such like. The Greek Orthodox Church was given priority over other churches. Then came the turn of

the Latvians. Russian was introduced in all schools as the main language. The Latvian language was used only in the first forms. Russian police and officials were imported to put down any manifestation of Latvian spirit. Censorship became stringent. Hopes for equitable reforms came to nothing, and the only achievement was Latvian participation in the councils and courts of the rural communes. Yet these measures failed to stem the ideas of national revival.

A look at the development of Latvian literature during the second half of the 19th century illustrates this. It throws light on the specific problems of the country and its people and it maintained a high standard of linguistic and literary expression. We can trace two currents of thought running through this literature. One of them was known as National Romanticism (c. 1850—1890), and was represented by such poets as Auseklis (1850—1879), A. Pumpurs (1841—1902), the author of the epic poem *Lāčplēsis*, and J. Lautenbachs-Jūsmiņš (1847—1928), who introduced folklore into our poetry. The second current was known as National Realism. Its most eminent member was J. Neikens, the creator of the Latvian short story, the two brothers Kaudzītes (Reinis 1839—1920, and Matīss 1848—1926), authors of the novel *Mērnieku laiki*, and Apsīšu Jēkabs (1858—1929), a painter of rural life. As the Latvian Encyclopaedia says: "Each of them depicts his own decade. The first, the time of serfdom, farm-leasing, changes in the economic life of the peasants. The brothers Kaudzītes show us something of the period when the peasants bought farms and of the social life of the eighteen seventies, and J. Apsītis tells us of the beginning of the cleft between the Latvian farmer and his farm hand."¹⁶

The late 19th century also saw the rise of the first generation of scientists and writers. Succeeding the philologist K. Biezbārdis (1806—1886), and the founder of our archaeological and geological studies K. Grewingk (1819—1887) we find such people as J. Lautenbachs, who studied our folklore, K. Milenbachs (1853—1916) who collected material for a large Latvian dictionary (supplemented and completed by J. Endzelins), A. Lerchis-Puškaitis (1859—1903) who collected Latvian tales and stories (this collection was supplemented and completed by P. Šmits) and many others.

Life in Latvia in the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century saw the following principal developments: (1) the appearance of national-revolutionary ideas which resulted in the revolution of 1905, and (2) an increasingly rapid economic and cultural progress despite unstable and insecure political conditions.

In Latvia deep social changes commenced as early as the eighteen eighties. Up to the middle of the 19th century, the Latvians were still

mainly peasants; but then a lower middle class came into being in the towns, and with the growth of capital in town and country the number of industrial and agricultural workers increased. A new political movement was formed known as the *Jaunā strāva*. In 1886 it started its first newspaper *Dienas Lapa*, but in 1893 this newspaper became Marxist in outlook. The graphic clear-cut verses of the young poet E. Veidenbaums, who swung between the irreconcilable extremes of materialist criticism and romantic sentiment, reflected the restless spirit of the time. In 1905 J. Rainis, while in exile, published his first volumes of verse, which were to have a profound influence on Latvians. The French Revolution, the rights of man, political freedom, democracy, and the parliamentary constitutions of France, Switzerland and England were the principal subjects of the ideological writings in *Dienas Lapa*, which was edited at this time by Rainis. It appealed not only to the workers but also to the peasants, craftsmen, the middle classes, professional men, and it preached equal rights for women. Thus followers were recruited not only from the urban proletariat but from other social classes as well, tired as they were of russification and the privileged status of the Baltic German nobility: "to all Latvians at that time socialism was the ideal of the future." But the educated Latvian revolutionaries found their inspiration in the new social ideas of western Europe.

After 1897, when nearly all the leaders of the various movements were arrested, the work continued underground; and as the labour movement continued to grow in strength, and as unrest spread among the workers, illegal Marxist groups were formed which became the foundation of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party (1904). Although illegal, its membership steadily increased. Its principal leaders were J. Jansons, J. Ozols and J. Asars.

It was natural that the industrial workers should be the first to join a Latvian revolutionary movement. However, in the Revolution of 1905 all kinds of people took part including middle-class people, intellectuals and, to a certain extent, even the well-to-do. In an historical sense it was a bourgeois and national revolution, for the entire nation fought the national and social oppressors. This is understandable in the light of the national problems of the "Baltic provinces", but positive national aims were not yet clearly conceived nor definitely formulated in 1905. The Social Democratic Party demanded the teaching of the Latvian language in schools, the use of the language in the administration and the courts, and democratic local self-government. Its programme also included a paragraph on the right of self-determination of nations, yet the leaders made no specific demand for an independent Latvian state, not even for any very far-reaching political autonomy. On agrarian questions the Social

Democratic Party did not demand that the manors be divided into small farms, and yet, if the Latvian Revolution of 1905 had not been quelled, the division of the large estates would have been inevitable as happened later in 1920.

By the side of the Social Democratic Party was another underground organization—the “Latvian Social Democratic Association” which was formed in 1903. Its leaders were M. Valters, Rolavs and J. Akurāters. The Association remained small and it differed from the Party in that it demanded self-determination for all nations under Russian rule. Further the Association demanded radical agrarian reforms including the redistribution of land, while the Social Democratic Party, be it noted, aimed at the nationalization of the land rather as has now been carried out by the Communists.

Events in Latvia in 1905 were not foreseen by the Social Democrats. On 9 January 1905 St. Petersburg police fired upon a procession carrying church banners and icons and led by the priest Gapon. The procession was on its way to the Imperial Palace where the people wished to express their desires to the Tsar. As soon as the news of the shots was known a general strike was proclaimed throughout the country; in Riga demonstrators were fired upon without warning, then the centre of unrest moved to the rural districts. The revolutionaries were quite ignorant of the doctrines of the Social Democrats: “The principal demands of the Latvians were for reorganization of the administration, agrarian reform, and a Constituent Assembly to work out the constitution for a democratic republic. The Revolution of 1905 was national in character as in the rural areas, especially in Vidzeme, there was no wide gap between farmers and the landless peasants. Indeed the leaders of the movement were often farmers and their sons.” (M. Skujenieks.) This revolution had something of the character of the age-old peasant rebellions mixed with the ideas of the new struggles for national independence. The revolt was a link in the chain of historical development which finally led to definite and formulated demands for independence. Here the Revolution of 1905, which began as a labour movement with general political as well as specific working-class demands, turned into an agrarian revolution aiming at the elimination of the power of the landed nobility. For although there was no general demand for the confiscation of the estates, the landlords were driven away and the land taken from them. But it did not stop there. On 19 November 1905 one thousand delegates from all over Latvia assembled in Riga under the leadership of J. Kroders and J. Asars. This congress ruled that the elected committees should be independent of the Russian government. They were to handle all matters in their respective communes, to abolish farm-leases, the

privileges of the landlords, and to elect delegates to a national assembly which was to be the first Latvian Parliament. The question of secession from the Russian Empire was not definitely decided upon; when the Russian Constituent Assembly meets "the central bureau will convene the Latvian parish constitutional assembly in Rīga, which will then work out definite plans for self-government." But all these dreams came to nothing.

During the Revolution clashes occurred with the German *Selbstschutz* (the local "Self-Protection" organization) and Russian army units stationed on the manors. About a thousand such clashes occurred during 1905 and 1906 in Latvia. In Kurzeme fifty five manors were damaged or burned during these fights, and in Vidzeme another eighty five were partially or completely burned.

The first armed skirmishes occurred in Zemgale in the summer of 1905. In August a state of emergency was proclaimed in Kurzeme, administration was transferred to the military authorities and new troops were sent to Latvia. But this failed to quell the fighting, and in the autumn it spread to Vidzeme where in November a state of emergency was also proclaimed. In Vidzeme, as in Zemgale and Kurzeme, the farmers rose up in revolt and drove away the Russian police and troops, as well as the German landowners who fled to Rīga or abroad. In nearly all the rural parishes new authorities were created—executive committees elected by the people. A People's militia was organized in the administrative districts. Army units and the police forces were expelled from several large towns, e.g. in Tukums an army unit, including some artillery, surrendered to the Latvian militia.

In December 1905 a punitive expedition headed by General Orlov came to Valka and spread throughout the country. Reprisals were started without delay. The leaders of the expedition were often members of the Baltic aristocracy and Baltic German officials, who proceeded to arrest those people whose names were on lists which had been drawn up beforehand. These people were shot without trial or examination of the charges brought against them. Farms, schools and assembly halls were burned. A Russian officer who participated in these expeditions wrote of his impressions in a letter to a friend: "Blood splashes around us, conflagrations blaze; and as to ourselves we are slaughtering, cutting, shooting." Although that was forty five years ago these events remain in the author's mind as vividly as if they had occurred only yesterday. Against the dark evening sky of the plain of Kurzeme I saw the blaze of fires rising from houses, and heard the shouts and drunken laughter of dragoons returning in sledges from their "heroic" exploits.

During the rebellions in the rural districts 895 cases of arson and

2,697 attacks of armed peasants were reported in which 635 Russians and Germans were killed and 926 wounded. The punitive expeditions shot and hanged 2,041 people and administered corporal punishment to over 1,000 people. Three hundred Latvian peasant farms were burned. The field courts-martial sentenced 128 people to death. From 1 December 1905 to 1 May 1908, 1,491 people from the Baltic were brought before courts-martial. Of these 112 from Kurzeme, 315 from Vidzeme and 481 from Estonia were executed. The rest were sentenced to imprisonment. 2,652 people were deported to Siberia and another 1,871 were expatriated. Throughout Russia the figures given for the period of fifteen months ending on 10 May 1906 were as follows: 15,000 people were killed, 20,000 wounded and 70,000 sentenced to deportation. At the same time as these punitive expeditions, field courts-martial were at work, which were followed by others before which many were charged; prisons were crowded, but some of the revolutionaries contrived to escape by taking to the woods in the winter of 1906, even by fleeing to Russia proper, or to Finland, Switzerland, France, England, or Belgium. They stayed in exile until it was possible to return.

Voluntary emigrees soon followed these political refugees, and students moved to the Russian universities. Often they set off with more courage than money. The significance of this emigration of educated Latvians is much greater than that of some years earlier when Latvian students gathered at Tartu, Estonia, in the second half of the 19th century. The result of this gathering at Mētraine, as Tartu was called by the Latvians, led to the foundation of the first Latvian intellectual group. After 1918, when Latvia established her independence her citizens who were scattered over the world nearly all returned. They came from Russia, western Europe, the United States of America and the Far East where a temporary Latvian Government had been established. This government had armed forces at its disposal—two regiments which had fought their way across Russia against the Bolsheviks to Vladivostok.

The Revolution of 1905 was suppressed by the vastly superior Russian military forces. However, despite their heavy losses, the Latvians emerged from this struggle with enhanced self-confidence and a feeling of strength. The year 1905 was an important turning point in the history of the country for the development of national thought went on and could not be stopped, and there followed a quickened economic development too. As a result of this, the traditional yoke of the German and Russian bureaucracies was threatened. Possibly it was Count Benkendorff, one of the greatest Russian diplomats and a Baltic German by descent, who once said while in London that he was afraid of such a national movement which could develop under two oppressors.

On the development of Latvian industry and agriculture Professor M. M.¹⁷ has this to say: "Owing to their superior technical equipment and managerial superiority, industries developed on Latvian territory before 1914 and were of same importance to Tsarist Russia which was predominantly agricultural. This industry in Latvia was founded on foreign capital and produced machinery and different kinds of manufactured goods for the vast Russian market. The raw materials, including English coal, were transported to the country by sea, while about 80% of the production was sent to Russia proper. The factories included the Fenix machine-making plant, the Baltic Railway Coach Factory, and the Provodnik metal industry in Sarkandaugava, a suburb of Rīga. In 1910, a year for which exact information is available, there were 782 factories in Latvia with more than twenty workers in each. The total number of workers was 93,345. Around these factories whole districts of Rīga sprang up as if from the earth, consisting of ugly workmen's houses along unpaved streets. The triumphant march of this industrial revolution was accompanied by the discontent of the workers with their social and political positions. This discontent of course added fuel to the flame of the Revolution of 1905." Again on the economic development of this corner of Europe J. Meuvret has some interesting observations to make: *on comprendrait mal l'histoire des pays baltiques au XIX siècle, si on négligeait leur aspect économique. Ici encore, comme dans le domaine de la lutte idéologique, on constate un paradoxe. De même que le développement du principe des nationalités aboutissait à deux résultats contraires en exaltant à la fois le nationalisme des populations baltiques et le nationalisme russe, de même le développement du capitalisme à la fois souleva plus fortement l'économie baltique à celle de l'Empire, et créa des forces neuves qui lui permirent de s'en détacher.*¹⁸

These economic changes which were taking place in Latvia were not so obvious in rural areas, but changes there were nonetheless. The German landed nobility made skilful use of their connections with the Russian court and re-established their privileged position which the Revolution of 1905 had not been able to destroy completely. On the other hand the Russian administration, frightened by the Revolution, preferred to support the nobles rather than the Latvians whom they feared. It was a very necessary alliance, but the Russians were despised by the Germans, *ein russisches Schwein*, and the Germans were hated by the Russians, *proklyatiye niemtsy!* Under such conditions how could the Latvians acquire economic power? "During the First World War," writes Professor M. M., "the Latvian farmers formed co-operative societies, and took an active part in parish life . . . yet this activity was controlled and restricted by the Russian centralized bureaucracy. Up to 1914 the Latvian small far-

mers successfully followed the same path of self-help and co-operation which the co-operators of England, Denmark, Sweden and Germany had trod before them. Along with these co-operatives, methods of agriculture, which had been so backward, quickly developed. This movement also helped the Latvian townspeople to raise their standard of life and social position (*e.g.* Craftsmen's Saving Groups).¹⁹

The Russian police were suspicious and indeed they had good reason to be. All these newly formed societies and clubs, at which courses in such things as dairying, bee-keeping and gardening were held, became good training schools for politics. When the Latvian deputies elected to the Russian Duma (such people as J. Čakste, F. Grosvalds, J. Goldmanis, Zālītis, Ozols) courageously demanded independence for their people, then, of course, there was no turning back. The German position in the municipalities began to weaken.

The following figures give some details of the population of Rīga from 1867 to 1935:

1867	Latvians	....	24%	Germans	....	43%	Russians	....	25%
1881	"	....	30%	"	....	39%	"	....	19%
1897	"	....	45%	"	....	22%	"	....	16%
1913	"	....	42%	"	....	13%	"	....	19%
1920	"	....	55%	"	....	16%	"	....	7%
1925	"	....	59%	"	....	13%	"	....	9%
1935	"	....	63%	"	....	10%	"	....	9%

(Jews, Poles, Lithuanians etc. made up the rest).

In Liepāja the percentage of Latvian inhabitants increased from 16% in 1863 to 68% in 1935, while the German inhabitants decreased from 63% to 8%.

To appraise these figures correctly we must compare them with the general proportion of the different nationalities in the territory of Latvia:

	1881	1897	1925	1935
Latvians	77.0%	76.8%	81.7%	82.1%
Germans	11.3%	8.4%	5.6%	4.6%
Jews	5.5%	5.3%	5.3%	4.8%

These figures need no comment.

Cultural achievements of this period are of significance and importance. The number of Latvian students at the universities and other higher educational institutions in Russia, Switzerland, France and elsewhere was constantly growing. The number of scientists also rapidly increased and later many of them formed the nucleus of the University of Latvia. Research work developed in philology and folklore but the study of Lat-



A Latvian farmer sentenced to death for being a local leader of the insurgents. The farmer, calm and spiteful, makes a strange contrast to the grotesque appearance of the Russian guards.



The arrest of two revolutionaries—Anna Krastiņš and Pēteris Barovskis. The latter was later shot. The revolution was suppressed ruthlessly. Among the numerous executed revolutionaries was a high number of innocent victims. In many cases punishment was meted out to relatives of escaped revolutionaries.



Captured revolutionary farmers of Rembate being taken to Rīga for execution.



J. Krastiņš's farm in Rembate on the Daugava river, in which the rebels held their meetings is being destroyed as a reprisal (see p. 313).



Rīga, the Daugava embankment, in 1906. A characteristic post-revolution scene. Patrols of Russian gendarmerie and Cossacks search for arms, persons in the street.

vian history by Latvians was delayed, for here the opposition was still too strong. There was no permanent national centre where Latvians could study, but the desire of Latvian students to maintain contact with their country was apparent from the attendance at the "summer gatherings" in Rīga, where lectures were given and concerts performed by the local Latvian Society. These "summer gatherings" were important events, and they were looked forward to with enthusiasm. Thus before a national university was created the necessity of having such a centre for advanced studies was recognized.

Literature too developed rapidly. The representative of realism was R. Blaumanis (1862—1908) "... prose-writer, poet and playwright, (he is) one of the classical authors for his perfection and style, his technique of composition and for the depth of his psychological penetration..."²⁰

We must also mention Anna Brigadere and Jēkabs Janševskis. One of the most outstanding writers of the *Jaunā strāva* movement was J. Rainis (1865—1929). His work is well-known abroad through translations. E. Stērste sagaciously said of him: "The complicated art of Rainis is rooted in the legendary world of the Latvian past, where he finds a symbolic expression for the magnificent dream of a Free Latvian State." His best works were created in exile in the Italian part of Switzerland (Castagnola). Aspazija (1868—1943)—Rainis's wife—wrote strongly for the emancipation of women. J. Poruks (1871—1911) was a characteristic writer of his age; some of his poems and stories are the most sensitive diagnosis of the Latvian soul. Another body of writers who gave themselves the peculiarly pretentious name of "decadents" followed closely the contemporary Russian authors. E. Virza (1883—1940) thoroughly understood the Latvian country and the fate of the Latvian nation. In his work *Straumēni* he praises the everyday country life of the Latvian farmers, a synthesis of Nature and God in "superindividual symbolism." Our lyric poet, K. Skalbe (1879—1945), whose youth and whose first works coincided with the period of the revolutions, wrote many a poem which became a symbol for his people.

The arts and music kept pace with literature. Our great composers, beginning with A. Jurjāns and J. Vītols (1863—1948) were deeply versed in the rich tradition of the folksongs, which gave all their work a characteristic and original stress. Song festivals became part of our national life—even in exile, as can be seen from those held in Germany since the end of the last war, and in London in June 1949.

As evidence of this cultural development in Latvia at the turn of the century it is interesting to read the Soviet Encyclopaedia²¹ which was printed in 1938: "On the eve of the World War (1914) the number

of books published in the Latvian language took third place in Russia, after those books published in Russian and Polish."

Religion in Latvia at the end of the 19th century was faced with a crisis which confronted religion in the whole of Europe. Religion in Latvia and Estonia has had to face an added disadvantage, for there it has always appeared as one more mark of foreign influence. For centuries the clergyman has been a "foreign master" to the Latvian or Estonian farmer, of the same nationality as the landowner, and the local church administration did everything to keep their privileged position. After the dam had been broken, and independence established, there was little room for a foreign clergy. When the old rural generation saw their sons in the pulpit of the native church they regarded it as the fulfilment of all the dreams of their hard life. But then in Latvia began a period of doubt and uncertainty, it was difficult to run up the flag of the national church when so many flags of atheism were already streaming over the world. It was a long serious crisis, and the left-wing press had an easy target for their mordant sarcasm. Yet they were held at bay.



*The poet Rainis against the background of the new buildings of Riga. Design by N. Strunke for a postage stamp issued by the Rainis Memory Fund in 1930.



XV

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

After the French defeat in 1871, the centre of European politics shifted from Paris to Berlin. The capital of the new German Empire, which had been proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, was in the very centre, not only of Central Europe, but of the entire European continent. The effect of this shift of power on the countries of Europe is obvious. At the same time German militarism grew alarmingly; it became the "National Industry" (Moltke, Tirpitz, Schlieffen and others), while the Austrian Empire inevitably disintegrated under the influence of the ideas of nineteenth century nationalism. It is, then, understandable that a man like Bismarck should gradually come to play the part of the judge of European destinies in the guise of *arbiter rerum*. Russia too sought to interfere in European politics. The British Empire, outwardly more or less reserved, was slowly forced to abandon its policy of "splendid isolation", and eventually became a participant in continental politics. Europe's political "pea-soup" became thicker and thicker, the

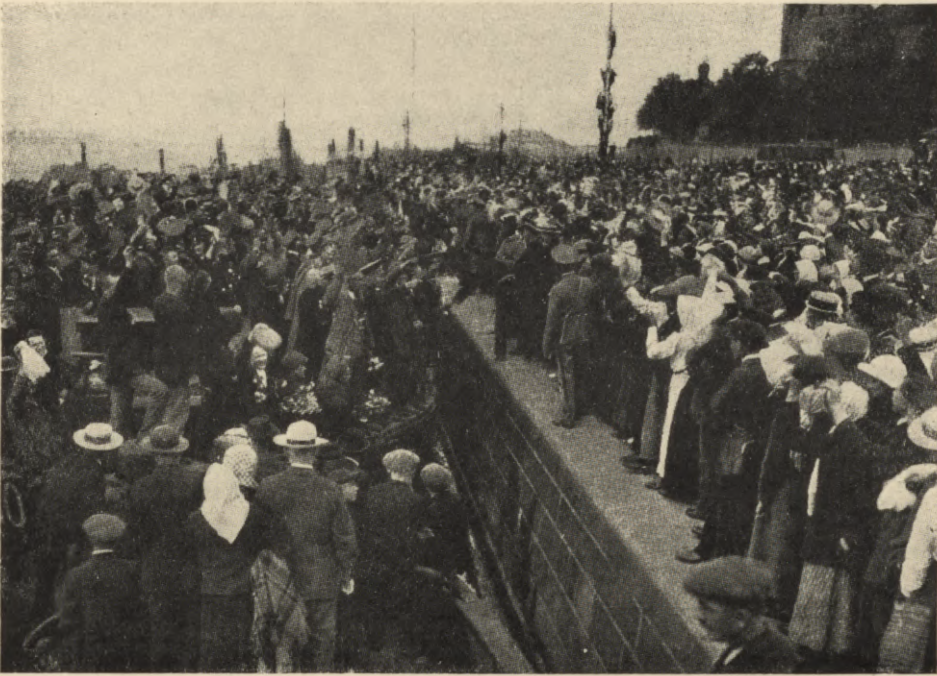
* The flag of the 3rd Kurzeme Latvian Rifle Battalion. The inscription is a strophe from a Latvian folk-song ("I lay on the balk to defend my country").

formula of the balance of power, which had been applied for so long in the chancelleries of the great powers before 1914, was unfortunately breaking down; it was designed to maintain the *status quo*. The seeking of such an "equilibrium" is an act of defence, and an admission that new and potentially dangerous forces are gaining over others.¹ The balance of power in Europe before 1914 could be little else than a makeshift as long as it was uncertain which power was to threaten and destroy the system and impose a new order. The Triple Alliance (since 1882) and the Franco-Russian military alliance (since 1891) represented the major forces. The direct or indirect results of these combinations were two world wars in the short span of one man's life.

The diplomatic exchanges which passed between the chancelleries concealed a terrible struggle to decide who was to control the Continent and indirectly the whole world.

Russia's new attitude was evidence of the deep change in European politics. Political reasons occasionally backed by economic considerations, and embellished by intellectual attractions, induced Tsar Alexander III to drift away from Germany, and to stretch out his hand to the France of the Third Republic. It was *un mariage de convenance*. The outward show of affection concealed numerous misgivings which were a breeding ground for future conflicts and misunderstandings. The Holy Alliance was still remembered, memories of the Crimean War were still vivid, and marital ties between the Romanovs and the various royal houses of Germany were important and were constantly being strengthened: Was not the last Tsarina a Hessian Princess? The influence of the Baltic German aristocracy at the Imperial Court of Russia was still strong; even during the First World War it was so marked that it was often described as evil and dangerous. From the point of view of domestic politics, the Franco-Russian alliance was a somewhat unnatural combination between a democracy which boasted at least a faith in the tenets of the great Revolution, and an absolutism which felt the ground giving way under its feet. To the Russians the *Marseillaise* was both a National Anthem of an ally and a revolutionary ghost. But the new European power which appeared so threatening made such an alliance a necessity, and it was promoted by the Russian people's dull dissatisfaction with and hatred of the Germans. It was for this reason that they entered wholeheartedly into the war of 1914 on the side of the Allies.

Whenever war breaks out between Russia and Germany, Latvia and the entire zone which lies between the two countries naturally becomes a battleground. This vast area has a similar history to the plains of Northern Italy, the Vistula, the central course of the Danube, and Belgium.



The farewell given to the first volunteers of the Latvian Infantry (Rifle) Regiment on the Daugava embankment, Riga 1915. When the Russian forces had abandoned Kurzeme, the Latvians, headed by J. Goldmanis and J. Zālītis, members of the Russian Duma, envisaged the formation of purely Latvian military units, composed of volunteers, and officers and soldiers transferred from Russian units, for the purpose of defending Vidzeme and reconquering Kurzeme.



From left to right: J. Goldmanis who initiated and led the formation of the Latvian Riflemen units, and Captain, later Colonel F. Briedis, one of the most prominent fighting officers of the Riflemen. He is known for several penetrations of the German front, tactically and daringly planned and skilfully executed.



The Latvian Rifle Regiment in the front lines. Nine Latvian Rifle regiments were formed. Orders were given in Latvian and the flags had Latvian inscriptions. The soldiers had a special badge. Compared to Russian units, the Latvian Riflemen were characterised by their tenacity and ardent fighting spirit and they were highly instrumental in raising the nationalistic fervour of the Latvians.



Machine-Gun Hill in 1917. This height over which fierce struggles ensued dominated a wide area in the Tirelis marshes. It was captured by the 7th Bauska Rifle Regiment under Colonel, later General K. Goppers's command during the Christmas Battles.

People living in these regions have a hard time of it but they manage to survive.

The beginning of the First World War is depicted by A. J. Grant and H. Temperley, with the sweeping strokes of a painter's brush:² "Europe beheld a unique sight during the early days of the war. Huge columns of troops were on the move along the Eastern, Central, and Western plains. They were moving in numbers so great as to resemble a migration of peoples. Europe had armed on an unprecedented scale and her mobilized millions were already on their march to death. From Germany grey columns passed across the Rhine and streamed towards France. Blue French columns with a few khaki-clad British ones, were straining to meet them in Belgium. A few grey German divisions could be seen on the border of East Prussia. Long yellow columns were pressing to the northern frontiers of Austro-Hungary and watching anxiously for the green waves of advancing Russians. Far away to the south, huge yellow columns were swarming across the Bosnian border, to envelop the little army of Serbia. Six weeks sufficed to decide the fate of all these movements. The tiny Serb host repulsed the Austro-Hungarians. The Russians had been flung back from East Germany with enormous loss, but had routed the Austro-Hungarians and occupied most of Galicia. Paris was saved—and the blue-khaki columns had driven the grey ones before them from the Marne to the Aisne. Effects had been produced by one battle in the West, and by another in the East which lasted till the end of the war. The green waves never again submerged East-Germany, the grey tide never again lapped the walls of Paris."

In the autumn of 1914, Russian forces under General Rennenkampf (one of the many Baltic Germans in the Russian Army) invaded East Prussia. This attack was launched in the usual Russian manner, with masses of poorly armed soldiers. Russia has never lacked cannon fodder; it was rumoured that men of the reserve units were armed only with clubs and had to take the weapons of those who had been killed and wounded. Many Latvians lost their lives in this offensive. However, its initial momentum brought the Russians close to Königsberg and the German pressure on Paris was relieved. It was even asserted that the real purpose of the Russian offensive was to save Paris, which was already under the fire of the long-range guns of the Germans. Hindenburg, who during the first stage of the war was pushed aside because of some differences of opinion with William II, appeared on the scene as the military leader. The Russian operations in East Prussia ended in the disaster of the Masurian Lakes. The Germans named it the Battle of Tannenberg by way of revenge for the defeat of the German Order five hundred years before

(1410). The German armies then advanced into Poland, and the Eastern Front was stabilized as early as 1915.

In Latvia for two years the front followed the Daugava river, so dividing the country into two. This marked the first stage of the journey along the *via crucis* which the Latvians had to follow during this battle of the giants.

Many post-war articles and books spoke with sympathy or indignation of the tragic events in Belgium and Serbia; many wealthy men kindly helped to reconstruct Belgium, but the world at large showed little interest in Latvia. When the Latvians, unaided, without foreign loans, began in 1919 to rebuild their devastated country (and in politics they showed the same determined attitude) they were to surprise many.

Here let us quote a few statistics. In 1914 2,552,000 people lived in the territory of Latvia; in 1925, after the return of the refugees, who had been driven out by Cossacks, particularly from Kurzeme, the popula-



Map 24. The positions of the eastern front in the First World War, 1914-1918.

tion was 1,845,000; these figures show a loss of some 700,000 people. Even if we subtract the small number of Russians who had come to Latvia shortly before the outbreak of war in the years of industrialisation and russification (people such as civil servants, workmen and the like) we must reckon that the First World War cost Latvia at least 25% of her population. No country made such a sacrifice during the war, not even Serbia which lost 317,000 of its inhabitants out of a total of 2,900,000; that country had only to mourn half the number Latvia mourned. However, in 1938, the population in Latvia once more neared the 2,000,000 mark. Under normal conditions, according to precise statistical calculations, it should have been three millions by that year. Every fourth Latvian perished either on the battle fields or on the vast plains of Russia. During the war the front appeared like an open bleeding wound in the middle of the body of Latvia. After it was all over, trenches and barbed wire were everywhere, homes were destroyed, forests burned or destroyed by shell fire, and everywhere there was silence and despair as after a terrible hurricane. In the summer of 1918 the author walked through a stretch of the fertile plain of Zemgale—there was no means of transport except a few unreliable trains. Silence reigned over the farms of this rich district. Not a herd of cattle could be seen, there was no bark of a dog to be heard, and the hard ground, left fallow for years, resounded at every step as if one were walking on a stone floor. Pascarella, master of the Roman dialect poetry said: *perché la storia si pe l'antri è storia, pe'nojantri so'fatti de famija.*

The march into exile of the Kurzeme farmers had an epic and tragic grandeur. Driven out by the savage Cossacks the peasants left their burning homes and their harvests, taking with them magnificent breeds of cattle; onto carts they hurriedly packed a few of their personal belongings. This mass of people headed for the River Daugava and crossed it by any means available. On the other side they settled in huge camps to wait. Later this sad procession marched north and eventually dispersed throughout Russia, but the Russians were reluctant to accept them fearing that they might eat them out of house and home. Many refugees managed to find a new living until they could return to their homeland, yet many others, particularly women and children, succumbed under the hardships of migration. The Latvians bore their misfortune with admirable spirit; quietly and composedly they had moved on east towards unknown destinies.

One may ask whether the German danger was real and whether there was any point in trying to oppose it? The answer to this may be found in the German plans as described in 1915 by L. Ozols (Bernevics) and, particularly, by Baron Silvio Broederich in his "secret" pamphlet (*Das neue*

Ostland). Here we can see quite clearly the real German intention. In Broederich's "New Ostland" (cf. the term *Ostland* as used in the Baltic area during the German occupation of 1941—1945) were to be included territories beyond Lake Peipus and the Pripet Marshes. Germany was to annex Finland, Poland, the Ukraine and the Caucasus.

For the Baltic area the plans were as follows: "Germans, come to this country! Faithful to the traditions of the Old Order and the Hanse, through stubborn perseverance we have conquered and held this large area of settlement for the German people. We struck the death blow to the revolution (1905) and remained steadfast and unyielding when so many wanted to leave our Fatherland. We used the freedom of action obtained after the revolution in order to unite the (local) Germans in cultural societies. When the Government established the Agrarian Bank which, endowed with extensive powers and authority, was to acquire farms destroyed during the revolution, we managed to achieve our ends, and in 1908—1913 we obtained possession of nearly all large farms threatened (by acquisition by the Agrarian Bank). We set up our own German land administration and with its help settled 20,000 Germans from the German colonies in Russia on the newly acquired farms among the Latvian population. We carried out this work quietly and inconspicuously, despite obstacles created by the Russian Government."

We see here plans for completing the Teutonic Order's unfinished work—germanization of the Baltic area. With the German occupation of Latvia, these plans were to be carried out to the full.

S. Broederich stated that representatives of the large landowners had informed the German government that if it annexed Kurzeme, they would give up one third of their land to German settlers, adding, however, in wise realisation of their own interests that they would do so in exchange for government forest land. But with the farmers' land it was a different story: Under a special law, the 25,000 Latvian-owned middle-size farms must be compelled to turn over to the Settlement Land Fund half of the land of each individual farm at an average price of the last three pre-war years. 50,000 farms will thus be created. Two German families will be settled on each. During the first year, the Latvian farmer will have to provide the German settlers with lodging. The other half of the farm, *i.e.* the part retained by the Latvian farmer, will also soon become German property, as the two German families with their fourteen to twenty children will have such superiority in manpower and human "working capital" that the Latvians will be unable to stand the competition.

The same plan will be applied to Vidzeme. All land earmarked for settlement by Germans, must be bought at an average price of the last

three years. In the beginning this land may be leased to its former owners in order to diminish the cost of expropriation . . . "There is no doubt," continued S. Broederich, "that by bringing German settlers to the Baltic, we shall within a generation make this country purely German. The traditional leadership of the German landowners over the cultural and economic activities of the Latvians and Estonians must be maintained under the new government. Moreover, there are German schools, German influence in the administration, and all this along with mass immigration of German settlers will guarantee complete germanization . . ."

Further, as early as 28 July 1915 the *Baltischer Vertrauensrat* (Baltic Council), a body of the Baltic nobles, sent a memorandum to the German Chancellor, asking that at the future peace settlement the Baltic area should be made a German province. The German Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, replied in April 1916 in a statement to the Reichstag, saying that the area would be annexed and its colonial character retained. This meant that the German Reich wanted to make the proposals of the *Vertrauensrat* a reality. This body proposed to bring to the Baltic area 1,500,000 German settlers from the small scattered German colonies on the Volga, in the Caucasus and in southern Russia. As a matter of fact this action had been started by the Baltic German barons in 1908, and about 13,000 Russian-Germans had been settled in Kurzeme.³

The age-old German *Herrenvolk* traditions appear here in all their nakedness. We see the desire to absorb, even to exterminate the peoples who had survived as nations along the shores of the Baltic littoral. But in defiance of German designs, these peoples were preparing a counter-attack with Russian aid and support. A new chapter in the age-old strife commenced. The Latvians were now armed and were serving in national units. The fame won by these soldiers on the battle-fields was not their only achievement; it was the first time that Latvian armed forces had appeared in modern history. The moral and political importance of such a fact was immense, and it helped to develop and strengthen the conception of an independent Latvian state. It will be remembered that after the Russian Revolution Latvian units were simultaneously formed in different parts of the Russian Empire, even in the Far East.

The outbreak of the First World War stirred up a wave of patriotic feeling among the Latvians, as among the other peoples of Russia. However, to the Latvians war with Germany had a specific meaning. They conceived it as a war against the Baltic Germans whose victory would bring them misery, but whose defeat would be an end to the age-old German privileges and rule in Latvia.

As early as 1914 men up to the age of 43 on the active reserve list and those older on the second reserve list were called up, and in the

autumn of 1915 all able-bodied men from 17 to 45 years were called up. In Russia proper comparatively few age-groups were mobilized.

Naturally, the first to be mobilized were the first to be sent to the front. Hopes that the Latvian soldiers would be left in their own country to defend the Baltic coast and Kurzeme were unfounded. The Latvian troops made up the 20th Army Corps which fought battles in East

I. Noteikums

par nosaukumu likumīgo spēku.

§ 1.

Visi noteikumi tiek mahju un apgabala parastajā ee-
diimto valodā iistudinati un regubst likuma spēku, ja
nebuhtu ihpaschā laikmetā nolēmā, trihā deenas pēh; no
atteeziga mahju maldihā pahrwaldneeka isdotā amicā
preclsch maldihā nosaukumu pasinoschanaā isnablschanaā
drenaā; gadijumos, kur schahda omise wehl nebuhtu nodi-
binata, trihā deenas pēh; noteikumu isinoschanaā atflah-
bai jaur prestiprimoschana per atteeziga pahrwaldneeka wal-
reā ehloā.

§ 2.

Schiā noteikumā nabl tubdat spēkā.

Waltwenā mitefli 28 julijā 1915. g.

Austruma wirspawehlneekš

parast. von Hindenburg

generalfeldmarschals.

Decree No. 1.

Concerning the Validity of (Administrative) Regulations.

§ 1.

All regulations shall be published in the German and the local native language and come into force, if no special date is decided upon, three days after the date of publication in the official gazette of the Commissioner of the German Government. In cases where such gazettes have not yet been established, the decree shall be fixed to the building of the office of the Commissioner, and shall come into effect three days after it has been affixed thereto.

§ 2.

This order comes into force immediately.
Headquarters, 28 July 1915.

Commander-in-Chief in the East
(Signed) von Hindenburg
Field-Marshal.

Field-Marshal von Hindenburg's order in the "native language".

Prussia and near the Masurian Lakes (31 January—8 February 1915). The Corps suffered terribly in these battles; there were 27,998 infantry casualties out of a total body of 35,505 and in addition there were 5,701 casualties out of a total of 9,311 men in the artillery units. The Latvians suffered wholesale slaughter, the heaviest during the war. The commanding officers of the Corps were blamed for their failure to disengage honourably their soldiers from a very difficult situation. M. P. Kamensky in his book *The Annihilation of the 20th Army Corps* says: "The annals of military history have preserved the story of the glorious end of Napoleon's gallant Old Guard at Waterloo. One hundred years later, in the technical age, this legend had to be revived to give descendants of the heroes fallen in the Augustov forests faith in the unfading beauty and strength and the eternal dignity of the human soul. Completely encircled (the 20th Army Corps) split up into separate groups, they sought escape in the battle, rejecting all thought of surrender. Those who were able to break through the lines of the German infantry, were pursued by the cavalry which constantly harassed them."

The world at large knew little about us. To see this we need only open the bulky histories of the First World War, e.g. *The Times History of the World War* (20 volumes 1919), or Gabriel Hanotaux's *Histoire illustrée de la guerre de 1914* (17 volumes 1920). We find in these two books mention of some events that took place in Latvia, but there is no mention of the Latvian people themselves. But in German publications the Latvians are referred to.⁴ However, the German soldiers inevitably saw them through the spectacles of Baltic Germans which is hardly surprising.

The origin of the Latvian Rifle Regiment was a direct consequence of the rout of the 20th Corps. The removal of the Corps from its original position in the Kurzeme area and the moving to Poland of the 68th Division, also recruited in Latvia, left Kurzeme practically unprotected. As early as April 1915 the German cavalry swept rapidly through Kurzeme as far as Jelgava from which the Russians fled in disorder. Two Latvian battalions of the reserve, led by General Potapov, drove out the Germans from Jelgava, awaited reinforcements and reconquered positions as far as the Venta river. These two battalions had actually been trained without the authorization of the Russian High Command in order to provide some sort of garrison for the Daugavgrīva fortress. Originally they were labour battalions stationed at this fortress. Later they were transferred to Palanga to cover the Russian retreat and to check the German advance. The fighting round the village of Andreyev and the small towns of Salanti, Skoda and Možeiki and their feat in halting the Germans at Jelgava brought these battalions to the notice of the High Command and they became the forerunners of purely Latvian military units.

140. Pasiņojums.

Dalchados Bahrijas apgabalos, it ihpafchi pee Kubru un Fribichu jomas eedshwotajeem, wahrna ir cezenitš usturas lihdselkš. Loti isplatita ir wahrnu olu ehščana, kurš garščas sra: ir lihdsigās lihwites olām. Par dalchado wahrnu fugu isplatščanos zecentajā apgabalā israhdās par wajādšgu, u: to aistradit. Vuhš jazensčās, ka tagad va sagaidamš peresčanas laiku olaš un gandrihs peaugušec zablenti teel no wahrnu ligšdām iinēnti, ka ari wahrnāš teel ščautāš un islectotāš preekšč eedshwotaju ustura, pee tam teel panahla laufšaimneezibai un medibai šaitiga putna isščlauschana. Ihpafchu ušmanibu pelna šo wahrnu nometnēš, jo tanis ir leelš dandsumš garščigu olu eeguhštams. Wahrnu noščausčana tišš isdarita weenigi no medibu polizijas un mešču pahrwaldeš eerehdneem; turpretim aprinka preekščneekem teel dota teešiba, wahrnu ligšdu iinēnščanu atšaut dalšceem ušizameem šaudim no žiwileedshwotaju widuš, bet tišai tahdāš weetāš, šur, ka p. peem, šowahrnu nometnēš, mešču un medibu polizijas eerehdneem ir eespehjamš išdarit kontroli par ščcem šaudim. Atšauju preekšč wahrnu ligšdu isnēnščanas walšš meščoš, isšneedš mešču inspeļijas eerehdai.

Galwenajā nometnē, 11. martā 1916. g.

Austrum-armijas wiršpawehlneekā ušdewumā.

Wiršforiešmeišarš

von Eisenhart.

ANNOUNCEMENT NO. 140.

In different districts of Germany, especially to the inhabitants of the districts of the Kurisches Haff and the Friesisches Haff, the crow is a favourite food. The eating of crow's eggs is widely practised, they having a taste like *lapwing's* eggs. It has been found necessary to provide information about the distribution of the various species of the crow in the occupied districts. The hatching time being at hand endeavours should be made to remove the eggs and halfgrown birds from the nests and to shoot crows with a view to providing food to the inhabitants and, at the same time, exterminating birds which are noxious to farming and hunting. The jack-daw colonies deserve special attention as large quantities of tasty eggs may be obtained from them. The shooting of crows will be done only by forest guards and employees of the Forest Department; however, District Chiefs may authorize

However, it was the Latvians themselves who first suggested that their soldiers should serve as separate national units in the Russian Army. On 25 May 1915, J. Goldmanis, a member of the Russian Duma, submitted to the Supreme Commander of the Russian Armed Forces a proposal to authorize the formation of Latvian Rifle Battalions. The proposal was approved on 19 July.

It was obvious from the very outset that this move was of great political significance. It was opposed by the Baltic German nobility and the local Russian administration. The Supreme Command was, however, of the opinion that "although the local civilian administration voices certain fears that the formation of Latvian units might give the Latvians an opportunity to take revenge upon their traditional oppressors, the Baltic German barons," it considered such views obsolete. "The (Latvian) Dau-gavgrīva battalions which have at times spent the night or stayed over long periods on the baronial estates, have on no occasion soiled their reputation through any misconduct" (comments by Colonel Kosiakov). On the other hand the Governor General, Kurlov, reported that "such formations should not be permitted, as they will be a danger to the Russian state. After the end of this war, whatever its result, the existence of a Latvian national army, especially in a territory so full of hatred between the different nations, can bring about serious complications."⁵ The Latvians made no secret of their hopes of certain political changes. However, the promise of self-determination which had been held out to them was deleted from the draft statute creating the Latvian Battalions. It was claimed that such a political matter could not be included in a statute creating a military organization.⁶ Since no local units (*i.e.* units recruited from among the inhabitants of any given area) were permitted in the Russian Army, this authorization to create Latvian formations with their own language and badges, and Latvian inscriptions on their flags, was an achievement. The flag of the Fifth Zemgale Battalion depicted a sword across the rising sun in a wreath of oak leaves bearing the device: "The freedom of our Fatherland we shall buy with our blood." When Nicholas II saw the first illustration of this flag he wrote across it, "This may be understood in many ways." Nonetheless it was approved.

E. Virza wrote of this time: "The whole nation was looking forward to a new era, to revenge on the oppressors who had filled our story with terror, despair and tears. Deep inside our people a voice said that they reliable civilians to take eggs from crows' nests but only in places where forestry employees are able to supervise these activities. Permission to take crows' eggs from the nests in government forests is issued by Forest Inspection employees.

Headquarters, 11 March 1916.

By order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Army
Quartermaster General

von Eisenhart.

had to march in the first ranks in this war and through self-denying efforts to obtain everlasting rights so that history should record that they are a free people."

But these Rifle Regiments were important in other ways than in fighting and in politics, for great care was taken to gather in a separate unit Latvian musicians, authors, poets, painters and actors; even a symphony orchestra was organized, and the War Museum, which was enriched and expanded after 1918, was founded by them.

The official Latvian red-white-red striped flag (the first design was by J. Grosvalds) was designed and approved by the organization of the Rifle Regiments in 1916. This flag was carried by these Regiments when they returned to Latvia.

On 19 July 1915, J. Goldmanis and J. Zālis, members of the Duma, published a patriotic appeal: "Rally under the Latvian colours." The appeal stated that the new regiments would be officered by Latvians: "The purpose of these regiments is to reconquer and defend Latvia... After 700 years, the fate of our people is taking shape again. Brothers, the hour has struck. He who has faith will gain the victory. Onwards with flying colours and for Latvia's future!..."

One stipulation was that the Latvian Riflemen should not be transferred to other fronts, but must operate in Latvia. This was granted at a time when the Russian authorities only knew the "governments" of the Russian State. For the Latvians it was of utmost importance to have armed national units ready to fight on their native soil, under their own colours.

Here is an eye-witness account of the send-off given to the first Infantry unit as it set out for Daugavgrīva: "The Daugava embankment is crowded. Everywhere one turns: flowers, flowers and again flowers. Scores of barges are floating on the waters of the broad river. They are to transport the first volunteers to be enlisted in Latvian Regiments. There are thousands of them. Their mothers, fiancées, sisters, and friends are there with armfuls of flowers to see them off. They are all talking in undertones, as in church, such is their emotion... It is a national festival, a wonderful manifestation, in which the will of the nation finds spontaneous and expressive utterance: to stand, themselves, and to die for their own sacred country... Suddenly a commotion vibrates through the huge mass of people, everybody expecting something solemn, something great, to happen and holding his breath, with eyes fixed in the direction of the street—Two doves were soaring in mid-air... (a Latvian folk-song)! And here they come: thousands of soldiers, uniformed, in closed ranks, with hard-set faces. It was not rows of soldiers marching by, it was the free will of a whole people. That was what I, what everybody

else, was feeling at that moment. Hundreds of handkerchiefs went up fluttering in the air like a flight of doves. People were crying and making way, deeply stirred at the spectacle. It was as if all Latvia's summer blossoms had embarked on the river, for every soldier had his breast and cap adorned with bunches of flowers . . ."

The poet and Rifleman, Kārlis Skalbe, expressed the feeling of the people at that time in the following manner:

Never will Latvia's sons cease fighting,
Even to hell they will descend, if need be,
And knock with their fists on the table
And demand Latvia's due and Latvia's share.

These were the men who stopped Hindenburg, for he believed that he could have taken Rīga by Easter 1916 "if the Daugava had not been defended by the Eight Stars of Latvia (the eight Latvian Rifle Regiments)."

It is also of interest to note that a German source (*Militär-Wochenblatt*) states that during the First World War the German casualties in the fight against these Latvian Regiments amounted to 24,000 dead; Latvian losses, considerable as they were, especially in the Christmas Battles, were much lower. General Goppers considered them light from the military point of view and very much lower than the average losses of the purely Russian units. Savinkov reckoned that one Latvian battalion was worth ten Russian battalions. They were crack troops; they had to retrieve desperate situations, hold the most exposed positions, and penetrate the enemy lines. Usually they followed Colonel Briedis's ingenious tactics of a surprise attack without previous artillery bombardment. The Latvian soldier was intelligent; his ability to find his way about, his power of endurance and unequalled energy in battle, played a great part. They were successful; the losses they suffered were due to the inefficiency of the Russian Supreme Command which failed to follow up advantages they had gained, and to provide necessary reinforcements for stabilizing and holding captured positions.

The 1st Battalion received its baptism of fire after only two months training, for on 23 October it was sent to liquidate a German breakthrough. The enemy had taken an island in the Tīrelis swamps near Mangāļi which threatened the Russian positions on the hillocks along the banks of Lake Babīte, near Bļodnieki. This island was recaptured by two Latvian companies and was later the starting point of a powerful attack known as the Christmas Battles. On 29 October the two other companies of this battalion liquidated similar German advances. The Rīga front was

not yet stabilized but successive Latvian attacks halted the enemy and so gave the Russian forces time to build defences. A more serious baptism of fire fell to the lot of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions in the Sloka area. It is worth noting that these small Latvian formations were thrown from one place to another, from the right flank to the left flank and vice versa, wherever the heaviest fighting occurred, in order to stiffen the morale of the Russian troops. The remaining Latvian battalions were sent to the front in March 1916.

During the following period of trench warfare the Latvian Rifle Regiments were used as shock troops to penetrate the German lines. These operations were planned by the Russian Command, but seldom, even when a considerable advantage had been achieved, were they followed up. This happened at Ķekava during the fighting in March and July 1916. The Latvian troops grew bitter when they saw that they were suffering casualties to no purpose, but they continued bravely to hold an important bridge-head at Ikšķile, known as the "Island of Death," on the Daugava's left bank. At its widest point it was only a few kilometres across, and it formed a wedge in the German lines which could be used as a starting point for an offensive in the direction of Jelgava or Bauska. From a purely defensive point of view it prevented the Germans from fortifying themselves on the right bank of the Daugava and blocked any threat towards Riga from the rear. It was only after the collapse of the front in 1917 that the Germans were able to advance on Riga from this direction. There was constant and fierce fighting around this small bridgehead; its only supply line was across the Daugava after dark. On 5 October, the Germans killed by gas 2,000 of its defenders, and only the prompt arrival of the 2nd Riga Battalion prevented the area from falling into the hands of the enemy. A. Grīns has depicted this fighting in his book *The Blizzard of Souls* in which he also gives an unforgettable description of Colonel Kalniņš ("Old Kalniņš").

In the autumn of 1915 the German advance was halted along the line between Ķemeri and the Island of Dole, due in great measure to the first victories of these Latvian Regiments, which spared the rest of the Latvian population from being evacuated to Russia like the inhabitants of Kurzeme. The battles enhanced the self-confidence of the Latvian troops. Their heaviest fighting, however, was during the Christmas Battles of 1917, which took place at the same time as the siege of Verdun in the west. They were formed into one battle unit and, without a preparatory artillery bombardment, launched a frontal attack and broke through the German lines along a front of eight kilometers, thus opening the gates for an incursion into Kurzeme and for its liberation. This was the idea

which inspired those troops whose ranks included a large number of refugees from that district.

The Christmas Battles started on 23 December (old style) and continued for 25 days. During the first phase the two Latvian Rifle Brigades penetrated the German front, pushing their spear heads several kilometres beyond the enemy lines. Failing to get support from the Russians, the First Brigade was compelled to retire to its initial positions, from where



General K. Goppers.

it could help the Second Brigade (Colonel Auzāns). The reconquered territory was enlarged as far as the banks of the river Lielupe, and the famous *Ložmetēju kalns* (Machine Gun Hill) was captured with over 30 cannon. In the meantime units under Colonel Goppers combed the territory on the opposite bank of the Lielupe. The initial success could not, however, be exploited, because the Latvian regiments were utterly exhausted and decimated by fighting which had lasted for several weeks. Promised relief from the Russian never reached them. When the Latvians were withdrawn to recover, they were replaced by Russian regiments. A few days later the news spread that the Germans had received reinforcements from the western front and that two divisions from Verdun, pushing the Russians out of the newly acquired positions, were steadily advancing. Again Latvian regiments were thrown into the fight; in the first day two thousand men of the Kurzeme and Vidzeme Regiments were killed. During the protracted fighting in January, which took place in deadly cold (32° C below zero), the Latvians halted the German advance.

The outcome of the Christmas Battles had a depressing effect upon these Latvian troops. Lofty patriotic sentiment and the hope of liberating Kurzeme had led them to heroic deeds. The road was opened up, an entirely new form of offensive was successfully used, they had sighted the towers of Jelgava, but instead of driving the wedge still deeper the attack simply faded out. It was not the fault of the Latvians, and it is therefore not surprising that they were dejected, indignant and partly affected by the process of disintegration which had thoroughly demoralized the Russian Army. The uneducated Russian soldier's unwillingness to fight, his fraternization with the Germans was due, among other things, to his belief that: "They won't come as far as Kazan." They did not, in fact, feel as the Latvians did that they were defending their country. The case of the Latvian Regiments was different. These soldiers were bitter and disappointed in the Russian Supreme Command, they considered all further sacrifice useless, but nonetheless remained in their positions, upheld discipline and even decided to support the Russian Provisional Government, "in so far as is compatible with the interests of the Latvian Regiments" (May 1917). This may largely be explained by the authority still held by the officers of these regiments, which they retained despite intense Bolshevik propaganda. To the last they fought the agitators, leaving their detachments only when no prospects were left of continuing the war against the Germans, and then only in order to fight against the demoralizers of the army in Bolshevik organizations. There was no fraternization between the Latvian troops and the Germans, and firing did not cease on "Machine Gun Hill" until they were withdrawn from the front line. On 20 August the Germans launched an attack in the Ikšķile area in order to cut off the retreat of the 12th Army and to take Rīga in the rear. On 3 September Rīga fell, and the skirmishes at Nitaure and Mālpils were the last the Latvian troops fought on their native soil. They were bitter against the Russian High Command and it was this bitterness that after a few months turned into a hatred of Tsarist Russia. Thus during the Civil War they fought with the Red Army against all the forces intent on "restoring" ancient Russia. It is an irrefutable truth that only by crushing the Empire (even the Russian liberal government never wanted to hear anything about an autonomous Latvia, let alone an independent one) could conditions be created which might enable the subdued peoples to fight for and gain political independence. And an independent state is the supreme achievement in the history of any people.

The bulk of the Latvian troops were demobilized, and the rest retreated into Russia where they played an important part in events there. The achievements of the Latvian Red Rifle Regiments are described in *L.K.V.*⁷ There details are given about this small force and about its ex-

plots in different parts of Russia, ending with the fight against General Wrangel, where the greater part of the Latvian force was destroyed.

Were these Latvian troops who fought for Soviet Russia victims of Marxist ideology? No. When one once happened to talk to some of them in Petrograd, they said, "Damn the Russians, if we only could get home quickly enough to chuck out the Germans!" And, when, after the battles of Perekop, the Russian political commissar ordered the *Internationale* to be played, the Latvian commander interfered, saying, "No, not the *Internationale*, but *God, Bless Latvia* (the Latvian National Anthem) must be played!" These Latvian troops fought against such reactionary and politically shortsighted generals as Kolchak, Yudenich, Denikin, all of whom bore a profound hatred for the Latvians. In his political appraisal of this period A. Švābe says: "Serving the evil spirit, they did, for all that, an extraordinary and unique service to the good spirit of the Latvian people." When the fighting was over they were at liberty to settle down in Soviet Russia, but they refused because as Pumpurs, a Latvian poet, said, "it is no use trying to celebrate Latvian Midsummer's Night where no Latvian songs are sung."

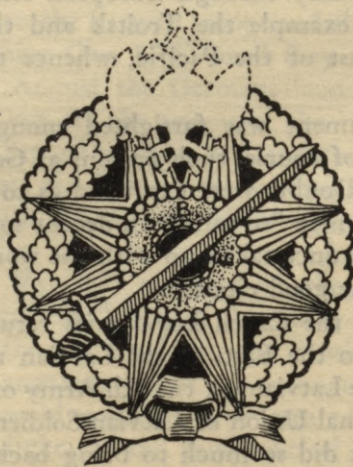
When a train carrying these troops arrived in Moscow from some outlying Russian province, all the carriage windows were decorated with Latvian flags. A commissar ordered the flags to be removed, the answer he got was, "Come and try, we may remove your head first!" Some of these troops had passed not only through European Russia, but also through Asiatic Russia, as for example the Troitsk and the Imanta Regiments, which reached the coast of the Pacific, whence they returned to their homeland.

The Latvian government was farsighted enough to permit the surviving troops (except of course, such persons as General Vāciētis and the like) to return home. Doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of allowing these few thousand men "to mix with decent society." However, those who came back were at once taken up with the work of building the new Latvia and they became good citizens.

In the same way as the Czech Legionaries returned to their country after a long journey to the East, so the Latvian troops who as early as 1917, together with the Latvians of the 5th Army of the Roumanian front had formed the "National Union of Latvian Soldiers," returned to Latvia. It was this Union that did so much to bring back to Latvia its soldiers who were scattered all over Russia. The First Latvian Rifle Regiment was formed at Troitsk (from which it took its name) in 1917, before the proclamation of Latvian independence. Ninety percent of these troops had been engaged in the heavy fighting against the Germans. Fully armed they crossed the whole of Siberia and arrived at Vladivostok, where the

Imanta Regiment was being formed and where a local Latvian National Council was active. Both Regiments returned by the long sea route and were welcomed home enthusiastically. When the German occupation power collapsed, the Latvian troops, who had remained in their own country, placed themselves at the disposal of the Provisional Government and formed the nucleus of the Latvian Army.

According to the calculations of General Bangerskis, which are based on official statistics, the two brigades and their reserve regiment had a strength of 35,000 men before the Christmas Battles; of this number 4,000 were killed or wounded, about 2,000 joined the Troitsk and Imanta regiments, and over 25,000 were demobilized and later joined the Latvian National Army. 770 or about 77% of the officers of the old Rifle Regiments took part in the War for Latvian Independence. From these figures we can see how small a number of Latvians (about 3,000) entered the Red Army, which makes it all the more surprising that this small group was able to hold the fate of the Russian Revolution in their hands, putting the fear of death into their opponents. From this number many Revolutionary leaders rose up (Commander-in-Chief Vācietis, General Alksnis, Eidemanis, Rudzutaks, Mežlauks, Stučka and others). Yet the figures show above all, how many of these troops remained in Latvia, which proved of the utmost importance in the country's struggle for independence.



* Badge of the Latvian Riflemen. The Tsarist eagle at the top was removed after the Revolution. The badge then underwent some modification of the symbolic sun ornament which finally took the shape of the Latvian soldier's sun emblem, which replaced the former eagle.



The Latvian Central Refugee Committee in Petrograd in 1917. Seated from left to right: Mr. K. Zariņš (later Foreign Minister, now Minister in London with extraordinary powers), Mr. J. Brūmelis, Mr. J. Zālītis (later Minister of War), Mr. A. Bergs (later a prominent Conservative leader), Mr. V. Olavs (chairman of the Committee), Mr. J. Čakste (later first President of the Republic), Mr. J. Goldmanis (later Minister of Agriculture), Mr. K. Bachmanis; standing: Mr. K. Hiršs, Mr. J. Kēmans, Mr. P. Ašmans, Mr. Stumbergs, Mr. J. Kreichbergs, Mr. Bērziņš, Mr. F. Vesmans (later President of the Saeima and Minister in London), Mr. Brunovs.



The Latvian Riflemen, disillusioned in their hopes of liberating their country, refused to bear further futile sacrifices and participated in the revolution. The picture shows them bearing red flags in attendance at the funerals of their comrades-in-arms at the Rīga Brethren Cemetery at the beginning of the revolution of 1917.



The proclamation of Independent Latvia in the National Theatre, Rīga, on 18 November 1918. In the centre, from left to right: Mr. G. Zemgals, Mr. M. Skujenieks, Mr. K. Ulmanis, Mr. E. Bite, Mr. S. Kambala.



Plenary meeting of the Latvian National Council. Until the Constituent Assembly was elected, the sovereign power in Latvia was exercised by the Latvian National Council, a body made up of representatives of the political parties. Mr. J. Čakste was elected Chairman of the Council. His deputies were Mr. M. Skujenieks, Mr. G. Zemgals and Mr. K. Ulmanis who were charged with the formation of the Provisional Government, *i. e.* the first Cabinet of Ministers. Mr. Čakste in the chair, to the left Mr. Skujenieks.



XVI

LATVIAN INDEPENDENCE

It was in the year 1917 that the most terrible revolution in history broke out. There is a vast amount of literature on this topic with such vivid titles as: Europe on the Brink of the Abyss, Storm and Night over Russia, The European Crisis, The Destruction of Civilisation, all of which emphasize the fears raised by it. Even the correspondence of Woodrow Wilson assumes peculiar accents when dealing with the Bolshevik Revolution: "I have been sweating blood over the question what is right and feasible to do in Russia. It goes to pieces like quicksilver under my touch."¹ There are so many lessons to be learned from this tragedy of Russia, that it is well worth our while to examine it carefully.

During the last decades of Tsarist Russia four Dumas were called, while at the same time the Tsar himself was making the utmost effort to preserve the principles of autocracy which led to an ever widening gulf between the government and the people. On top of it all was the noxious influence exerted by mystics of all kinds, including the hypnotic figure of Rasputin. It was Rasputin who introduced himself to the French

* *Lāčplēsis* — the ancient legendary Latvian hero and symbol of the War of Liberation (cf. the detail of the Monument of Liberty on Plate LX).

Ambassador M. Paléologue as "the Minister of the soul of Her Imperial Majesty." Little wonder that revolutionary activity was increasing.

There was a sense of impending doom. In 1909 the Tsar who was born on Job's day, told Stolypin, who was assassinated two years later, of his fears for the future. The Tsar was sure that he would meet a terrible fate, and would not live to reap the fruits of his work in this life. He frequently used to repeat to himself the words of Job, his patron-saint: "that which I feared has come over me and what frightened me has overtaken me."²

Lenin, the Red Tsar, almost at the same time was explaining his ideas to Korostovetz at Zürich, saying that when he obtained power, some 30 or 40 million people out of the 180 million would have to be sacrificed for the socialist experiment, yet this sacrifice would be a small price to pay if it brought the world nearer to socialism.

Neither the Tsar nor Lenin was mistaken. But for a moment in 1914 it seemed as if people's minds were occupied with other matters during those early days of the war. Putilov, one of the best known and richest of the Russian industrialists, is reported to have prophesied the imminence of revolution: "... however, with us, revolution can only be destructive, because the educated classes in our country are in an insignificant minority, devoid of any experience of organization and of any contact with the masses." It is the bourgeoisie which will open the game, ... "but from the bourgeois revolution we shall soon proceed to the workers' and, gradually, to the peasants' revolution, which will be followed by a terrible ten years' anarchy." Paléologue, who relates this prophecy, uttered in 1915, calls its author the owner of a melancholy Slav temperament!

Yet two years later the game opened and the mouldering edifice of the Russian Empire, erected by Ivan III, Peter I, and Catherine II, collapsed. Tsar Nicholas II abdicated on 15 March. The Provisional Government of Prince Lvov, amid general enthusiasm which expressed itself in innumerable ways, promised to erect golden bridges into the future. The conviction of the middle-classes and the intelligentsia, that the country was now entirely happy, was so spontaneous and unsophisticated that, indeed, thoughts of a melancholy nature about the political intelligence of these masses of people force themselves upon our mind. Prince Lvov, himself an idealist and aristocrat, delivered a long speech on 10 May in which, among other things, he said, "we can regard ourselves as the happiest of all people—our generation is witnessing the happiest era in Russian history." And the chorus of professors, country administrators, students and soldiers re-echoed: this has been the last world war, peace and an era of progress have come!

But in the meantime a new government was being formed in St.

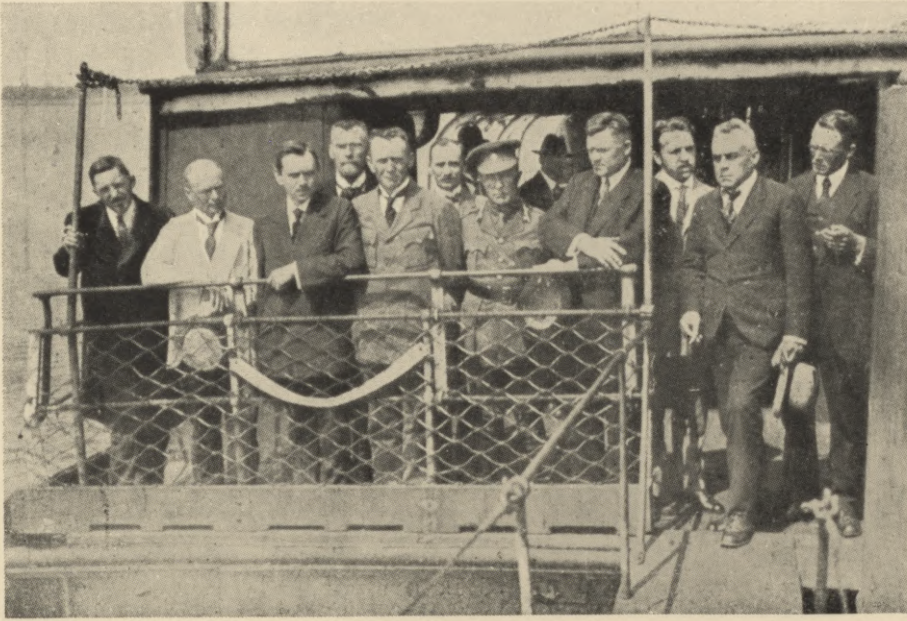
Petersburg, the SSRD (Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Representatives), at that moment under Menshevik leadership (Tcheidze, and Tseretelli). On 3 April, Lenin (Ulyanov) arrived in St. Petersburg from Switzerland, after passing through Germany in the notorious "sealed carriage" under the authority of the German High Command. The German High Command rightly believed that Lenin's return to Russia would hasten the collapse of the Russian front. Lenin well deserved this confidence placed in him for as early as September 1914, he had written that the Russian proletariat's duty was to do everything in its power to help the Germans gain the victory, in order to prepare the ground for the great Russian social revolution. At the congresses of Zimmerwald (September 1915) and Kienthal (February 1916) he had launched the famous slogan of "peace without contributions and annexations!" These two foreign words—"contributions" and "annexations"—were hardly understood by the dark Russian mob. Lenin staked everything on revolution, for as he said, "either the revolution will come which will kill the war, or the war will kill the revolution." The gamble and the hazardous events which accompanied it are well portrayed by J. W. Wheeler-Bennett in his book *The Forgotten Peace—Brest-Litovsk*.³

Bolshevism, which strove to "deepen the revolution," met with little success in the beginning. Indeed Lenin at one time had to flee to Finland, and at the great Soviet congress which convened in June 1917, of the 1,019 delegates there were only 105 Bolsheviks. But before very long, as Putilov had foreseen, matters became worse. Kerensky's government fell on 7 October, and the bourgeois revolution had to retreat, leaving the way open for the extremists. The weakness of the bourgeoisie was due partly to the dispersion of the elements of the Russian middle-classes over the vast territory of the country, and partly to the peculiar character of the Russians themselves.

The first period of the Russian revolution was marked by a ruthless civil war, and the struggles of the "foreign" peoples to rid themselves of Russian domination. In Latvia the situation was particularly grave. From the very beginning of the war the people suffered terribly, but from 1917 even until 1920 the position was extremely critical. In 1919 in Kurzeme alone there were five governments set up by alien military powers. In the end a solution to these problems was found by the Latvian people themselves.

The activity of the Central Latvian Refugee Help Committee in St. Petersburg, conducted by Vilis Olavs and after his death by Jānis Čakste, did much more than mere relief work on behalf of the refugees. In fact it virtually developed into a national political centre of all Latvian refugees in Russia.

Yet before the Russian Revolution of 1917—in germ even before 1914—numerous Latvian patriots had been devising plans for an extensive local autonomy, but the question of complete independence had also been discussed. They wished for “a free Latvia in a free Russia.” The Revolution accelerated the rhythm of the new trend of thought, but after its outbreak the question of the future of Latvia immediately came to the fore. Thus, as early as 4 March, at a meeting in Rīga, a resolution was passed which said, “considering the economic, cultural, national and historical peculiarities of Latvia, she must be an independent autonomous province.” On 8 March, when the Council of Latvian Social Organizations was formed, the decision was taken to “prepare a draft for the autonomy of Latvia and to form sub-commissions to deal with the problems of agriculture, schools, the church, judicial affairs, labour, trade and industrial problems, communications, the co-operative movements and taxation.” This discussion on autonomy was the first expression of political emancipation, which in part has been alluded to as they appeared in the slogans of 1905. In 1917 autonomy was discussed not only in Rīga, but also in St. Petersburg, Dorpat (Tartu) and elsewhere. A move from provincial autonomy, conceived on the lines of the Russian *zemstvo*, to state autonomy was made when a resolution was adopted (14 April) by the Committee of the Latvian Rifle Reserve Regiment. The resolution demanded “complete autonomy for a united Latvia with domestic sovereignty to comprise all districts of Kurzeme (Kurland), four districts of Vidzeme (Livonia) and three districts of the government of Vitebsk (Latgale), and, in addition, other regions populated by Latvians.” From then on it was but a small step towards obtaining complete independence. However, that step was delayed, for soon afterwards the whole territory of Latvia was occupied by the Germans and the Provisional Government of Russia would not consider even the slightest of these demands for autonomy. The Russian policy was summed up by Miliukov when he said: “If autonomy is granted to the Latvian people, it must also be granted to the Samoyeds.” Yet with the disintegration of the Russian Empire these demands could not be checked. The Central Society of Agriculturists convoked at Rīga the so-called Land-Meeting of Vidzeme, which elected a farmer and one representative of the landless from every rural community to the Provisional Council of Vidzeme, which met in Rīga Castle on 25 March 1917. As a counter-measure, the Social-Democrats called together a meeting of the landless at Valmiera and elected a provisional council of their own. However, a fusion of these two bodies was finally effected. The managing committee of this joint Provisional Council then convoked, on 30 July, a meeting of various organizations in order to discuss the question of the



The Latvian Provisional Government on board the S/S "Saratov", at Liepāja in 1919. From left to right: Mr. E. Strautnieks, Minister of Justice, Mr. Rudzītis, Director of the State Chancellery, Mr. K. Puriņš, Minister of Finance, Mr. S. Paegle, Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. J. Zālītis, Minister of War, Mr. J. Goldmanis, Minister of Agriculture, Mr. K. Ulmanis, Prime Minister, Mr. Hermanovskis, Minister of Communications, Dr. M. Valters, Minister of the Interior, and Mr. J. Blumbergs.



The first military units of the newly-organised Latvian State included the Special or Students' Company, composed of volunteers in the fight against the Reds. Above, a group of members of this company in Liepāja, in January 1919.



Volunteers of the Northern Latvian Army in the spring of 1919. As early as February 1919, the North Latvian Brigade, consisting of drafted men and volunteers, was set up in the Estonian-occupied areas of northern Vidzeme. The unit which was commanded by Colonel J. Zemitāns lacked weapons and equipment at the outset.



The entry of the Northern Latvian Army into Rīga on 6 July 1919. The Northern Army together with the Estonians had liberated Rīga after defeating the Germans in heavy fighting. On the platform from left to right: Colonel J. Zemitāns, Commander of the Northern Latvian Army, Colonel J. Balodis, Commander of the Southern Latvian Army, and Lieutenant Colonel E. Kalniņš.

juridical status of Latvia. The following organizations were represented at this meeting: the Provisional Council sent six representatives, the Council of the Riga Social Organizations seven, the Council of the Workers' Representatives of Riga six, the Council of Latvian Riflemen and Landless three, the Executive of the United Latvian Riflemen (*Izkolastrel*) eight, and its Latgale section five, the Kurzeme Provincial Council six, the Riga Town Council six, the Latvian section of the Executive of the 12th Army one, and the Latvian Bureau of the 5th Army one. This heterogeneous body, representing the most varied political opinions, succeeded in passing unanimously the following resolution:

(1) The Latvians, like any other nation, possess the rights of complete self-determination.

(2) Latvia will be indivisible and will comprise Vidzeme, Kurzeme and Latgale. In the border-regions of Latvia the local population will determine for themselves whether they wish to belong to Latvia or to some other state or province.

(3) Latgale, by virtue of being a particular component of Latvia, will be granted independence in matters of local administration, language, education, and religion.

(4) Latvia will be a political autonomous unit within the Republic of Russia, which has been founded on democratic principles.

(5) The power of the Latvian legislature, executive, judiciary and local administration will lie in the hands of the Latvian people and of the *Saeima*, which will be elected on the basis of general, direct, secret, and proportional voting, indiscriminately of sex.

(6) The Meeting protests against annexations and, generally, against any attempt whatever towards determining the legal status of Latvia or any of her parts and its frontiers without the Latvian people's knowledge and decision.

The illusion of a "free Russia" however faded with the Bolshevik revolution in October. However, we cannot help stating and underlining as one of the greatest successes of that period the paragraph in the resolution referring to a *united* Latvia. It was included in order to end the artificial separation of the three provinces of the country which had been particularly injurious to Latgale. This region had been separated from the rest of Latvia since 1772. From 1863 to 1904 no one in that province was allowed to read and write in his mother tongue, and as late as 1912 Latgalian teachers were forbidden to teach in their native district. In Latgale the period of national revival did not begin until 1904 when the printing of books in the native language was allowed. The current of freedom, which in 1917 swept the eastern parts of Europe, also helped Latgale to remove the obstacles which separated it from the

rest of Latvia. A Latgallian Provincial Council was elected whose representatives took part in the proclamation of the Latvian State on 18 November 1918, though Latgale was not liberated until 1920. By the end of 1917, when the Germans occupied the whole territory of Latvia, and when Russia became the scene of Bolshevik subversion, the Latvian patriotic movement went underground where it was conducted by the Provisional Latvian National Council which was formed on 29 October 1917. At its first congress held on 16—19 November at Valka, representatives of the Kurzeme and Latgale Provincial Councils took part. In addition, representatives of most of the Latvian national, social, political, and economic organizations were present at this convention. The Congress resolved that Latvia was an autonomous and indivisible unit, whose internal form of government and foreign relations should be decided by its Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks suppressed the Provisional National Council, but it continued its work nonetheless, holding its meetings in St. Petersburg and in other places. The Council considered as its chief task the opening of relations with foreign countries. Z. Meierovics was sent to London and Paris, an information bureau was opened in Stockholm, and books and pamphlets on Latvia and her aspirations were written to give information to those abroad.

However, as late as February 1918, *i.e.* on the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the entire eastern littoral of the Baltic was still under German occupation, for they hoped to bring about a speedy end to the war on the Western Front and then to incorporate the Baltic area into the German Empire. With this end in view, they drafted a project for the creation of a Baltic Duchy (to include both Latvia and Estonia). This Duchy was to be under the rule of some member of the Hohenzollern dynasty and directly responsible to the Kaiser himself. According to the ancient Livonian tradition, a Landtag was called together, at which a few germanophile and conservative Latvians were present. In the autumn of the same year the administrative apparatus of this Duchy went into operation in a limited way. However, defeat on the Western Front, and the collapse of the whole German-Austrian resistance, interrupted this scheme. The German nobility of Vidzeme, like that of Kurzeme, had at an earlier date submitted to the German government a plan for colonization which promised one third of their lands—for a moderate pre-war price—for settlement by German peasants. Further, they requested the German government to proclaim the country a protectorate of Prussia, or Germany proper, and to place it under military administration until "germanization" (*Eindeutschung*) had been completed. It was then hoped that a constitution would be granted (November 1917).

By the Russian-German Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on 3 March 1918, the territory of Latvia was split up. Germany retained Kurzeme and Riga, the question of Vidzeme remained undecided, though its inhabitants were granted the right of self-determination. Latgale was ceded to Russia which, indeed, gave up its right of sovereignty over the Baltic States. The juridical formulation of this renouncement is to be found not in the text of the Treaty itself, which only deals in general terms with the territories west of the fixed line of demarcation, but in the text of a supplementary treaty signed in Berlin on 8 August 1918, art. 7 of which reads as follows:

"Estonia, Livonia, Courland, and Lithuania
Article 7

Russia, taking account of the conditions at present existing in Estonia and Livonia, renounces sovereignty over these regions, as well as all interference in their internal affairs. Their future fate shall be decided in agreement with their inhabitants.

No obligations of any kind towards Russia shall accrue to Estonia and Livonia through their former union with Russia."⁴

On 5 January 1918 the Russian Constituent Assembly met at Taurida Palace where J. Goldmanis protested against the separate peace of Brest-Litovsk: "The Latvian nation desires peace as ardently as any other nation; but we Latvians consider it unfair of Russia to conclude a separate peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, deserting her allies the United States of America, England and France in their fight against Germany. The Latvian nation does not want the peace of death, a peace which is a grave for our mutilated country. We are expecting a peace that will bring justice to every nation, and this will only be possible after the victory of the United States of America, England and France." At the end of this speech J. Goldmanis said: "The Latvian problem has become international. It can no longer be solved here in this House. The Latvian people will decide on its inner structure and its relations with other nations in its own constituent assembly."

The partition of Latvia caused a storm of protest from the Latvians themselves and numerous speculations from the Germans. A personal union with, that is to say, an incorporation with Germany, was predicted for Kurzeme. The essence of the "eastern" dream of the declining empires of Austria and Germany was this: Prince Karl of Hessen was to be given the throne of Finland, Duke Urach of Württemberg was to be given Lithuania, and the Archduke Eugen of Austria that of the Ukraine, while the throne of Kurzeme was to be reserved for Emperor Wilhelm II himself. Hindenburg sanctioned the bill of colonization and expressed his gratitude to the nobility for their grant of one third of their land

for settlement purposes. If such a policy had been carried out it would have meant the end of the Latvian peasantry. When discussing the future of Vidzeme on 22 March 1918, the Landtag in its project for the future administration of the country suggested that there should be 32 representatives of the large-estate owners, 32 of the peasantry, four of the nobility proper, eight of the clergy, and ten of the towns (Rīga excepted), which meant the consolidation of German power. On 22 September the German Emperor granted official recognition to the independent, free regions of Vidzeme, Estonia, Riga and the island of Oesel. On 19—20 October, a Landtag commission of these regions met and resolved to "lose no time in taking the necessary steps for the consolidation of the Baltic countries into one constitutional-national State." Jointly with the Kurzeme Landtag a resolution was passed suggesting the formation of a Committee to be drawn from the whole country (*Landesausschuss*), with representatives from all circles and all nationalities of the population. Its business would be to work out a draft Constitution for the Baltic States, and to appoint a Baltic Provisional Government. It was an attempt to save what could be saved. However, the German front in the west collapsed and the refusal of the Latvians to collaborate was clear by 3 November. Article 14 of the Armistice, signed on 11 November between the Allied Powers and Germany, dealt with Germany's obligations towards the inhabitants of the Baltic States and their actual governments. The note of the British Government, recognizing Latvia *de facto*, was also signed on 11 November. Article 433 of the Versailles Treaty abrogated the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, nor was Germany allowed "in any way to interfere with the arrangements on national defence which might be made by the provisional governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania." Thus the German dream came to nothing.

Naturally the Latvians in Rīga had not been idle. Here the Democratic Bloc was as active as it could be under the difficult circumstances of the occupation. Like the Provisional National Council, it kept alive the idea of independence and counteracted the endeavours of the committee formed by the occupation authorities to create a united Baltic State under German rule. What is more, both this Democratic Bloc in Riga and the Provisional National Council gave repeated expression to the country's genuine opinion. On 17 November these two organizations came together to form the People's Council, and Mr. J. Čakste was elected its President and Mr. K. Ulmanis Prime Minister. The first declaration of the People's Council, signed by the Prime Minister K. Ulmanis and the Vice-President, G. Zemgals, reads as follows: "Citizens of Latvia! The Latvian People's Council, recognizing itself to be the sole body possessing power of authority in the Latvian State, proclaims

that (1) Latvia, united within her ethnographical boundaries (Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale) is an autonomous, independent, democratic republic, whose constitution and relations with foreign states will be fixed in the near future by the Constituent Assembly which will be convoked on the basis of universal, direct, secret, and proportional suffrage; (2) the Latvian People's Council has created the Latvian Provisional Government as the supreme executive body of Latvia. The Latvian People's Council calls upon the citizens of Latvia to maintain peace and order and to give their whole support to the Latvian Provisional Government in its difficult and responsible task."

On 18 November 1918 the State of Latvia was proclaimed in a solemn ceremony in the National Theatre at Riga. The meeting was opened by the Vice-President, G. Zemgals, the protocol of the constitution of the People's Council was read by E. Bite, and the Prime Minister, K. Ulmanis, on behalf of the Government declared the Republic of Latvia founded.

"On that night the National Theatre was crammed, yet it was not an audience of spectators. An atmosphere such as permeates the House of God during divine service had descended on all who had gathered to be present at a ceremony which was to give an entirely new turn to Latvian history." Yet, "on leaving the shining hall," continues the author, "the participants came out into the dark of night and were met by a German patrol which had not yet left the town..."

Mention must be made here of the manner in which the Baltic States are alluded to in the text of the Versailles Treaty. Apart from the passages which refer to Poland (art. 27, 87, 100, etc.), the Versailles Treaty (16 June 1919) touched the Baltic sector but lightly, among other countries it completely omitted Finland. The Baltic States were referred to simply as "the Provisional Governments of Estonia, Livonia, and Lithuania" (art. 433). Such an attitude, full of uncertainty and ignorance towards the Baltic States, is well illustrated by articles 27 and 28, in which the frontier question of East Prussia is settled. However, of the adjoining countries only Poland and the former Russian frontier were mentioned. The Baltic countries were dealt with in articles 116, 117, and 433, which read as follows:

"Art. 116: Germany acknowledges and agrees to respect as permanent and inalienable the independence of all the territories which were part of the former Russian Empire on August 1, 1914,..."

"Art. 117: Germany undertakes to recognize the full force of all treaties or agreements which may be entered into by the Allied and Associated Powers with States now existing or coming into existence in future in the whole or part of the former Empire of Russia as it existed

on August 1, 1914, and to recognize the frontiers of any such States as determined therein."

"Art. 433: As a guarantee for the execution of the provisions of the present Treaty, by which Germany accepts definitely the abrogation of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, and of all treaties, conventions and agreements entered into by her with the Maximalist Government in Russia, and in order to ensure the restoration of peace and good government in the Baltic Provinces and Lithuania, all German troops at present in the said territories shall return to within the frontier of Germany as soon as the Governments of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers shall think the moment suitable, having regard to the internal situation of these territories. These troops shall abstain from all requisitions and seizures and from any other coercive measures, with a view to obtaining supplies intended for Germany, and shall in no way interfere with such measures for national defence as may be adopted by the Provisional Governments of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. No other German troops shall, pending the evacuation or after the evacuation is complete, be admitted to the said territories."

The armed forces of Latvia were built up under the most difficult circumstances. According to the conditions of the Armistice of 11 November 1918, the German troops were to remain on the spot until the Latvian Government had established the basic organization of a national army. Disregarding these stipulations, German troops were withdrawn and the country was left open to attack from the Bolsheviki. Even after the revolution in Germany, the German civil administrator in Latvia, A. Winnig, who was a Social-Democrat, did not give up Germany's former intentions towards these Baltic countries. "The Russian borderlands", he said, "ought not to be given the chance to become independent states, irrespective of who would remain in possession of them—and that will be decided by power only."⁵

It was not before 7 December that Winnig gave his consent to the formation of armed forces, the so-called *Landeswehr*, which was to be composed of Latvian, German and Russian companies. The commanding officer of this military unit had to be a German, and no mobilization of Latvians was to be allowed. The Germans, indeed, armed their *Landeswehr* and openly enlisted volunteers through recruiting-offices in Germany. A number of the few Latvian volunteers had to be sent away for want of arms. Only a few minor units could be supplied with "smuggled" arms which were bought from the demoralized German military units. However, the German 8th Army, on its retreat from Russia, left its stores to the Red Army which followed close at its heels.

No wonder the Bolsheviki approached Rīga without meeting any con-

siderable resistance. At this critical hour the Social-Democrats left the Latvian National Council. The Provisional Government had to move to Jelgava and from there to Liepāja. It was followed by the first Latvian military formation, a battalion under the leadership of Colonel Kalpaks, which was the nucleus of the subsequent formations.

The entrance of the Red Army into Rīga on 3 January 1919, was a breach of the declaration of the right of self-determination for all peoples, which was so solemnly proclaimed by Lenin and Stalin (15 November 1917). A passage of this declaration runs as follows: "... the First Congress of the Soviet in June proclaimed the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination. The Second Congress of Soviets in October confirmed this inalienable right of the peoples of Russia still more securely. Executing this determination of the Congress, the Council of the People's Commissars decided to adopt the following principles in its dealings with nationalities: (1) Freedom and sovereignty to the peoples of Russia. (2) The right of free self-determination for the peoples of Russia, even unto separation and establishment of independent states. (3) Abolition of all and every kind of national and nationally religious privileges and restrictions ... Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars: V. Ulyanov-Lenin. People's Commissar for National Affairs: Yosif Djugashvili-Stalin."⁶

By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 1918 Russia had also renounced her claims to the Baltic countries. By the end of 1918, however, her attitude had completely changed. On 28 November, for example, the *Vooruzbonny Narod*, a Petrograd newspaper, wrote as follows: "... the world bourgeoisie desires to erect bourgeois Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as a wall separating us from revolutionary Germany ..." While the Soviet semi-official organ *Izvestya*, on 25 December 1918, stated that "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are directly on the road from Russia to Western Europe and are therefore a hindrance to our revolution because they separate Soviet Russia from revolutionary Germany ... This separating wall has to be destroyed. The Russian Red Proletariat should find an opportunity to influence the revolution in Germany. The conquest of the Baltic Sea would make it possible for Soviet Russia to agitate in favour of the social revolution in the Scandinavian countries so that the Baltic Sea would be transformed into the Sea of the Social Revolution."

No further comments are necessary. Latvia was occupied and proclaimed a Soviet Republic without a plebiscite. Terror and misery increased from day to day. After nightfall endless lines of women could be seen, with sacks over their shoulders, leaving the town for the country in search of food. There was a quick succession of decrees of nationalization, followed by numerous threats of capital punishment and confisca-

tion of property. Huge taxes were imposed (5 February 1919). The workers too had to face increased taxation. Clothes and footwear were requisitioned (16 February), all landed property was nationalized (3 March), and compulsory labour was decreed (18 March), etc. Since the implementation of all these orders could not be effected without terror, the number of people who were tortured, shot or died of hunger was enormous. The prisons were crammed. Compared with the experience of later times the number of people who suffered at the hands of the Russians during this period seems small. However, if we compare the events of 1919 in our country with those of 1940—41 it becomes obvious that if anything in the Russian methods has changed since then, it is the extent to which they applied their ruthless measures of extermination.

Early in 1919 the power of the central Soviet government was hardly felt at all in the country districts; all power was in the hands of the local Soviets. The authorities were mainly concerned with searching day and night for supposed counter-revolutionaries. During the night those in power would meet and decide whom to arrest, and it was at night that the victims would be seized and taken to prison. Farmers, workers, artisans and the few rural intellectuals were among those arrested; nobody could feel safe. In the prisons, revolutionary tribunals were at work pronouncing numerous death sentences. The law of the judges was "the Bolshevik revolutionary conscience." Towards dawn special units took charge of the condemned, made them take off their clothes and footwear, which the guards kept for themselves, and then the shivering victims were executed and buried in shallow graves in a careless haphazard manner. The Vecgulbene tribunal gained particular notoriety in this respect.

At home things were going from bad to worse, but the Latvian delegation which pleaded the Baltic cause in Paris did all it could. It will suffice here to quote but one document⁷ which will clearly show the extent of the aid which the Western Powers were willing to grant to the Baltic peoples in their efforts to cast off the German yoke and ward off the obtrusive Bolsheviks. It indicates what these peoples were expected to do for themselves in order to implement their age-long political aims. On 9 May 1919, in the course of a meeting of the Foreign Ministers attended by Mr. L. Lansing (U.S.A.), Lord Balfour (Great Britain), M. St. Pichon (France), Baron Sonnino (Italy) and Baron Makino (Japan) it was resolved that "a Committee including all the United States, British, French and Italian economic, naval and military representatives should meet to make a report on the best means of establishing and maintaining order in the Baltic Provinces and of revictualling the population. This committee met on the 14th May at the Ministry of Com-



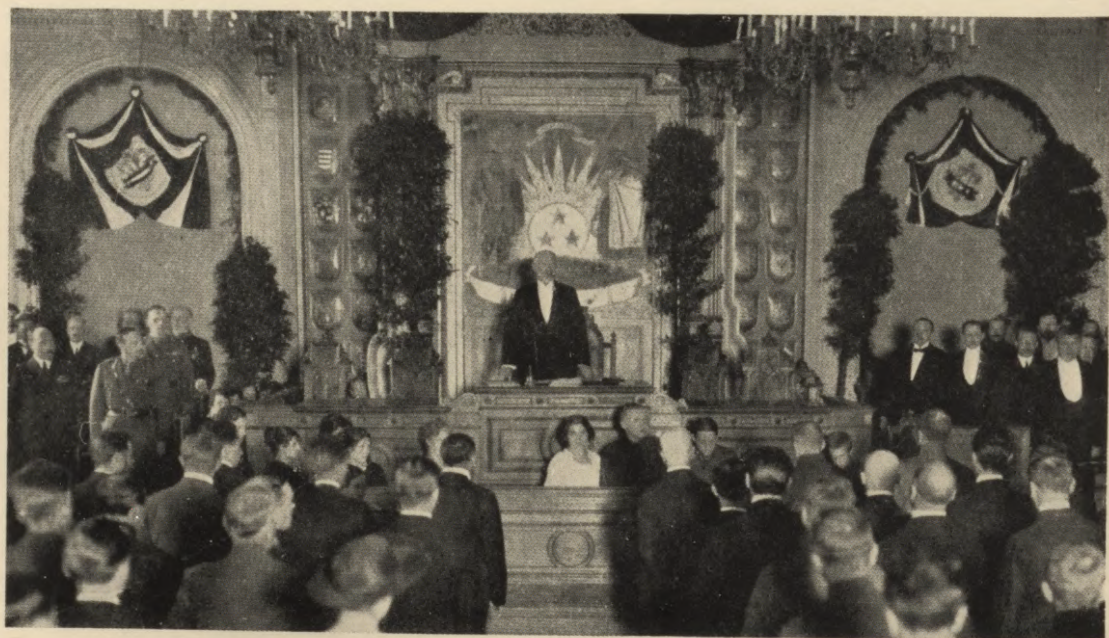
Cadets of the Officers' School at the Daugava bridges during the Bermont attack. The German forces, ignoring the Allied orders to evacuate Latvian territory, under the disguise of a "Western Russian Volunteer Army" and ostensibly headed by a former Russian officer Bermont-Avalov, attacked Rīga but were halted on the left bank of the Daugava river.



The first Latvian military units at Pārdaugava, Rīga, on 11 November 1919. The attack of the Bermont forces which were headed by German General von der Goltz raised a storm of indignation among the Latvians and all able-bodied men joined in the defence of Rīga and eventually drove the Germans from the left bank of the Daugava and from the remainder of Latvian territory. British and French naval artillery participated in these battles.



The poet and ideological fighter for free Latvia J. Rainis, and his wife, the poetess Aspazija, leaving Government House where they were welcomed after their return to Rīga in 1920 from exile in Switzerland. Left (with flowers) the poetess Biruta Skujeniece. To the right the Minister of Education, Dr. K. Kasparsons.



The solemn opening of the Constituent Assembly on 1 May 1920 in Rīga. J. Čakste, the Chairman, addressing the Assembly. In the background the symbol of the Rising Sun of Latvia.

merce. It was of the opinion (a) that the maintenance of order is a necessary condition of the distribution of food in the Baltic Provinces, (b) that the present situation in Lithuania and Lettland, which leaves the maintenance of order entirely in the hands of the German army, is most regrettable and should in no case continue, (c) that, as there can be no question of sending Allied troops to the Baltic Provinces, the only alternative is to organize all that can be obtained in the way of native forces and volunteers from outside; these, it was further explained, should imply volunteers from Scandinavia and Finland. It was therefore decided, after an exhaustive discussion of the whole question in its different aspects, to submit to the Council of Foreign Ministers the following recommendations, purporting, in conformity with Article 12 of the Armistice, to have the German troops withdrawn and, if possible, local forces organized; to send military missions to Libau (Liepāja) and Reval (Tallinn) under British command, further, a credit of ten million pounds sterling should be placed at the disposal of the Baltic States by the Allied and Associated Governments."

This, obviously, was as much help as could be expected at that time.

The first invasion of the Red Army into Latvia and its occupation, however, did not last long. It was possible to stabilize the front at the Venta, though the situation remained precarious. Yet the Germans still refused to give the Latvian Government permission to mobilize, and, indeed, made several attempts to disarm Latvian military units in order to deprive their Government of any armed support. At that time, the Latvian Government received 5,000 rifles from the Commander of the Allied naval units at Liepāja.

The situation, however, became tense when General R. von der Goltz, who was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the German armed forces, arrived at Liepāja. According to his own statement he had four enemies: the German Soldiers' Council, the Latvian Government, the Bolsheviks and the Allied Powers, and lastly the German Government.

At the beginning of March, the moment for a counter-attack on the front had come. Operations which started on 3 March resulted in an impetuous advance from the Venta line to the banks of the river Lielupe. On 8 March, Jelgava was taken, which prepared the way for the liberation of Rīga. The losses of the Latvian troops who made the attack were insignificant, although during a casual encounter with German units the Commander of the Latvian forces, Colonel Kalpaks, was killed and Captain Balodis took over command. Once again the old German ideas of domination in this region made their appearance. As early as 19 February the customs authorities at Liepāja had detained a suspicious parcel which had been found on board the *Runeborg*. This parcel, whose owner, a cer-

tain von Stryck, had managed to clear out, contained a draft of the well-known proposal for incorporation of the Baltic countries within the German Empire, this time to be implemented after the overthrow of the Latvian Provisional Government. The Provisional Government issued a warrant for the arrest of von Stryck, but General von der Goltz, who had the power, refused to allow any further investigations to be made into the matter. As the Latvian Provisional Government continued to oppose the Germans as well as they could, a unit of the *Landeswehr*, the *Stossgruppe*, undertook to organize a *putsch* which was attempted on 16 April. As General von der Goltz describes it in his memoirs, von Manteuffel and his unit suddenly appeared in the Government Building and arrested several ministers, though unfortunately the most important of them, including the Prime Minister, K. Ulmanis, were said to have found refuge on board the Latvian S/S "Saratov", then under British protection in the port of Liepāja. At first the Germans tried to create a triumvirate, consisting of Prince Lieven, who was the officer in command of the Russian military units, Captain Balodis, the Commander of the Latvian forces, and some representatives of the German nobility. However, Prince Lieven and Balodis refused the honour. Indeed, Balodis declared on behalf of all Latvian units under his command that he would remain loyal to the Provisional Government. This *putsch* gave rise to profound indignation against the Germans, and the *Landeswehr* was forced to undertake a punitive expedition into the country districts. The Head of the Allied Military Commission categorically insisted upon the punishment of the instigators of the *putsch* and demanded that the Germans should stop interfering with the work of the Government. This order was to a certain extent observed by General von der Goltz who dismissed von Manteuffel. On 10 May, a mixed German-Latvian government with Pastor A. Niedra at the head, was formed, which, however, was acknowledged neither by the Latvian people nor by the Latvian soldiers who, as a matter of course, loyally continued to do their duty at the front. Nor was this puppet government recognized by the Allied Powers. Yet it was not until the Niedra government was formed that General von der Goltz gave the order for an attack on Rīga on 22 May. The same day Rīga was taken. The blame for the long and unnecessary hardships endured by the population of the city rests solely on those who, for political reasons, delayed this attack. During the attack on Rīga, the Latvian troops were involved in a fierce action on the flank, and thus the *Landeswehr* were the first to enter the town and take over and keep administrative control of it.

The liberation of Rīga, however, was not the sole military success on the anti-Bolshevik front. At that time the North-Vidzeme Group, a

small unit of the Latvian Army in northern Vidzeme, together with the Estonian Army, reached Cēsis and cleared Vidzeme of Bolshevik remnants. The Latvian brigade under the command of Colonel Balodis was then ordered to the southeastern front, while the German units—the *Landeswehr* and the Iron Division, “hired” by the Niedra government—marched into liberated Vidzeme.

In the meantime the Provisional Government headed by Ulmanis had not been inactive. Lively negotiations had been initiated with the Allied



Colonel Kalpaks, the first
Commander of the Latvian
forces.

Powers and the neighbouring States. In January the Prime Minister visited Mr. Pāts, Prime Minister of Estonia, and Lieutenant Colonel Laidoner, Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Army. An agreement was reached whereby those Latvians who were resident in Estonia were to be mobilized and formed into Latvian military units on Estonian territory. Captain J. Zemitāns was entrusted with this task and sent to Tallinn to carry out the mobilization and to organize the Latvian units. As early as 27 March the Vidzeme Regiment arrived at the joint Estonian-Latvian front. Other formations followed in due time. After heavy fighting, the Estonians captured Pskov on 26 May, while on Latvian territory joint Estonian-Latvian troops successfully continued the liberation of their countries. On 25 May, Ainaži was taken, then Valmiera and, on 1 June, Cēsis. Rīga having been liberated on 22 May the Bolsheviks were compelled to leave central Vidzeme in a hurry in order to avoid being cut off. On 5 June the Valmiera Regiment reached the Daugava at Krust-

pils. It had been planned to help the Estonians clear the rest of their country when, on 2 June, the news reached Cēsis of the approach of the *Landeswehr*. Its movements caused profound suspicion, since it was directed to the rear of the Estonian-Latvian front. The Estonian Government had on the occasion of the attempted *putsch* of 16 April reacted in a very energetic manner. They disarmed the Estonian units of the *Landeswehr* and arrested some of the German nobility of Estonia. On this occasion the Estonians were fully informed of the real purpose of the German *Landeswehr*, as they had a representative on General von der Goltz's staff. Indeed, on 2 June, the *Landeswehr* entered Cēsis, but was compelled to retreat. On 4 June, the plenipotentiary of the Estonian Commander-in-Chief, Lieutenant Colonel Reek, sent an ultimatum to the Commander of the German military forces, saying "until relations are cleared up between the Estonian formations, and the Latvian troops which are operating in northern Latvia and recognize the Ulmanis Government on the one hand, and those who are moving from Riga on the other, the Estonian Commander-in-Chief determines the borderline as follows..." But late on 5 June the *Landeswehr* opened hostilities by firing on the Estonian armoured trains. They attacked Cēsis on the following day. Though this attack was witnessed by Captain Dawley, a United States Army officer and other military representatives of that country at Tallinn, von der Goltz sent an ultimatum stating that Latvian units under Estonian command had attacked, on 5 June, those Latvian troops which were under the German High Command. Unless the Estonians observed the strictest neutrality, fighting between Latvia and Estonia would be inevitable. For this reason the Estonians were to withdraw behind the linguistic frontier, and the German High Command would guarantee that frontier. The Estonian Commander-in-Chief replied that Estonian and Latvian troops were then fighting on a front which extended from Pskov to Daugavpils and that it was essential that the railway line Ieriki-Vecgulgbene should remain in their hands for strategic reasons. Units of the *Landeswehr*, continued the Commander-in-Chief, had not taken part in the operations against the Bolsheviks on that sector of the front. He asked the Germans to send their troops to the Krustpils-Jaunjelgava front in order that he might concentrate his troops in the north. The Estonian troops were to leave northern Latvia the moment Latvian, *i.e.* Ulmanis Government units, had completely taken over the front facing the Bolsheviks.

The German command had decided to attempt to crush both the Estonian and the Latvian military forces simultaneously. They halted their attack in Latgale against the Russians and directed their troops towards Vidzeme in order to "liberate" it from the Estonians who had

"invaded" it. The troops in northern Latvia were called Bolshevik by the Germans and they attempted to drive them from Latvia.

On 19 June, the *Landeswehr* and the Iron Division opened the attack. On 21 June the Germans succeeded in advancing to a considerable depth on the left flank, but after receiving reinforcements, the Latvian-Estonian troops counter-attacked from three sides. The *Landeswehr*, to avoid encirclement retreated and this retreat developed into flight on 22 June. On 26 June, the Germans turned again to fight at the gates of Riga. Between the 2nd and 3rd July the road to Riga was opened. The truce of Strazdumuiža was concluded on 3 July under the pressure of the Allies.

On 8 July the lawful Latvian Government returned to Riga, acclaimed by the people. Subsequently, the "northern" and "southern" units were merged into one Latvian National Army. General Simansons became the Commander-in-Chief, and Colonel, later General E. Kalniņš, Chief of the General Staff.

Events showed, however, that the conditions laid down in the Strazdumuiža Truce, were inadequate and insufficient for a complete solution and clarification of the situation. It is true, General von der Goltz no longer controlled the *Landeswehr*, it was put under direct Allied control, and H. R. I. G. Alexander, then a Lieutenant Colonel of the British Army and later Field-Marshal, took over the command of it. Yet the remnants of the German army did not leave Latvia, but were only compelled to retreat behind the Daugava. These forces were renamed and placed under the command of Bermont-Avalov. Their objective was the same: the reconquest of Latvia for the Baltic Germans. While all this was going on, further armies were being formed to fight against the Bolsheviks along all the border-lands of Russia. On Estonian territory the army of General Yudenich was in the making. However, it soon left Estonia for the Petrograd front.

Such events seriously troubled the Allied military missions in the Baltic States and Finland: General Gough in Finland and General A. Burt in Latvia and Estonia, the latter having his headquarters in Riga. On General Burt's staff were Lieutenant Colonel Tallent, Lieutenant Colonel Keenan, Colonel Du Parqué (France) and several officers of the United States Army. A personal meeting between General Gough and General von der Goltz, which took place on 19 July, was not a success, as it failed to implement the conditions of the Versailles Treaty according to which the German troops were to leave the territory of Latvia. When the Allied Powers most categorically insisted on the withdrawal of von der Goltz's corps, threatening Germany with reprisals, the Iron Division was again "hired out", as during the Cēsis operations, and

entered Russian service, remaining, however, at Jelgava. For all that, the German Government was compelled, on 3 October, to recall General von der Goltz.

General Gough's negotiations with Bermont and the demand that he should leave for the Bolshevik front were unsuccessful. It was due to this intricate situation that the Latvian Government had to withdraw from the front part of its armed forces in order to be quite safe. At the beginning of October, Bermont stopped all communications with Kurzeme and dissolved all local garrison headquarters there. On 8 October, he launched an attack on Rīga, having at his disposal about 50,000 men, 40,000 of them being German volunteers, well armed and equipped with 100 guns. The Latvians on this front had but 5,000 men and 6 guns. Their equipment was poor, to say the least, even as far as clothes and footwear were concerned. On the first day of the fighting the Latvians were forced to retreat to the right bank of the Daugava, crossing the river by night. The Bermont troops immediately entered the suburbs of Rīga on the left bank of the river. The Latvian units, however, were neither defeated nor destroyed and the river Daugava formed a natural line of defence. Almost the whole population of Rīga and the surrounding districts volunteered for the defence of the capital. The enthusiasm and determination which consolidated and animated the entire Latvian nation at this juncture was unprecedented and has hardly been surpassed.

The first assault of Bermont on Rīga was unsuccessful. After a few days of defensive wariness, the Latvian counter-attack began on 11 October.

As early as 15 October they forced a crossing of the Daugava and captured the fortress of Daugavgrīva, which became the starting-point for future actions. The Latvian Army was now efficiently backed by Allied naval units. On 3 November commenced the onset on Torņakalns, a suburb of Rīga, whose capture on 10 November initiated the complete liberation of the town. Pursuing the enemy on 21 November, Jelgava was taken, though General Eberhardt, the successor of von der Goltz informed the Latvian headquarters on the night of 19—20 November that Bermont had placed his troops under his protection, and he asked for a truce in order to open negotiations. On 29 November the whole territory of Latvia was cleared of the Bermont troops. It is worth noting that the communication of General Eberhardt formally involved Latvia in a state of war with Germany. In the peace treaty which was concluded on 15 July 1920, Germany waived her claims to remuneration for landed property owned by German citizens and nationalized under the Land Reform. This was no particular act of charity by the German Govern-

ment but merely compensated for the damage wrought by her in Latvia during the war.

At that time General Balodis was Commander-in-Chief of the Latvian armed forces, General Radziņš, Chief of Staff, conducting the army operations, while the weight of fighting rested on General Berķis.

After this Bermont-Avalov episode, and after the country had been cleared of German troops, the Latvian Army was free for its next task — the liberation of Latgale. Poland was interested in this undertaking in order to ensure the safety of her left flank. An agreement was accordingly made between Latvia and Poland for common action which took effect on 3 January 1920, when Daugavpils was taken. However, on the same day an armistice was concluded between Estonia and Russia, which might have resulted in the reinforcement of the Russian troops on the Latgalian front, but, in spite of that, operations were continued there successfully. Northern Latgale was liberated and Rēzekne, an important railway junction, was taken. Here in Latgale the guerilla troops, which were formed during the fighting in Vidzeme, were particularly helpful. They were most effective in the wooded regions, and their improvised and sudden attacks were a constant threat to communications and wrought havoc in the enemy's rear. The local population was ready and willing to render them all possible help.

As early as the end of January the ethnographic frontier was reached by Latvian troops. The Armistice between Latvia and Russia came into effect on 1 February 1920, though quite fierce encounters with Russian patrols and isolated units continued for some time after its conclusion. Peace with Russia was concluded on 11 August 1920, after one and a half years of fighting. The text of the peace treaty contains a formal promise from the rulers of Russia at that time to recognize "irrevocably" Latvia's sovereignty, and to renounce all Russia's former rights over the Latvian people and territory. The passage in question runs as follows: "By virtue of the principle proclaimed by the Federal Socialist Republic of the Russian Soviets, which establishes the right to self-determination for all nations, even to the point of total separation from the states with which they have been incorporated, and in view of the desire expressed by the Latvian people to possess an independent national existence, Russia unreservedly recognizes the independence and sovereignty of the Latvian State and voluntarily and irrevocably renounces all sovereign rights over the Latvian people and territory which formerly belonged to Russia under the then existing constitutional law as well as under international treaties, which in the sense here indicated shall in future cease to be valid. The previous status of subjection of Latvia to Russia shall

not entail any obligation towards Russia on the part of the Latvian people or territory."⁸

This was how independent Latvia came into being. Mention has already been made of the price paid for it by the Latvian people. I want, however, to stress the fact that between 1915 and 1920—not to mention earlier occasions—a firm and unshakable will was predominant among the Latvians to acquire, whatever its cost might be, the independence of their native land. Or, to put it simply, in the words of a tired Latvian soldier on a military train, "The Latvian army has no deserters."

Before concluding this chapter, let us take a brief glance at what was going on in the rest of the East European zone.

Events in Estonia were strikingly similar to those in Latvia. There, too, a national revival announced the dawn of a new era. Then came the Revolution of 1905, its suppression, and then after the collapse of the Tsar's Empire in 1917, Estonia established her National Council (12 March), which managed, step by step, to settle the administrative problems of the country. On 24 February 1918, an independent Estonian State was proclaimed. In this country, too, a few Bolsheviks were to be found among the soldiers of the Estonian Army. But the country did not suffer quite so much as Latvia did during the war. Neither did the Bolshevik invasion reach their capital Tallinn, for the heroic efforts of the Estonians, supported by British naval units, defeated them thirty kilometres away. The war against the Russians, in which Latvian and Finnish volunteers took part, ended with the liberation of Estonia early in 1919. Finally, it must be remembered that Estonian armed forces played an important part alongside the North-Latvian army in the defeat of the *Landeswehr* in the battle of Cēsis. The Estonians were sensible enough to refrain from participating in General Yudenich's assault on Petrograd, which collapsed like so many other military exploits of the White Russian armies.

The events in Finland took a more complicated turn. The Revolution of 1905 had restored to the country part of its former rights and authority, as for example the setting up of their own Finnish parliament which was acknowledged by the Tsar on 20 July 1906, yet later further attempts were made to russify the country. This also explains the fact that at the outset of the First World War a military unit of Finnish volunteers, some 2,000 men, left Finland and went abroad and took part in the military operations of the Germans in Kurzeme. But it must be remembered too, that about the same number of Finns fought on the Russian side. When the Russian Revolution broke out, a marked strengthening of the left-wing parties could be observed in Finland in 1917—18, which led to a cruel civil war. After the proclamation of in-



The Prime Minister K. Ulmanis reports to the President J. Čakste at the first graduation ceremony of the Latvian Officers' School. To the right the Foreign Minister Z. Meierovics talking to Colonel P. Radziņš who was the actual leader of the last stage of the War of Liberation. To his right the Army Commander General J. Balodis.



The first Latvian delegation to the League of Nations in 1920. From left to right, seated: Envoy M. Valters, a leader of the 1905 Revolution, who was the first to demand Russia's partition into national states, the first Foreign Minister Z. Meierovics who laid down the guiding lines for Latvian foreign policy, Envoy J. Lazdiņš. Standing: Envoy Dr. O. Grosvalds, Consul General G. Bisenieks and Mr. J. Tepfers, secretary to the Foreign Minister.



J. Čakste Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, the poet J. Rainis and the Prime Minister K. Ulmanis (between the two) on *Lāčplēsis Day* in the Parliament House in Riga in 1921. *Lāčplēsis*—the Bear-Slayer—is a mythological hero symbolising the resistance against invaders from east and west. His legend has been expressed in poetical form by A. Pumpurs and was the theme of a dramatic play by J. Rainis. The *Lāčplēsis Order* was instituted in 1920 and was awarded for military bravery. Soldiers who had been awarded this distinction formed an organisation and met each year on *Lāčplēsis Day*, 11 November.

dependence, the Finnish right-wing and centre parties asked Sweden for help and, later, also applied to Germany for succour. And, indeed, German expeditionary forces, under the command of General von der Goltz, disembarked in the port of Hangö and together with Finnish troops, under the command of Marshal Mannerheim, succeeded after severe fighting, in liberating the country from the Bolsheviks. The last battles were fought on 28 and 29 April 1918 when the town of Viipuri was taken.

The vicissitudes of Lithuania, the southern neighbour of Latvia, were somewhat different. The Revolution of 1905 limited itself to some manifestations by the congress of Vilna, the consequences of which were suppressed by the Russian Government. In 1915 the whole of Lithuania was occupied by German troops. In September 1917 the Lithuanian National Council (*Taryba*) was established and recognized by the German authorities; on 16 February 1918, the Independent State of Lithuania was proclaimed. It is true, the Vilna question complicated matters. The Lithuanians insisted on their claims to the once famous capital of their former Grand-Duchy as they wished to make it the capital of their new republic. The Poles who had taken it from the Bolsheviks on 19 April 1919, seized it once more from the Lithuanians during the revolt of General Zeligowski. Another complication, and this one of an international character, in which Lithuania became involved, was the problem of Klaipėda (Memel). In 1923 the town and the adjoining rural districts of this region were occupied by the Lithuanians and in 1939 by the Germans.

Let us add a few words about the fate of Poland, which to some extent resembled that of Latvia. Passing over the events which occurred prior to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, mention must be made of the most important facts of the period between the two world conflicts. In November 1916, Germany and Austria-Hungary gave a constitution to the former Russian part of Poland which vaguely resembled the Duchy of Warsaw called into existence by Napoleon a hundred years previously. Polish Rifles fought in the Austrian army against the Russians. When the Revolution broke out, Pilsudski, on 3 March 1917, started forming his Legions and strove to recover those Polish provinces which were then under German and Austrian domination. Thus under Pilsudski's orders the Polish Legions refused to fight any longer with the Germans. For this Pilsudski was put into prison in the fortress of Magdeburg (in September 1917). The Brest-Litovsk Treaty compelled the Russians to renounce the Polish territories, and the collapse of Germany and Austria-Hungary cleared the way for an independent Poland reunited after an interval of a hundred years. The

desire to re-establish Polish influence over the Ukraine led Pilsudski into a rather dubious undertaking. In April 1920 he started an offensive against Kiev. This, however, proved only a short-lived success. After expelling the Poles from the Ukraine, the Bolsheviks pushed them back and reached the suburbs of Warsaw in August 1920. Polish patriotism with French support (General Weygand) defeated the Russians and compelled Trotsky's armies to retreat in haste.⁹ The Peace Treaty of Riga, concluded after lengthy and difficult negotiations on 18 March 1921, put an end to warfare in that region.

Thus we see that the entire zone of Eastern Europe, extending from the Baltic to Roumania, was the scene of fierce and complicated fighting. But in the end many of the oppressed peoples realized their hopes of independence. However, the Caucasian peoples enjoyed but a brief spell of such freedom. For example, Georgia was independent only from 25 May 1918 until 12 February 1921. Just as shortlived was Armenian independence, but numerous other peoples were never able to cast off the yoke of Russian imperialism at all.

Arnold Toynbee, in evaluating, from his western European point of view, the huge political, national, and social transformations which took place in eastern Europe after the First World War writes as follows: "...in the preceding transitional volume, a brief preliminary survey has already been given of the thirteen States of intermediate or minor calibre (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Roumania, Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania), with an aggregate population of 104,000,000, which had come to occupy the eastern part of continental Europe, between Germany and Italy on the one side and Soviet Russia on the other, as a result of the war of 1914. The fact that something like 80,000,000 out of these 104,000,000 people had been detached, at almost the same moment, from the three great empires which had formerly filled the East European landscape, and that one of these empires had ceased to exist, while the other two had been mutilated and inwardly transformed, gives some measure of the revolution which had taken place in this region between August 1914 and January 1920. The foundations of the old political and economic order had been broken up, and it was not yet possible to predict where, when, and how the new foundations of international intercourse in Eastern Europe would be laid. At almost every point the new map had been brought into existence by a sudden, violent explosion of long-pent-up forces, and for the time being the environment seemed to offer less prospect here for constructive statesmanship than in any other part of the world which had been affected by the war. In view of this, the failures of the East European statesmen during the next four years

should not be judged too hardly, while their successes — and there are brilliant successes to record — deserve generous recognition from spectators in Great Britain or overseas.

*Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem,*

but the privilege carries its obligations."¹⁰

That is how Toynbee wrote almost a quarter of a century ago. We may well wonder whether his feeling and attitude of resigned superiority and political reserve about these matters would be the same if he were to write about them today? And what would his forecast be now that on a European scale "a *limen* or threshold, which was a zone, has been replaced by a *limes* or military frontier, which is a line that has length without breadth"?¹¹



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* The Latvian sun-emblem. A stylized rising sun over the national colours (red-white-red). In the centre the letter L (for Latvia) and three stars representing the three regions of Latvia: Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Latgale. This motif was very popular and much used for designs of seals, stamps and currency notes, also for the badge of the soldiers of the Latvian Army.



. XVII

THE FREE STATE

The Free State of Latvia came into being under most difficult and unfavourable circumstances. History shows that for a people to obtain independence a long and hard struggle is necessary, and the Latvians, no exception to this rule, had to pay dearly for the freedom of their country. The problem of the independence of the Baltic States raised numerous doubts and difficulties; many, indeed, thought it better to postpone the matter for discussion at a later time. But such opinions were set aside and the victorious allies of the First World War gave their approval to the setting up of the independent Baltic States when they signed the Treaty of Versailles. Such, however, was not the attitude of the two neighbouring countries, Germany and the new Soviet Russia. Neither of them by any means wished to give up the important eastern shores of the Baltic, which they deemed so vital to their interests. In fact, they did their utmost to regain it as may be seen from the von der Goltz-Avalov adventure, and the incursion of the Red Army.

After these small states of the Eastern Baltic had shown their determination to establish their independence, it might have been expected that the Western Powers would not only have shown a profound interest in them, but would have tried to use their desire for political self-determination to separate defeated Germany from revolutionary Russia.

* View of Riga with the modified coat-of-arms of the city (cf. the Riga coat-of-arms of the Middle Ages, p. 163, 203 and Plate XXII).

The attitude of these countries towards this region was dangerous even at that time as may be seen from the Treaty of Rapallo (16 April 1922).

Yet material aid from the west was quite inadequate and antiquated. Thus, the Baltic peoples, sorely tried as they were, had to reconstruct their countries without the help of any such aid as was generously given to Belgium, northern France and northern Italy. "When the Free State of Latvia was founded, it was believed that foreign states would take an active part in helping to stabilize the country's economic position. For Latvia was one of the countries which had suffered most during the First World War. Therefore there was a reasonable demand for reparation for war damages which was at the bottom of all discussions and negotiations. But, alas, as each year went by it became obvious to everybody that such naive hopes were doomed to remain but hopes, and that no indemnity, either from the allies or from the defeated nations was to be expected. The completely inadequate sum, which was part of the bank money evacuated by the Russians, mentioned in the peace treaty with Soviet Russia, was merely a gesture, and just as vague and useless as the forest concessions granted in the same treaty. The food and war material surplus of the *entente*, which they were prevailed upon to cede, had later to be paid for. Thus this became the first debt of the young government to Great Britain and to the U.S.A."¹

The Latvian country suffered terribly during the war. Not only was it utterly exhausted economically, but in places completely devastated. The transfer of works and factories, not only from Riga but from other towns as well, to the interior of Russia had reduced them to a state of utter poverty, and the inhabitants were left without any means of livelihood. Yet it was not only the towns which became depopulated, for the peasant population of the rich and fertile province of Zemgale had been banished and driven away too. Indeed, throughout the whole of Latvian territory more than half of the population had been scattered with the wind and some districts were deserted.

The Latvian State came into being on 18 November 1918, after a war which had ravaged the country, ruined its economy and cost thousands of human lives. Out of the ruins a state had to be built up. Latvian territory comprised an area of 65,791 square kilometres which made it a little smaller than Ireland but bigger than Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

The population, totalling 2,552,000 (38 inhabitants per sq. km.) in 1914, had decreased to 1,596,131 (24 inhabitants per sq. km.) in 1920. Thus the population had dropped by 37 per cent. When considering these losses it must be remembered that the war had taken a heavy toll

on the young men of Latvia, thus in 1920 there was a ratio of 1,211 women to every 1,000 men, and even as late as 1935 there were still 1,139 women to every 1,000 men. Hence the task of reconstructing the country weighed just as heavily on the shoulders of the women as the men—particularly on the land for as late as 1935 there were 108 women farm-workers to every 100 men. This feature of the new Latvia was unusual among the European States. From the above facts it follows that in the new country there was an unusually high number of people supporting themselves by productive work. Latvia ranked first in Europe in 1930 employing 71.8% of the male population, and second only to Lithuania by providing employment for 64% of the whole population. Figures of the working population of other countries are as follows: Switzerland (1930) 47.6%, Czechoslovakia (1930) 47.5%, Great Britain (1931) 47%, Italy (1931) 41.9%, the Netherlands (1930) 40.1%.

A still more striking difference becomes evident when we compare the number of working women. In Latvia 57.2% of the female population was employed, while in Switzerland (1930) it was 28.9%, Great Britain (1931) 26.8%, Italy (1931) 18.5%, the Netherlands (1930) 19.2%. The high percentage of working people in Latvia shows that the inhabitants of the devastated country were obliged from early youth, even from childhood (in 1935 4.5% of Latvia's working population was under fourteen years of age), to work for their living, to reconstruct the devastated country. Old people too worked, for 3.6% of the working population was over seventy years of age. Another feature of the new Latvia was a strong minority of foreign nationals who had entered the country from the east and west. Altogether 24.1% of the population was made up of foreign nationals. Of this group 12% were Russians, 3.2% Germans, 4.8% Jews (to be found mainly in the towns of Latvia), 2.5% Poles, 1.2% Lithuanians, and 0.4% Estonians. The last two groups were naturally to be found mainly concentrated in the borderlands adjoining the respective States.²

Being fundamentally an agricultural country, many of her people were engaged in agricultural work (79.5% in 1920). But as industry slowly revived the number of farming people began to decrease (67.8% in 1935). However, agriculture remained the foundation of Latvia's economic life up to the Second World War. This was one reason why the Land Reform became inevitable, but another and more obvious reason was to be found in the fact that Latvia as late as the beginning of this century was a typical region of large states. Of the whole area of the country 48% was concentrated in large private estates (26% in Russia). In Kurzeme out of the 570 large estates 24% were between 10,000 to 70,000 hectares. Some families owned even larger properties as, for example, the

Wolf family in Vidzeme which owned 90 manors with a total area of 289,894 hectares or 2,899 sq. km.! But of the land of these large estates only 19% was tilled in Vidzeme and 23% in Kurzeme. Of the land belonging to the peasant farms 38% and 47% were tilled respectively. In these circumstances it is not surprising that in 1897 there were in Latvia about 591,000 landless peasants, including their dependents, who left the country for the towns, or who emigrated.³

The Provisional Government, then, had to solve a very difficult agricultural problem. A registration of the landless was started as early as 10 January 1919, and on 27 February the State Lands Fund was created, in which to begin with only the former crown lands, the landed property of the Agrarian Bank and the crown forests, were included. Allotment of the land started on 23 April of the same year. The Land Reform gradually returned the Latvian soil to the Latvian peasant. The former tenants and farm-servants of the estate-owners thus began to till their own lots. Numbers of new farms were carved out. While at the beginning of the Land Reform there were some 150,000 peasant farms in Latvia, their number steadily increased after the implementation of the reform, and in 1935, when an agricultural census was taken, there were 275,698 farms, which shows an increase of about 125,000. A new type of farm, that of the new settlers (*jaunsaimnieki*), appeared which employed one fourth of the entire agricultural population.

Along with mobilization under Colonel Kalpaks, a land reform was proclaimed as early as 27 February 1919: "Regulations Concerning the Distribution of Land to the Landless" which were 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 one hundred and twenty three and a half acres. The Minister of Agriculture, H. Celmiņš, submitting the Land Bill to the Assembly on 27 August 1920, stated that as much as 40% of the agricultural land was not under cultivation. He took Denmark as the model to be imitated by Latvian farming and aimed at the setting up of farms large enough—but only just large enough—to give full employment to a peasant and his family.⁴ Only the minority parties voted against the Land Bill which set up the State Land Fund. This Fund took over most of the large estates in the country for re-distribution not only from the Baltic German nobility, but also from Russians, Poles and even some Latvians. Parsonages, all forest lands, except those which belonged to peasant-farmers, peat-bogs, and all large inland waters were also taken over. But about fifty to one hundred hectares of each of the large estates were left in the possession of their former owners, the nobility or any of the other large land-holders,

except in cases where they had taken an active part in the war against Latvia. Small parcels of land not exceeding fifty hectares were then handed out to every parish church. This revolutionary measure was successively carried out in all the countries of eastern Europe which had thrown off the tutelage of Russia, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Statistically it is reflected in the following summary:⁵

The total area of land for cultivation in Latvia amounted to 6,267,000 hectares.

	Prior to the Land Reform	After the Land Reform
Large landholders . . .	3,015,900 ha (48.1%)	nil
State	627,700 ha (10%)	1,746,500 ha (28%)
Old peasant farmers	2,467,000 ha (39.4%)	2,817,600 ha (45.1%)
Sundry proprietors . . .	156,800 ha (2.5%)	129,500 ha (2.1%)
New-settlers	nil	1,550,200 ha (24.8%)
Number of farms: in 1905—83,117; in 1929—216,209.		

The social revolution brought about by the Land Reform may be studied from the following figures:

	Landowners and their families	Landless people
1897	38.8%	61.2%
1925	70.9%	29.1%
1930	76.8%	23.2%

The Latvian economist Professor M. M., has written: "The Land Bill of 1920 changed Latvia into a typical country of small-holders. The majority of Latvian farms, *viz.* about 70%, held 20 ha each. Likewise a considerable number (over 25%) are medium-sized farms of 20—50 ha each; most of the old farms fall under this class. These medium-sized country-farms constitute 40% of the whole area of farm-land. Relatively numerous were the farms of 50—100 ha each; there were altogether 14,365 such holdings which made up 21% of the total tilled area. The number of large farming estates, however, covering areas exceeding 100 ha each, amounted to 1,071 or 3% of the whole agricultural area."⁶

Such was the general picture. But many a foreign observer of this agricultural revolution viewed it with some misgivings. Thus, for instance, in his clever and well-documented book, *Economic History of Europe*, H. Heaton expresses the opinion that the dividing-up of the large landed properties would result in a rapid fall of grain production, which might eventually work unfavourably upon the general economic situation of Europe by making it in this particular respect dependent on overseas production.⁷ Indeed one of the most outstanding achievements of the Free State of Latvia was the surprisingly rapid all round develop-



A farm built on former manor (cultivated) land.



A farm built on cleared forest land. Both are typical examples of new farms created under the Agrarian Reform Law of 1922.



A farm (first building) on reclaimed marsh land. The cultivating of marsh and forest lands went on until the last days of independence and modern concrete buildings were erected on the reclaimed land by means of State subsidies.



A typical example of old farms. The farm buildings were loosely grouped round the farm house. The other separate buildings were the stable, the drying-kiln, the granaries, the summer cooking-room and, in early farms, a mill-house with a hand-mill for grinding flour.



A farm in Latgale. Owing to Slav influence, the typical form of settlement in Latgale was of the village. Separate farms were an exception before the agrarian reform of the 1920-ies. The picture shows a new separate farm. The buildings have been moved from their former sites in the village.

ment of agriculture, despite the devastation wrought by war, despite the great social break created by the Land Reform, and despite the necessity of renewing and reconstructing the country during the first years of its independence.

The First World War had to a great extent laid waste the 1,729,828 hectares of Latvian tilled soil, which made up 28.3% of the total area. The reduced population of 1923 was able to break up 1,698,425 hectares of land (27.9% of the total area). But this figure continued to improve during the following years, and in 1929 1,947,876 hectares (31.5% of the total area) were being tilled. Compared with the pre-war area, this meant a rise of more than 10%. In 1935 there were 2,113,684 hectares (33.9% of the total area) of arable land, more than 20% in excess of the pre-war area. Some districts of the most fertile regions of Latvia, the plain of Zemgale, of which on an average 63% was under cultivation, appeared as a vast stretch of fields. In the parish of Lielvircava, arable land and orchards covered as much as 89% of the total area of farm land in 1935.

The area of wheat had increased from 32,000 hectares in 1914 to 140,000 hectares in 1935, oats increased from 305,000 hectares to 339,000 hectares in 1936, potatoes from 80,000 hectares to 127,000 hectares, cultivated grass lands from 258,000 hectares to 585,000 hectares. In addition several new crops were started, which in pre-war Latvia either did not exist or were cultivated to a negligible extent, such as sugar-beet, medicinal plants, etc. Not only was the area of tilled land increased, but the yield per hectare was considerably improved. Rye during the pre-war years maintained an average of nine quintals per hectare, and in 1920 it reached its lowest figure, six quintals per hectare. But then the yield increased steadily, and in 1937 it was fifteen quintals per hectare (exceeding even the twenty quintals per hectare in the most fertile parts of Latvia). There was a similar improvement in the yields of wheat and other crops. After 1932 the production of rye and, after 1933, that of wheat, was entirely sufficient to supply the needs of the country, and in later years a surplus for export, similarly with oats after 1929, and barley after 1932. The import of sugar was stopped in 1935. Several agricultural products helped Latvia to secure a permanent place in the world market. In addition to the products of forestry, which had from the beginning made up the bulk of Latvian exports, amounting to 30 to 40% of the total export value, agricultural products began to play a more and more important part. The production of flax in Latvia was extremely important and was only surpassed by production in the Soviet Union, Poland, Lithuania and Belgium. Clover-seed and other agricultural products also formed important items of Latvian exports.

A still more significant part in Latvian economy was that played by stock-farming. Two particular branches of this were dairy farming and the production of bacon. However, it was not until 1925 that the pre-war figure for farming stock had been reached. Since then the number of cattle increased steadily until it reached 1,275,000 in 1935. At the same time dairy farming developed rapidly on the abundance of stretches of rich natural meadows and pasture land, the former constituting 14% and the latter 13% of the whole area of the country, while cultivated grass lands covered an area of about 24% in 1935. Several areas, exclusively utilized for dairy farming, developed with a wide net of dairies and creameries. There were 57.5 head of cattle to every 100 inhabitants, a figure only surpassed by Ireland, Denmark and Estonia. In 1935, the Latvian export of butter (16,816 tons) was only exceeded by that of a few European states (Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Sweden). This branch of agricultural produce expanded continuously. The production of bacon also increased, but it was not comparable with dairy farming, nor was it so profitable.

To these branches of agriculture which provided many of our exports and which were based principally on private farming, must be added the products of the State forests. The bulk of Latvian forests were State property, and timber constituted the principal export of the country.⁸

Many of the Latvians recovered, after the Land Reform of 1920, the land which had been so long withheld from them, and when they became "new-settlers" they achieved great things by devoted and hard work. A. Švābe says: "The Agrarian Reform was a wise and far-sighted measure. The old-established farms of the small-holders, who were the backbone of the national renaissance in the 19th century, were not touched, but all the big estates were re-distributed among war veterans and landless peasants in small farms calculated to be of the size that would provide a living for a family. This created social content and economic prosperity. Stimulated by a strong co-operative movement, the new farmers in a few years built up a prosperous agriculture, which not only satisfied all the home needs, but also provided the basis of a great export trade."⁹

By creating a state of social stability and by fortifying the stimulus to individual farming, contrary to communist practice, the Land Reform greatly contributed to a rapid improvement in post-war conditions. The population too began to increase once more. Between 1919 and 1925 220,000 refugees returned to Latvia. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War the total population of Latvia had again reached two millions.

Such was the situation in the political and economic spheres of Latvia.

Yet the attitude of the old countries towards the three new Baltic republics displayed ignorance, mistrust and at times contempt. Numerous, very numerous, were the objections and reproaches which were repeated by word of mouth and expressed in print. Some complaints even reached the League of Nations protesting against the Agrarian Law and "oppression" of the minorities. All was in fact part of a policy directed against the new countries whose life they believed would be a short one. But even those in western Europe who had no personal grudge against the Baltic States asked themselves if the Land Reform did not go too far in abolishing the large estates of non-Latvian owners. And further, would it be possible, they asked, to carry out large-scale social and economic re-organization without huge monetary backing which, surely, the Latvians did not possess? But let us remember the astonishment of an emissary of the King of Poland who, while travelling through Livonia after the collapse of the Order, wondered at the high standard of life in those "little kingdoms", and the "round" sums which the Polish crown once derived from the port of Rīga; or again the times when Livonia was "the corn-granary" of Sweden, and when Duke Jacob was "too poor to be a king, but too rich to be a duke." At that time there was apparently no room for such economic "apprehensions", for the standard of living there fell only when the Baltic coast-land came under Russian domination, though during the last decades of Tsarist Russia that country took much more from the region than she expended on its behalf. Russia deliberately fleeced those border-lands. Apart from the custom revenues, which it was impossible to estimate, the rest of the income of the Russian government of Livonia, even as it corresponds to the unpublished estimate of the Livonian *Landratkollegium*, greatly exceeded expenses. But after Latvia had established its independence the standard of living in the country began to rise. According to estimates taken over the period from 1935 to 1939, Latvia held the sixteenth position in the standard of living of the countries of western Europe. The figures in the following table are estimated in gold francs:¹⁰

Great Britain . . .	547	Hungary	198	Jugoslavia	93
Ireland	307	Denmark	184	Portugal	77
Sweden	297	Italy	162	Estonia	74
Netherlands . . .	288	Switzerland . . .	145	Bulgaria	70
Norway	246	Finland	137	Poland	69
Germany	244	Czechoslovakia .	118	Lithuania	67
Belgium	236	Greece	107	Roumania	63
France	221	<i>Latvia</i>	97		

The sixteenth position is not much to boast of, yet it was reached after

only twenty years. We may here quote the fine inscription on Ariosto's house at Ferrara:

*Parva sed apta mihi, sed nulli obnoxia, sed non
Sordida, parva mea tamen aere domus.*

It may not, perhaps, be out of place here to cite another passage from A. Švābe's book *Latvija 30 gadus, 1918—1948*:¹¹ "The finances of Latvia were in a good state, showing an active balance of payments, and the reserve funds of gold and foreign currency in the Bank of Latvia between 1923 and 1938 increased from 31.8 to 91.7 million lats, or 53 lats *per capita* (1936), while at the same time the rate in Italy was 25, in Poland 12, and in Germany 7 lats. If the share of state revenue on one inhabitant in lats (97) was less in Latvia than in the other northern European countries, then with regard to the national debt Latvia showed the lowest figure—79 lats a head, while in Great Britain it amounts to 4,344 lats. In Latvia therefore one per cent of the State Budget sufficed to pay off the debt, while in the rest of the European countries it amounted, on an average, to 12.9%. Compared with other nations, Latvia expended more on the reconstruction of her economic life (25.6%), on educational purposes (14.7%), and on national welfare and health (13%)."

Here are some more figures (in million lats) illustrating Latvia's trade during the same period.¹²

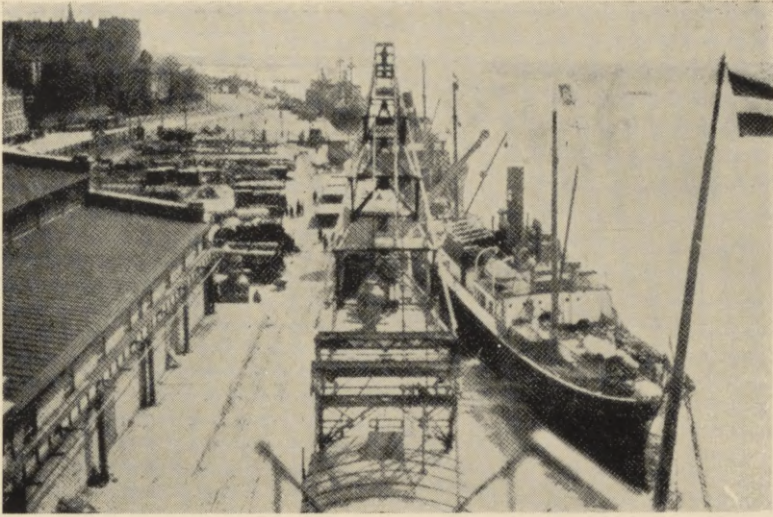
	Export	Import	Balance
1921	29.3	73.7	— 44.4
1925	179.6	280.6	— 101.0
1930	247.9	296.3	— 48.4
1933	81.5	91.2	— 9.7
1934	85.3	94.9	— 9.6
1935	138.3	121.9	+ 16.4
1936	260.7	231.2	+ 29.5

In order to assess the figures for the last few years correctly the devaluation of the lat in 1936 must be taken into account. The figures for the subsequent years are, therefore, given in gold dollars, and are taken from *Annuaire statistique de la Société des Nations*:

1937	30.2	26.7	+ 3.5
1938	25.9	26.0	— 0.1
1939	25.1	24.6	+ 0.5

(the statistics for 1939 are incomplete.)

In concluding this survey of Latvia's economic problems, a few more words must be said about the industry of the country. As has already been mentioned there was a rapid economic development in Latvia, par-



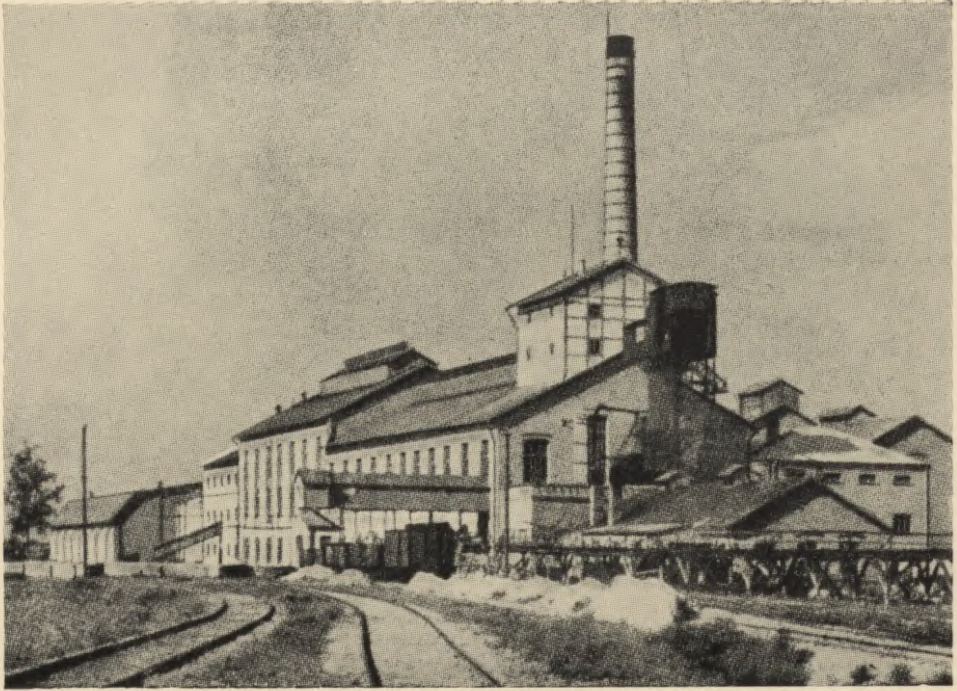
A section of the harbour of Riga. In the background to the left can be seen Riga Castle.



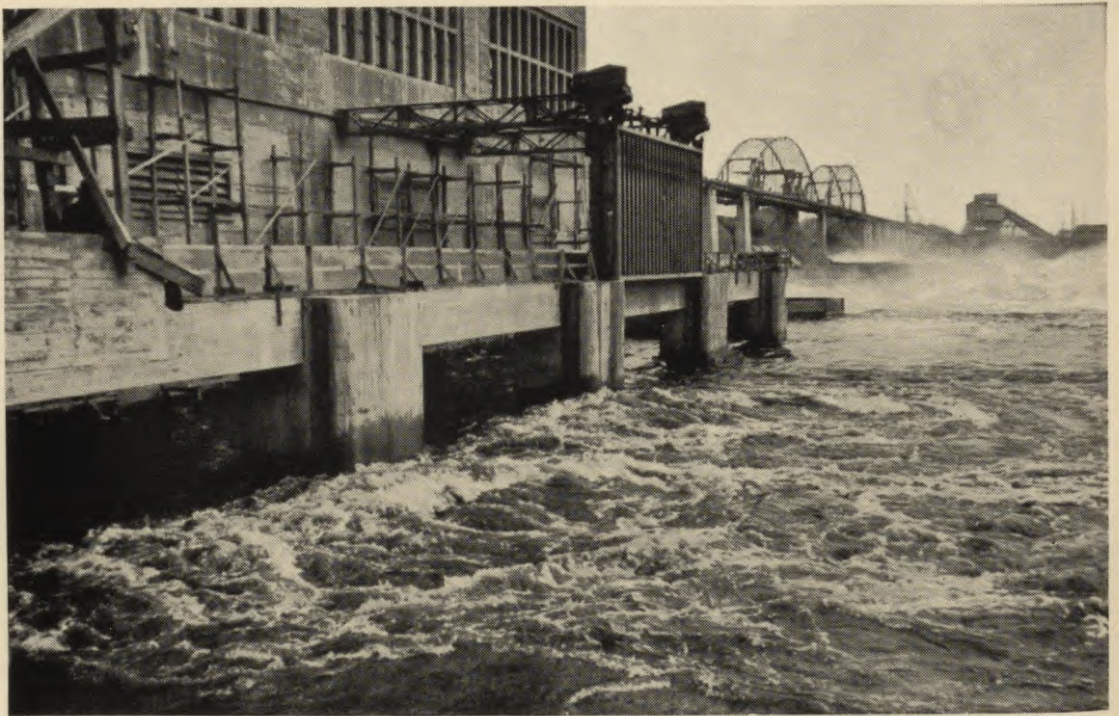
The harbour of Liepāja, an ice-free port.



The port of Ventspils, the most important ice-free port, after Liepāja.



The first sugar refinery built in free Latvia (in Jelgava). Latvia was self-sufficient in sugar.



One of the last large-scale erections in free Latvia, the Kegums hydro-electric power station which supplied about 40 percent of all Latvian electric power.

ticularly in and around Rīga, during the last few decades of the Tsarist regime. "But the First World War completely destroyed this industrial growth and when the country achieved its independence its industries had to be completely rebuilt. Little wonder, then, that the course of development of Latvia's industry over the next twenty-five years did not show a definite and continuous upward trend. On the contrary, those were years of hard struggle when success was often followed by disappointment and losses. Conditions in eastern Europe were so uncertain at that time that there could be little or no industrial planning. It was necessary to improvise and to do what was possible at any given moment, in order to meet some of the more urgent needs of the devastated country."¹³ Earlier in his book Professor M. M. says, "Before 1914 80% of the Latvian industry worked for Russia. Prior to the Second World War, however, Latvian industrial enterprise adapted itself principally to local requirements and to the increase in the purchasing power of its own population. More than two thirds of the industrial production were consumed in the home country, and there was no particular need for an export drive. This gives the lie to the opinion that Latvia's industry would and could develop and exist only if supported by some more extensive foreign market or hinterland. Another objection which was just as unfounded supposed that Latvian industry could hardly flourish in the absence of natural resources and raw materials. However, such was not the case, for in 1936 approximately 73% of the raw materials required by industry was to be found in the country itself. It might be well to remember that there is hardly an industrial country in the world, not even in the largest of states, which subsists on indigenous raw materials alone."¹⁴

The Latvian authorities steered clear of the risks involved in large scale industrial enterprises but encouraged the growth of small and medium-sized factories and companies, as may be seen from the following statistics:

Principal branches of manufacture, 1937

	Number of enterprises	Persons employed
Metal industry	733	18,549
Timber "	1,093	18,452
Food "	1,850	17,639
Textile "	400	17,220
Building "	445	8,954
Cloth & shoe industry	364	6,474
Chemical industry	185	5,114
Total	5,070	92,402

Being a country where hardly anyone lived on their capital, Latvia devoted a great deal of attention to social legislation, conditions of work, hours of work, adjustment of wages, cost of living and of social assistance, in which she ranked well-nigh first in the world. State subsidies exceeded 12% of the entire Budget and the sick insurance scheme ran 143 hospitals, 512 dispensaries, and had 1,553 doctors and 776 dentists on its panel. Further, the State introduced family allowances and a superannuation law which was extremely liberal; it provided a full pension after the age of 55, but in some cases part of the pension was available as early as after fifteen years of service.

In the fields of culture and education there were some remarkable achievements. The educational system during the Russian period provided for three year schooling in the country districts and all the instruction was to be given in the Russian language—a language which was incomprehensible to most of the pupils. Secondary schools were only to be found in some of the larger towns. At the beginning of 1920 there were only 864 elementary schools, but at the end of 1933 there were 2,057. In 1919—20 there were only 36 secondary schools, but in 1934 their number had increased to 96, including the newly founded technical schools. 15% of the Budget was spent on the nation's education; the European average at this time was 12%. All teachers were paid by the State. The curriculum was widened and improved and that for the elementary schools was designed to cover six years. All civil servants were obliged to complete their secondary education. Naturally all these reforms brought with them numerous problems, not the least of which was the recruiting and training of teachers, for even those in the profession before the war had to be trained for the new requirements.

The creation of a Latvian University formed part of the programme of the period of National Revival. Kārlis Baumanis, the author of the Latvian National Anthem, also composed a Latvian University hymn, while a Vecpiebalga farmer in 1877 bequeathed 20,000 gold roubles to the future university. These aspirations induced, as early as May 1917, the Latvian University Commission of the Provisional Country Council to meet and to suggest the foundation of a Latvian University. This topic was discussed in a more detailed manner at the Latvian Teachers' Conference at Tartu, 7—13 July 1917, at which a decision was taken to open the first faculties in two or three years time. Thus on 28 September, 1919, the High School (later University) of Latvia was solemnly inaugurated. The new institution consisted of eleven faculties and comprised the former Rīga Polytechnical Institute, which was founded in 1862. "In 1939 the University of Rīga, on its twentieth anniversary, had 446 professors and 7,247 students, distributed among twelve depart-

ments. 6,841 students have graduated up to date, and the part played by the University in the development of Latvian national culture can hardly be exaggerated. Not only has it prepared whole series of specialists in the various branches of knowledge, but it has also been instrumental in the production of numerous works of permanent value, most particularly studies bearing on Latvia and the Latvian people. During the period 1919 to 1940, Latvian scientists started to explore fields that had remained unexplored in the past."¹⁵

Research was begun in the Latvian language, literature, art, history, law and also in the natural science of the country—its fauna, flora, geography, geology, etc. Lively relations were kept up with foreign research workers by attendances at congresses and through visiting lecturers.

In a short time special institutes within and without the University were established for research work under the guidance of competent Latvian scientists. One of the first and most extensive among these institutes was the Board of Monuments. This institution supervised the maintenance of all the historical monuments of Latvia of any architectural value. It recorded the objects of folk-architecture, organized ethnographic expeditions, and carried out archaeological excavations. An Open Air Museum, which in its earlier stage was under the surveyance of the Board of Monuments, was created to preserve examples of traditional rural architecture and crafts from deterioration and decay. Old farm-houses from Zemgale, Vidzeme and Latgale were erected there and furnished in the traditional way.

The collection of ancient folklore traditions and material was started by K. Barons, and continued by the Archives of Latvian Folklore. From this institute sprang an independent body for the study of the Latvian language. During its brief existence the Institute of Latvian History not only succeeded in collecting a great deal of material for historical research, but also published valuable sources of history. Its activity was completed by the work of the State Museum of History, which added numerous ethnographic objects to its exceptionally rich collection of Latvian national costumes, and equipped a separate and very comprehensive archaeological section. The net of the state-subsidized provincial museums (at Jelgava, Liepāja, Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Cēsis and other places) became branches of the State Museum of History.

Indicative of the development of Latvian art was the establishment of two higher educational institutions—the Latvian Conservatoire and the Latvian Academy of Arts, which gave facilities for higher education in music and painting. The Conservatoire, under the uninterrupted direction of Professor J. Vītols shaped the new generations of Latvian composers and musicians, whose training and experience were eked out and

furthered by opportunities to take part in symphonic and other concerts, and by the demand for Latvian music from the Latvian Broadcasting Company. Likewise, the National Opera not only gave opportunities to rising soloists, conductors and orchestral musicians, but also required a Latvian repertoire in which purely Latvian opera was soon represented. The Ballet, at once refined and sumptuous in its rich setting and remarkable for its classical school, has not yet been surpassed either in the Baltic countries or in the neighbouring states to the west. Special mention must be made of the high standard of choral singing which after the First Song Festival, organized by the Rīga Latvian Society, has become a tradition and a manifestation of national union and consolidation. The number of participating singers at the last festival exceeded 10,000 and the audience totalled 100,000.

The State Museum of Arts in Rīga Castle, which developed into a veritable centre of Latvian painting, rendered great service by collecting many of the best paintings by Latvian artists. Latvian painting is also duly represented in many art collections abroad, and has gained recognition and success at numerous exhibitions outside the country. As far as exhibitions were concerned the Fund for Cultural Achievements held an annual one at which all contemporary trends were represented. Touring exhibitions were organized and paintings collected for display in the provinces. The Fund for Cultural Achievements was founded on 18 November 1920, two years after the proclamation of Latvia's independence. Its income was drawn from surtaxes levied on such things as alcoholic drinks and railway tickets.

In all these departments of education and art the Latvian government achieved an unprecedented intensification of creative activity. The traditions, which were conceived during the period of National Revival, could now freely develop and range alongside the cultural life of western Europe. "It must not be forgotten that the ethnical minorities had not only their own universities (including the German Herder Institute, with 192 students and 35 German teachers, and the Russian University Courses, with 109 students and thirteen Russian and Jewish teachers), but also elementary and secondary schools. 29.9% of all elementary schools belonged to the minorities, and they were state-supported like the rest. The minorities had also 14.4% of the high schools, likewise state-supported or supported by various municipalities.

It is characteristic of the liberal educational policy in Latvia that there was one state-supported elementary school for every 929 Latvians and one elementary school, similarly supported by the state, for every 74 Germans."¹⁶

As soon as an independent Latvian State was set up and the government administration was running smoothly, Latvia was faced with the important task of revising and modernising the Law.

The four Latvian provinces, when they formed a part of Russia, had no unified law. In regard to Criminal law all provinces were subject to the Russian Ordinance of Criminal Penalties. In 1903 Russia had approved the Project of a new Criminal Code of which part had immediately been put into operation all over Russia. However, the introduction of the Code was postponed by the Russian Government, but soon after the proclamation of the Latvian State it was adopted in full. Over the course of the next twenty years, however, it was subject to many amendments of varying degrees of importance.

In the domain of Civil Law the three western provinces of Latvia, namely Kurzeme, Zemgale and Vidzeme, had their own law, independent of Russia. Latgale, the fourth province, owing to its separate development, was ruled by Russian Civil Law which was based on the *Code Napoléon* and on the Lithuanian Statute. Since Rīga had been a Hanseatic city, Latvian Commercial and Shipping Law had taken its origin from the Statutes of the Hanseatic League and was akin to the laws of Lübeck. These branches of private law were never codified.

Civil law in the restricted sense of the word originated mainly from Roman Law, which had been introduced into the Latvian territories via Germany. The Peasant Laws were collected into a Compilation in the early years of the 19th century, and the Town Laws were compiled by Bunge in 1864. These Compilations were valid in Latvia until 1938. During the last decade before the Second World War a committee was set up to work on a new Code of Civil Law. This Code was ready in 1937, and was adopted and introduced into the whole territory of Latvia on 1 January 1938.

The Latvian Constituent Assembly, which was elected as soon as the country was cleared of Soviet military forces, met on 1 May 1920. Two years later the Constitution of Latvia was adopted—on 1 May 1922. The régime created by this Constitution was that of a parliamentary democracy, shaped largely on the pattern of the French and the German Weimar constitutions. The legislative body was the *Saeima* with 100 members to sit in one chamber and elected for a period of three years by direct, secret and proportional ballot. The *Saeima* elected the President of the Republic by at least 51 votes and could dismiss him by at least 67 votes. The President had practically no power and his position in this respect was very much like that of a king in a constitutional monarchy. The executive body—the Cabinet of Ministers—received its power from the *Saeima* and could be overthrown by a simple majority vote.

The Saeima passed, amended and repealed laws by a majority vote, but to amend the Constitution a majority of at least three-quarters of the assembly (75 votes) was required. Some of the articles of the Constitution, including Article 2 which stipulated that Latvia was a free, democratic and independent republic, could be changed only if a referendum approved the pertinent decision of the Saeima. Direct popular votes could be arranged also on other occasions and could overrule decisions of the Saeima.

The Electoral Law allowed 100 citizens to put up a list of candidates and a group of seven citizens to register as a political party. The pattern of political parties was briefly as follows. The right-wing included the Farmer's Union, Catholics, and a number of extremely small parties. The Centre was represented chiefly by the Democratic Centre, New Settlers, and the Right-Wing Socialists. The left-wing was represented by the Social Democratic Party which had about 30 members, except during the Saeima of 1931 when they had only 22 members. The Communist Party was illegal. In the 1931 election it ran under the name of Workers' Block and obtained seven seats in the Saeima. Later all these seven deputies were excluded from the Saeima and convicted of conspiring with a foreign power (the Soviet Union).

Since all natural resources, including forests, railways and public utilities were owned by the State or municipalities the issues at stake between the right and left wing parties were largely confined to social and agrarian legislation, taxation, commercial policy—chiefly tariff rates,—and educational questions. Racial minorities (Germans, Jews, Russians and Poles) played an important part in the Parliament and at times occupied key positions, since in none of the five Latvian Parliaments (including the Constituent Assembly) had either the right or the left wing of the Latvian parties a clear majority. The radical minorities were chiefly concerned with their own narrow interests. Such things made it difficult for the country to form a strong stable government.

The Saeima did considerable legislative work but could not provide a stable executive which was so necessary if there was to be any continuity of policy. As it was, government crises were as frequent in Latvia as they were in France.

Jānis Čakste was elected first President of Latvia (1922—1927). He was followed by Gustavs Zemgals (1927—1930), Alberts Kviesis (1930—1936) and Kārlis Ulmanis (from 1936). Deficiencies in the Latvian Constitution, which soon became apparent, gave rise to demands for amendments and reforms. These troubles indicated political disunion and instability which was evident in all three Baltic States. As Professor

Švābe has pointed out,¹⁷ "An extremely liberal and almost too democratic Constitution was agreed upon. It provided for an assembly of a hundred members, in which at one time there were as many as 27 political parties. This, of course, was not conducive to stable government. However, it was our first experience of modern self-government and we learned much. Given time we would have smoothed out all the clumsy faults of beginners." Foreigners recognized this weakness too: "In 1928, for instance, Latvia had twentyfive parties, 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."¹⁸

The economic crisis of 1929 began to be felt in the country about 1931. Although its effect in Latvia, an essentially agricultural country, was less violent than in western Europe and North America, unemployment and foreign trade restrictions followed in its wake. But it was felt that many of the economic difficulties were due, partly at least, to the Constitution and unstable government. The right-wing and most of the centre parties felt that the Constitution of 1922 should be amended with a view to ensuring government stability. In 1933 the Farmers' Union introduced a bill calling for the amendment of the Constitution to the effect that the President should be elected not by the Saeima, but by a direct popular vote. His prerogatives were to be increased and more power was to be given to the Cabinet. Chiefly owing to the opposition from the Social Democrats the bill failed to obtain the necessary threequarters majority and so it was rejected in the spring of 1934. Meanwhile the political atmosphere was tense. It was generally believed that the left-wing Social Democrats and, on the other hand, a right-wing extremist party *Pērkonkrusts* were becoming increasingly active.

In the draft of the amendment of 1933 to the Latvian Constitution, provision was made for the election of the President by the whole of the electorate, for enlarging his competence and for extending the functions of the ministerial cabinet. It was in fact an attempt to adopt the principles of the Constitutions of Great Britain and of the United States. However, this amendment was rejected by the Saeima. The development of subsequent events was similar in both Estonia and Latvia. The Estonian President K. Päts with the help of General Laidoner, a popular leader during Estonia's fight for independence, dismissed the Estonian Assembly in 1934 and temporarily prohibited, until further notice, the activities of the political parties. The new Constitution was accepted. It came into force on New Year's Day 1938.¹⁹

Similarly in Latvia the first Prime Minister and fourth President, K. Ulmanis, in joint action with General J. Balodis, dismissed the Latvian Parliament on 15 May 1934, and political parties were prohibited. "Hostile propaganda brands this period as one of fascist dictatorship . . . but it certainly did not bear the all too familiar gruesome hall-marks of fascism: concentration camps, secret police, arbitrary courts."²⁰

On 15 May K. Ulmanis who was then the Prime Minister in a right-wing-centre coalition government (Ulmanis was leader of the Farmers' Union, had been Latvia's first Prime Minister and had occupied this position in several later governments), in joint action with General Balodis who was a member of the Saeima and who had a strong position in the Latvian Army, and M. Skujenieks, who was also a member of the Saeima and who was leader of the right-wing Socialists, dismissed the Saeima and announced that until the preparation of the new Constitution, the Cabinet of Ministers would, on the basis of Article 81 of the Constitution (this article provided that when Saeima was not in session the Cabinet could issue laws which had subsequently to be confirmed by the Saeima) would also act as the legislative body. A new government was formed with K. Ulmanis as the Prime Minister. Ulmanis retained this post up to 1940. All political parties were prohibited. A number of Social Democratic and *Pērkonkrusts* leaders were interned for a few months, and one Social Democrat leader was later sentenced to two years imprisonment. A comparatively larger number of *Pērkonkrusts* leaders were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment up to three years. All the members of the Saeima received pensions from the Government, despite legal prosecution of individual members.

In staging this bloodless *coup d'état*, Ulmanis also leaned on the Latvian Home Guard. This organization was established on 20 March 1919 by a decree of the Latvian Provisional Government. All male inhabitants from the age of 18 to 60 could join it and it was created for the purpose of fighting criminal bands in the rural districts, and aiding the inadequate police forces. In 1921 it was reorganized territorially, on the Finnish pattern, into nineteen regiments (one regiment in each of Latvia's administrative districts and one railroad regiment). The majority of the Home Guard were farmers. In 1940 the organization counted 45,000 male members, 12,000 members of Women's Auxiliary Corps and 11,000 candidates.

The political changes of 1934 did not create any particular complications. They were ratified by the President, A. Kviesis, and by the Senate which was the Supreme Court of Latvia. The planned constitutional re-

form was carried out in Estonia by K. Päts who called for new elections to the Assembly in 1938. However, due to the outbreak of the Second World War such constitutional reforms were not carried out in Latvia.

Foreign policy is a question of life and death for a small country. Latvia had no territorial demands on her neighbours, no unsettled frontier problems and it was but natural that its foreign policy had only one basic aim: security or in other words preservation of its national independence within the boundaries established in 1918—20. During the first period which roughly coincides with the time Z. Meierovics was Foreign Minister, Latvia was successful in consolidating its international status through peace treaties with Soviet Russia and Germany; settlement of frontiers with Estonia and Lithuania through arbitration; practically universal *de iure* recognition; admission to the League of Nations; agreements on payment of wartime debts; and commercial and other treaties with various foreign countries.

However, this and the following periods failed to solve the security problem. It was generally understood that the only countries that might threaten the Baltic countries were Germany and Russia. It was also realized that the best possible means (as formulated by Meierovics who already in 1922 predicted that a German-Russian alliance would bring about a Second World War) was a defensive Baltic block which would have close relations with the Entente Powers and would consist of the three Baltic countries proper, Finland, and Poland.

All these countries agreed in principle, and signed in August 1920 at Bulduri near Riga, as a preparatory move to possible military treaty, a convention of political alliance. Unfortunately, this convention never came into force. Lithuania refused to ratify it because of its conflict with Poland over Vilna, which had intervened in the meanwhile. Also Finland withdrew from the convention and orientated thereafter its policy towards the Scandinavian countries. Even subsequent endeavours to conclude an alliance between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland stumbled over the Vilna question. Germany and Russia also did their best to frustrate these efforts. When it became clear that there were no immediate prospects of concluding the Four-Country Block, Latvia and Estonia concluded on 1 February 1923 a defensive alliance. The failure of the Four-Country Agreement was fatal to the security of the three Baltic States and also essentially weakened Poland's ability to withstand German and Russian pressure.

In the following period, 1925—34, efforts to solve the security problem were centred in the League of Nations and in such collective security devices as the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 and the Convention on the

Definition of the Aggressor. Latvia signed a non-aggression treaty with Soviet Russia in 1932.

The third and last period, 1934—39, was marked by the conclusion of the Baltic Entente between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, an agreement on coordination of foreign policies. A policy of neutrality was the watchword now, as the threat of a new war was growing. At the outbreak of the Second World War all the three Baltic countries declared themselves neutral.



* The grand coat-of-arms of Latvia. It was approved on 15 June 1921 by a bill of the Constituent Assembly. On the shield a rising golden sun on a blue field, beneath it a red lion on a silver field representing Kurzeme and Zemgale, and a silver griffon on a red field representing Vidzeme and Latgale. On top three golden pentagram stars symbolising the three provinces—Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Latgale. The shield is held by a red lion on the right and a silver griffon on the left.



XVIII

TEN YEARS OF FOREIGN OCCUPATION

The importance of the Molotov—von Ribbentrop pact of 23 August 1939 is obvious: it was the prelude to the German attack on Poland and thus became the immediate cause of the Second World War. Its implications, direct and indirect, for all the countries lying between Germany and Russia were tremendous, as it changed the entire international pattern in eastern Europe. Indeed it could hardly be otherwise. This pact was an agreement between two countries which, unlike the other great powers, pursued a policy of territorial expansion at the expense of their neighbours even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both lost the First World War, and, as a result, had to give up territories inhabited by non-Germans and non-Russians; in these territories arose a number of new states. However different the new régimes in Germany and Russia were, they inherited much of the old imperialistic policy of their predecessors. Unlike the other great powers neither of them made a serious effort to disarm, for on the eve of the Second World War they, together

* *The Message of Titmouse.* In the Latvian folksongs, the titmouse heralds the approach of war. The engraver J. Plēpis has used this motif for a wood-engraving of a selection of Latvian martial folksongs.

with Japan, were the best armed nations in the world. The slogans of the New Order and World Revolution with which they disguised, consciously or unconsciously, their imperialistic designs, should not have deceived us. In the first place they were intent on regaining their positions which they had lost in the years 1918—20; this meant simply the annihilation of all the new countries which had sprung up in eastern Europe since that time.

Poland's defeat, its fourth partition, the so-called mutual assistance pacts with the three Baltic countries and the Finnish Winter War were the first fruits of the Molotov—von Ribbentrop Pact.

By the end of September 1939 the Polish question had, in the main, been settled between Germany and Russia. The Kremlin then turned towards the Baltic countries, forcing upon them mutual assistance pacts, popularly referred to as the base (military) treaties. Estonia's turn came first. The Estonian Foreign Minister, Selter, was summoned to Moscow at the end of September to negotiate a commercial treaty. There he was faced with a Soviet demand for military bases in Estonia. He flew to Tallinn to consult with his government. Returning to Moscow, on 28 September, he signed for Estonia the Estonian-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact, valid for ten years, and providing for the lease of certain parts of Estonian territory to the Soviet Union for the purpose of establishing military bases.

On 1 October, the Latvian Foreign Minister, Munters, was at short notice invited to Moscow "for discussions." In the Soviet capital, he was asked to sign a treaty which in all the essential points was similar to the Estonian-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact. After consulting his government, he signed the Latvian-Soviet Pact on 5 October. Under this pact, Latvia leased to the Soviet Union, for a period of ten years, military and naval bases in the ports of Liepāja and Ventspils, and at Pitrags on the northern tip of the Kurzeme peninsula, which together with the Soviet bases on the Estonian island of Saaremaa (Ēsel) commanded the entry into the Gulf of Rīga. Soviet Russia had the right to deploy 30,000 men (compared with about 20,000 men of the peace-time strength of the Latvian Army) in various parts of Latvia. The Soviet Union declared that the peace treaty of 11 August 1920 was to remain the basis of relations between the two countries and pledged not to interfere in any way with Latvia's internal affairs, nor to make any attempt to change in any way Latvia's social, economic and political structure.

A similar pact was signed in Moscow between Lithuania and the Soviet Union on 10 October. The bases were leased for a period of fifteen years,

but on the other hand the Soviet Union "ceded" to Lithuania the Vilna area which Soviet troops had occupied in September 1939.

In the light of subsequent events it is natural to ask why the Latvian government (the same question also applies to the Estonian and Lithuanian governments) concluded, apparently so readily, a treaty which actually placed the country at the mercy of a powerful neighbour whose moves the Latvian people had watched with suspicion ever since the establishment of their independence? And why did the Latvian government uphold the fiction of having entered into this agreement of its own free will, of having achieved an advantageous treaty, publicly professing faith in the honest intentions of the Soviet Union?

But when the Soviet Union offered, or rather dictated, the terms of the treaty, Latvia had no alternative but to sign. Lack of foresight, a series of blunders committed by European powers, as well as by Latvia herself and her neighbours, and last but not least the very geographical position of the country—all served to create a situation in which Latvia was left to face the Russian colossus alone. It had no allies. Efforts to establish a defensive Baltic alliance, to include the three Baltic countries, Poland and Finland, had proved futile because of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilna, and Finland's leanings towards Scandinavia. But at the time of this new threat from Soviet Russia, Poland was eliminated as a military and political factor. The defensive alliance concluded with Estonia in 1924 could hardly affect the situation one way or the other.

England and France had shown little interest in this area during the inter-war period, but in 1939 they did offer to guarantee the independence of the Baltic countries together with Russia. However, even if these guarantees had proved worthless as they did in the case of Poland they would still have been preferable to a treaty with Russia alone, as they might to some extent have curbed Soviet expansion in the Baltic area. We see clearly, then, that in October 1939, Latvia had either to accept the Russian terms or to fight.

Latvia's isolation and the Soviet determination to resort, if need be, to force, follows from the reports on the negotiations preceding the signature of the mutual assistance pacts. According to Munters's report to the Latvian government, Molotov told him *inter alia*: "But war is raging now. We must look to our security. Certain countries—Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland—have already disappeared, and others may follow. We think that there are as yet no real guarantees of your safety. This is not without danger for you, but we have chiefly ourselves in mind. What was laid down in 1920 cannot remain for ever. As early as Peter the Great, Russia obtained access to the sea. We want to secure

the use of (your) ports, free transit to and from the same and the right to protect them." Munters's remark that the Soviet Union and Germany had now a pact of friendship and therefore he could not see any need for additional security measures in the Baltic area was countered by Stalin when he made a reference to a possible threat from the British "who had already demanded from Sweden air and naval bases." Stalin added: "I am telling you frankly: a division of the spheres of interest has taken place—the Germans would not protest if we were to occupy you. However, we do not want to take advantage of this situation."

A. Rei, Estonian Minister to Moscow, who participated in the Estonian-Soviet negotiations states that Molotov's proposal was in substance, if not in form, an ultimatum and that Molotov had repeatedly told the Estonians: "I beg you not to compel the Soviet government to use more radical methods for safeguarding its security."¹

The fact that while Munters was in Moscow six Russian divisions were concentrated along the Russian-Latvian frontier is also significant. Finland's case subsequently proved, beyond all doubt, that the Russians were determined to go to extremes if necessary. However, on 17 May 1940 the Latvian Government evidently felt suspicious of Russian designs, for it issued, after a secret meeting, extraordinary powers to the Latvian Minister in London, Mr. K. Zariņš. The document in question stated that "in case it should no longer be possible to communicate with Latvia's diplomatic and consular missions in western Europe due to the outbreak of war" Envoy Zariņš was to act in the name of the Latvian government by appointing and transferring diplomatic and consular agents and appointing Latvian representatives to various international conferences. These extraordinary powers have already proved of great value to Latvia in maintaining her international status in exile.

It may also be mentioned that the Government had earlier transferred the Latvian State gold fund to the United States.

The Latvian government was also confirmed in its attitude by the behaviour of the other partner to the agreement. In personal and official conversations and official declarations the Russians professed their intention of observing the pact most strictly. Characteristic of such assertions was Molotov's statement in his report to the 5th Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union in Moscow, 31 October 1939. With reference to the mutual assistance pacts with the Baltic countries he said: "... The Pacts with the Baltic States in no way imply the intrusion of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as some foreign interests are trying to make out... 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 a basis of reciprocity and we declare that all talk of societization of the Baltic States is foolish and only serves the purposes of our common enemies and all kinds of anti-Soviet provocateurs."

To the public at large, the conclusion of the pact with Soviet Russia was a shock. The first feeling was that a complete occupation would follow sooner or later. However, as time went on, opinions became less pessimistic. People told their friends that there was every reason to assume that during the twenty years of the existence of their régime the Soviets had become less radical and ruthless; that Stalin, being a Georgian, and a member of a small nation, had sympathies for other small peoples and would defend the Baltic countries against all-Russian elements in the Soviet government; and many other such like tales, all of which sprang from wishful thinking. And the final argument of the optimists asserted that the realistic Soviet politicians, following a policy of enlightened self-interest, would not antagonize the Baltic populations by a complete occupation in case of a Russo-German war.

While Latvian-Soviet relations were on the whole quiet up to June 1940, two major events in other spheres disturbed the Latvian people. One was the exodus of the Baltic Germans and the other was the Finnish Winter War.

During the last quarter of 1939, about 50,000 Latvian citizens of German origin, responding to the call of the German *Führer*, left Latvia. However, they were not settled in Germany proper, but in the newly created *Wartbegau* which comprised territories of the Polish provinces of Pomorze, Poznan, Slonsk and Lodz. This, it seemed, was the end of the 700-year-old German problem in the Baltic area. This Livonian élite, which was not autochthonous but had come from Germany, had for centuries consciously erected an insuperable barrier between itself and the majority of the population. The Latvians saw without regret the departure of this racial minority which had become troublesome as Hitler's power grew in Germany. There was, however, a slight feeling of annoyance among the Latvians when they saw that about 90 percent of the Baltic Germans left apparently so readily. A special agreement, concluded between the Latvian and German governments to regulate the transfer of the property of the repatriates or its equivalent, placed a considerable financial burden on the Latvian state. Some Latvians also wondered whether the German repatriation was not a sign of future sovietization of their country. As a matter of fact, the German officials handling the

repatriation openly told the repatriates that this would be the case, using it as an argument for departure.

The Finnish Winter War which followed on Finland's refusal to submit to Russian demands for military bases and territorial adjustments was watched with deep sympathy, admiration and envy, many Latvians holding that the Finns had chosen the right course—a course which their own country should have taken.

Otherwise, but for some Soviet press articles in April and May in which the Baltic populations were blamed for having pro-Ally sympathies, things went on in a relatively quiet way. However, on 28 May the Kremlin, in a note sent to the Lithuanian authorities, accused them of having kidnapped some soldiers from Soviet units garrisoned in that country. The Lithuanian government rightly protested its innocence but accepted all Russian demands for an investigation of the alleged cases of kidnapping. But Soviet Russia had made up her mind to begin the sovietization of the Baltic countries. Events on the western front—the German occupation of Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium and the collapse of French military resistance—apparently prompted the Soviet Union to move faster than was anticipated in her original plan—in all probability dating from the Molotov-von Ribbentrop pact of 23 August 1939—of incorporating and sovietizing the Baltic countries.

Accordingly, on 14 June 1940 the Soviet Union in another note demanded (1) that Lithuania admit to its territory as many troops as Russia deemed necessary, and (2) that a new Government which "is capable of assuring an honest implementation of the Mutual Assistance Pact" be formed in Lithuania. The Lithuanian government accepted this ultimatum and as early as 15 June the country was occupied by Soviet troops. Smetonas, the President of Lithuania, fled to Germany.

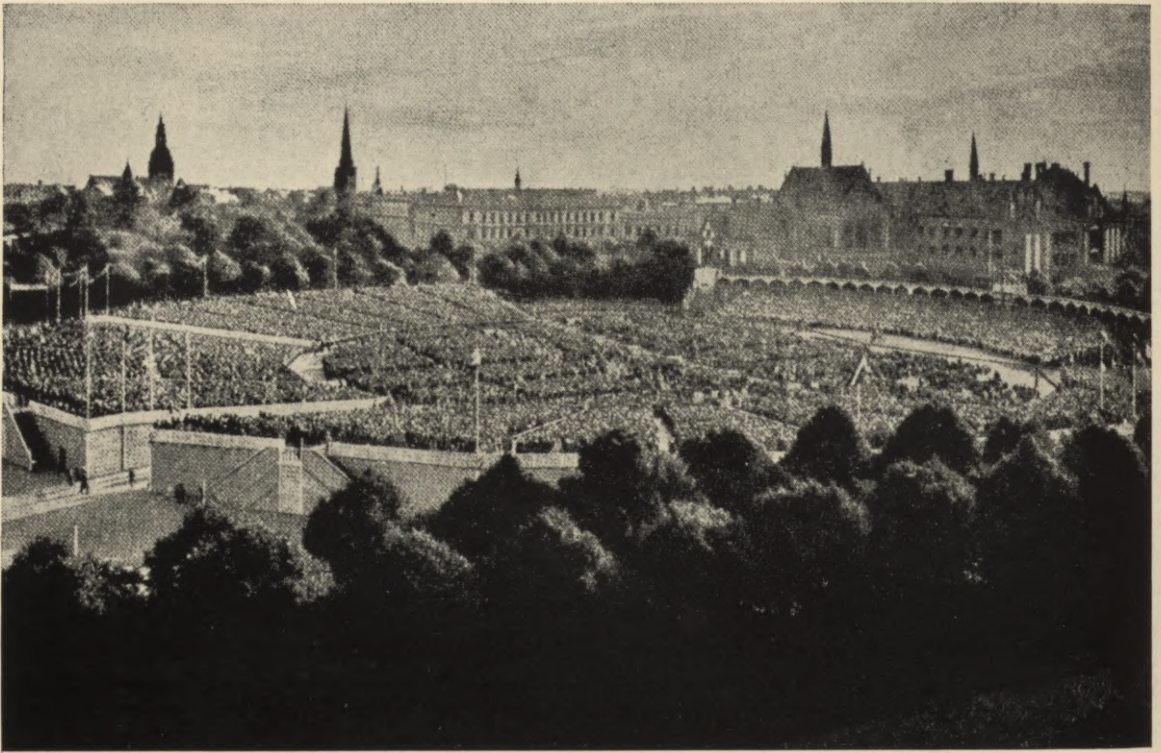
A similar ultimatum to Latvia was preceded by a Soviet attack on a Latvian frontier post on 15 June. The post was burned, the garrison killed and the civilians living nearby taken into Russia. This news was received when thousands of Latvians had gathered in Daugavpils in eastern Latvia for a singing festival. The President of Latvia, K. Ulmanis, in view of the tense situation, did not come to Daugavpils as previously intended, but he addressed the assembly over the radio. His address was followed by the Latvian National Anthem *God, Bless Latvia* which was sung in unison over and over again in realization that this would probably be the last time that it would be sung in freedom. The next day, 16 June, Molotov, in the name of the Soviet Government, handed to the Latvian and Estonian ministers in Moscow ultimatums the wording of which was almost identical.



President G. Zemgals (right) accompanies King Gustav V of Sweden to the Brethren Cemetery in Riga during the latter's visit to Latvia in 1929. To the left of the King of Sweden General P. Radziņš, then Commander of the Army, to the right Provost E. Bergs, Chairman of the Brethren Board, and, with cane, K. Zariņš, then Minister to Stockholm.



President A. Kviessis at a military parade in Riga in 1933. To the left of him Garrison Chief General K. Goppers, to the right the Prime Minister K. Ulmanis, President of Saeima Dr. P. Kalniņš, and General M. Peniķis (then Commander of the Army).



A general view of the National Song Festival in Riga. The first National Song Festival was held in 1873. In free Latvia the festivals were arranged every five years.



Choir-singers of Rucava commune. According to an old tradition every commune sent a choir to the festival, all singers wearing the costumes of their own commune.

A. Rei, the Estonian Minister, states that he was handed the ultimatum by Molotov at 2.30 p.m. (local time). Molotov stated that an answer should be given before 11 p.m. on the same day (*i.e.* within eight and a half hours, which was to include consultations with the Estonian government). If an answer was not received by that time, Soviet troops, concentrated along the Estonian frontier would be ordered to march into Estonia and to break down all resistance.² The same was told to the Latvian Minister.

The ultimatum presented to Latvia was, in substance, as follows: Latvia had not denounced its military alliance with Estonia and indeed had expanded it to include Lithuania. The general staffs of the three Baltic countries had held secret meetings. A special organ of the Baltic military alliance, *Revue Baltique*, appeared in 1940. All this constituted a flagrant breach of the Mutual Assistance Pact. To ensure an honest fulfilment of the pact, a new government should be formed in Latvia and the Latvian frontiers opened to Soviet troops.

The accusations in the ultimatum were either irrelevant or untrue. Neither when it was concluded nor at any time later had the Soviet Union protested against the Latvian-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact of 1923. Neither had the Soviet Union demanded that this pact be abrogated in connection with the Latvian-Soviet pact of 5 October 1939. Lithuania had not joined the pact. The general staffs of the Baltic states had not held any secret meetings. The *Revue Baltique*, a quarterly published by the three Baltic states in Tallinn and printed in English, French and German was a political periodical. Only one issue had appeared before the ultimatums were submitted, and the wildest imagination is needed to find anything anti-Soviet in that issue. It is significant to note that even when they had access to the secret archives of the Baltic governments after their complete occupation, the Soviet authorities failed to find anything that would substantiate their allegations concerning the breach of the mutual assistance pacts.

At an extraordinary meeting of the Latvian government it was decided to accept the Russian ultimatum. Some members of the Cabinet urged that the Government should openly voice a protest, stating that the demands were a breach of the Mutual Assistance Pact on the part of the Soviet Union and that the ultimatum was to be accepted only because Latvia was threatened by overwhelming force. However, it was decided to give a conciliatory wording to the Latvian answer, stating *inter alia* that Latvia trusted that Soviet Russia would remain true to its obligations under the Mutual Assistance Pact.

On 17 June 1940 Soviet troops moved into Latvia. Things moved fast from that moment. An emissary of the Soviet Government, Vyshinsky, the notorious public prosecutor at the Moscow "purge" trials in the thirties, now Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, came to Rīga to "assist" in the formation of the new government. This government was formed on 20 June. It was headed by Professor Kirchenšteins, an amateur politician belonging to the left-wing liberals. The Cabinet included a few secret members of the Latvian Communist Party, but most of them were short-sighted men who thought that the time had now come when they could realize their political ambitions. However, whatever their motives, the members of this Government acted as quislings both in accepting their positions and later, up to the so-called incorporation of Latvia in the Soviet Union, by serving the purposes of the Russians.

The first act of the new government was to legalize the Latvian Communist Party which, on account of its subversive activities, had been banned ever since 1920. The government then released all political prisoners. There were about two hundred in all, including members of the *Pērkonkrusts* which was a Latvian organization made up of right-wing extremists! However, these were soon imprisoned again.

Under a decree, published on 23 June, members of the Latvian Home Guard (*aizsargi*) were ordered to surrender their fire-arms to the authorities. Under another decree, dated 10 July, their organization was dissolved. On 4 July the government announced that elections to the Latvian parliament would be held on 14 and 15 July in accordance with the Latvian Constitution of 1922 and a new election law which was to be prepared and promulgated within a few days.

Although in theory any groups of inhabitants could present lists of candidates, in fact only one list was presented, which had been prepared by the Latvian Communist Party and approved by Vyshinsky. Another list, including the names of well-known Latvian politicians, was rejected on the grounds that the election platform of the group had not been announced to the public in the press. However, as the entire press and all printing establishments were under the control of the Government, the group had no chance of publishing any kind of programme. The leaders of this group were soon afterwards arrested and deported to the Soviet Union.

The election platform of the "Block of the Working People", as the Communist-controlled list was called, called for the establishment of closer friendship between the Republic of Latvia and the Soviet Union, wage increases for industrial workers, aid to farm hands to acquire land,

certain social reforms, and the safeguarding of the democratic freedoms of the individual.

In the press, over the radio, at public meetings, and through the activities of individual agitators, a tremendous pressure was brought to bear upon the population to make them participate in the election. The press stated that those failing to cast their vote would be branded as enemies of the people.

According to Soviet figures, 98.49 percent of the votes were cast for the list of the Block of the Working People. The newly elected "parliament" met on 21 July and the agenda for its first meeting included three points: the proclamation of a Soviet Latvian Republic, nationalization of the banks, land, urban real estate, industry and commerce and transport, and a request to the Soviet Union to admit Soviet Latvia into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. No one had mentioned these points during the election campaign. On 5 August 1940, by a decision of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, Latvia, together with Estonia, Lithuania, Eastern Carelia and Moldavia-Bessarabia were "admitted" as Soviet republics to membership of the U.S.S.R.

Thus the annexation of the Baltic countries, which must have been in the minds of those in the Kremlin for some years, was made possible through the Molotov-von Ribbentrop pact of 23 August 1939.

The existence of such a planned annexation and the German connivance to it are, in the main, evident from the above account of events. Information which became available after 1941 and especially after the end of the Second World War throws further light on these questions.

At the Nuremberg trial of war criminals in 1946 a secret protocol which was added to the Molotov-von Ribbentrop pact of 1939 was brought to light. It runs as follows: "On the occasion of the signature of the Non-Agression Pact between the German Reich and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics the undersigned plenipotentiaries of each of the two parties discussed in strictly confidential conversations the question of the boundary of their respective spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. These conversations led to the following conclusions:

1. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna area is recognized by each party.

2. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the area belonging to the Polish state the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narew,

Vistula and San. The question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish state and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments. In any event both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly agreement.

3. With regard to South-Eastern Europe attention is called by the Soviet side to its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political disinterestedness in these areas.

4. This protocol shall be treated by both parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, 23 August 1939.

v. Ribbentrop *V. Molotov*³

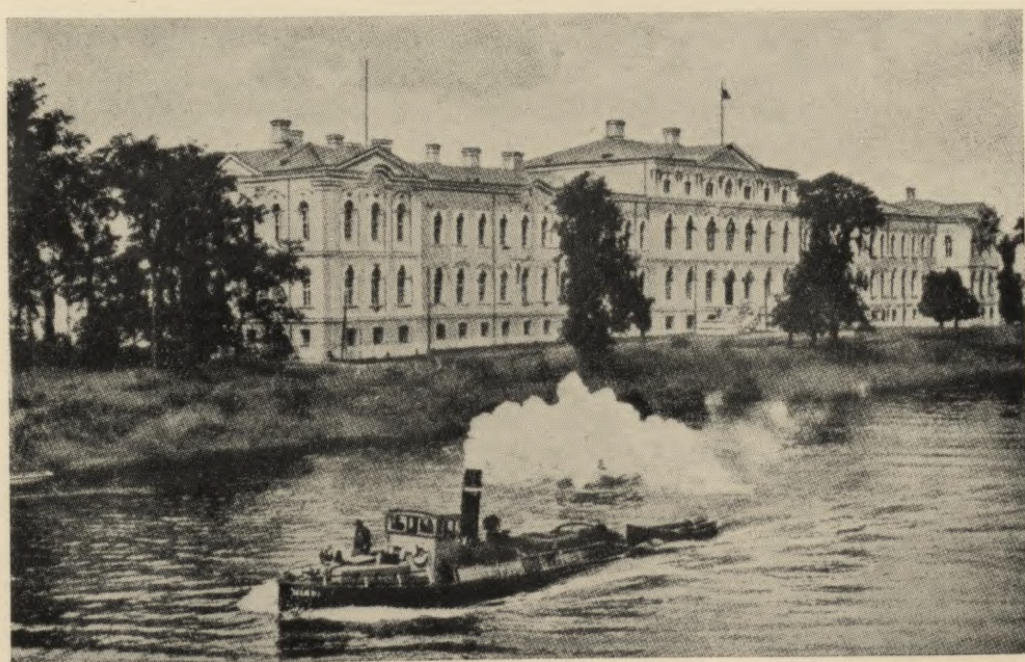
But Germany was subsequently compelled to renounce Lithuania in accordance with a supplementary agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union which was worded as follows: "The Secret Supplementary Protocol signed on 23 August 1939, shall be amended in item 1 to the effect that the territory of the Lithuanian state falls to the sphere of influence of the U.S.S.R., while, on the other hand, the province of Lublin and parts of the province of Warsaw fall to the sphere of influence of Germany (cf. the map attached to the Boundary and Friendship Treaty signed to-day). As soon as the Government of the U.S.S.R. shall take special measures on Lithuanian territory to protect its interests, the present German-Lithuanian border, for the purpose of a natural and simple boundary delineation, shall be rectified in such a way that the Lithuanian territory situated to the south-west of the line marked on the attached map shall fall to Germany . . ."⁴

In 1939 the Soviet General Staff published maps which carried the inscriptions: "Litovsk. SSR, Latv. SSR, BRSSR—pervoye izdaniye 1939 (Lithuanian Socialist Soviet Republic, Latvian SSR, White Ruthenian SSR—First Edition 1939)."⁵

It is also interesting to read what von Grundherr, the chief of the Baltic section of the German Foreign Ministry, had to say about the Russian ultimatums to the Baltic countries in June 1940, in a report to the Reich Foreign Minister: "The co-operation between the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is based on the Treaty of Mutual Understanding and Co-operation concluded for ten years by these three States on 12 September 1934. In addition, Latvia and Estonia signed a mutual defence pact on 1 November 1923. In practice, the political co-operation consisted mainly of semi-annual conferences of Foreign Ministers and joint press conferences; on the other hand, there has often been an abundance of discord and rivalry within the Baltic Entente . . . The assertion,



The central building of the University of Latvia, in Riga (formerly the Riga Polytechnical Institute).



The Academy of Agriculture in Jelgava. Formerly the residence of the Dukes of Kurland. This castle, designed by the Italian architect Rastrelli, built by Duke Ernst Johann Biron (1737-69), was looted in 1919 by the troops of Bermont-Avalov.
The picture shows the castle's lateral facade.



President K. Ulmanis distributing prizes at a graduation ceremony in a public school.



Latvia's last President K. Ulmanis (right) with Minister of War J. Balodis (left) and General K. Berķis, then Commander of the Army, (later Minister of War), at a military parade in Riga.

now made by Russia, that Lithuania had joined the Estonian-Latvian pact, is, according to information available here, without any foundation. Since the conclusion of the Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact with the Baltic countries in September-October 1939 there has been no closer cooperation in an anti-Russian sense among the Baltic States. . . . In view of the occupation of their countries by Soviet Russian troops, the three Baltic Governments were aware of the danger of such a policy."⁶

It is hardly necessary to make any further comment on the main Russian arguments presented in the ultimatums. Officially, Germany remained silent, and the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, von Weizsäcker, gave the following revealing instructions to German missions abroad: "For information and the orientation of our conversation. The unresisted reinforcement of Russian troops in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and the reorganization of the Governments of the Baltic States, sought by the Russian Government, to bring about more reliable cooperation with the Soviet Union, are the concern of Russia and the Baltic States. Therefore, in view of our unaltered friendly relations with the Soviet Union, there is no reason for nervousness on our part, which some of the foreign press has tried to impute to us in only too transparent a manner. Please refrain from making any statements during conversations which could be interpreted as partisan. Please acknowledge receipt."⁷

In a report dated 17 June, the German Ambassador to Moscow, von Schulenburg, stated that Molotov had congratulated him on German successes in the West. Molotov added that "an end had been put to all intrigues by which England and France had tried to sow discord and mistrust between Germany and the Soviet Union in the Baltic States". Moreover, Molotov informed him that "for negotiations concerning the formation of the new governments the Soviet Government had, in addition to the Soviet envoys accredited there, sent the following special emissaries: to Lithuania—Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Dekanosov, to Estonia—Regional Party Leader of Leningrad, Zhdanov, and to Latvia—the Representative of the Council of Ministers, Vyshinsky."⁸ Germany had no objections, and later on (10 September 1940) it concluded an agreement ceding Lithuania to Soviet Russia for 7.5 million gold dollars or 31.5 million RM.⁹

Finally, it must be stressed that although the Soviet Union in 1940 occupied and sovietized the Baltic countries, it was unable to give her actions any valid legal covering. The decisions of the Baltic "parliaments", elected in July 1940, to establish Soviet régimes in these countries and to apply for admission to the Soviet Union were illegal. As this question has been treated extensively in separate essays, only a review of the main

facts will be given here. The parliament was elected under duress, the country was occupied by foreign troops, only one list of candidates was actually admitted, among the selected members were persons who were not Latvian citizens, and the elections were controlled by the agents of the occupying power. This illegal body, then, had no authority to act on behalf of the Latvian nation and no decisions made by it were binding on Latvian citizens. Moreover, a decision concerning Latvia's independence and territory made by such a parliament could not be valid under the Latvian Constitution, unless such a decision were confirmed by a referendum. No such referendum was carried out, but in authoritative statements by the leaders of the "Block of the Working People" it was emphatically stated that rumours concerning possible incorporation were utterly unfounded and malicious. Thus, there is not the slightest foundation to state that the voters—leaving entirely aside the question of the legality of the elections—had by tacit approval given the new Parliament a mandate to incorporate the country within Russia.

The Soviet action against the Baltic States, beginning with the conclusion of the mutual assistance pacts, was a combination of ruse, threats, violence and deceit.

The decisions of the Latvian puppet parliament on 21 July 1940 marked the beginning of an open sovietization of the country and its actual incorporation into the system of Soviet Russia. The German occupation of Latvia in 1941 interrupted this process but after having reoccupied Latvia in 1944-45, the Russians resumed sovietization, crowning it with the collectivization of agriculture. For reasons of convenience, the two Soviet occupations (1940-41 and 1944) will be briefly surveyed together.

In the economic field, the first stage of sovietization meant nationalization (*i.e.* confiscation, since no indemnity was either provided or paid to former owners) of "large industrial enterprises" (according to the Soviets, enterprises employing more than 20 persons, but also a number of smaller enterprises, such as printing shops), banks, natural resources (which even in free Latvia were mostly State property), and land. Farmers could retain a lease on 30 hectares of land per farm, while the rest was turned over to a State Land Fund from which land was given to the landless. The maximum size of the new farms was ten hectares, which, in view of local conditions, in most cases was not sufficient to sustain a family. Moreover, although promised, no aid was given to the new farmers in the form of loans, or building material for the construction of farm houses, with the exception of the establishment of the so-called Machine and Tractor Stations and Horse-Lending Centres, which for payment undertook to work the fields of the new farms. This system which was

called an agrarian reform was actually only a preparatory stage towards collectivization of agriculture, the new farms being still-born.

During the second Soviet occupation the system of privately owned farms was retained for the first few years. It was not compulsory for the farmers to form or join kolkhozes. However, a pressure was being brought to bear upon them to do so by excessive taxation and extremely heavy demands for compulsory delivery of farm produce. At the same time kolkhozes were granted all kinds of facilities. However, when all this had failed to produce "voluntary" collectivization, compulsory collectivization was decided upon. The development of the drive, in figures, was as follows: In the spring of 1947 there were four kolkhozes in Latvia, in the autumn of the same year sixteen, on 1 January 1948 49, by the end of that year 900, in March 1949 there were 1,261, and in May 3,800, comprising about 80 percent of all farms in Latvia, each kolkhoze having an average area of 300 hectares. This number has increased during 1949. According to A. Švābe, a "kolkhoze is essentially the same feudal manor with its statute work and serfdom as it existed in the Baltic area before the reforms of the eighteen sixties. The only difference is that now the land of the manor is tilled, or should be tilled, with tractors and harvesters. According to a decree of the Soviet Government, dated 7 July 1948, no kolkhoze member may leave the kolkhoze or change his residence without a special permit. This means that serfdom has been re-established even formally in the Soviet Union."¹⁰ Collectivization has resulted in a rapid lowering of the living standard of the farming population and the turning of independent farmers into salaried workers.

As regards industry, it should be noted that in Latvia it was not concentrated in large enterprises. In addition to State-owned and co-operative firms, there was a number of small or middle-sized industries. Through mechanical merger, *i.e.* by concentrating their equipment and machinery into new large units, the existing enterprises were destroyed, but nothing new or better was created in their stead. Handicraft shops, although formally not liable to nationalization were gradually liquidated through excessive taxation, refusal to supply raw materials and similar methods. Through another series of measures all bank and saving deposits were actually confiscated, since during the first months of the Soviet régime holders of accounts were allowed to withdraw only 100 lats a month, and, finally, after the devaluation of the lat to one tenth of its previous rate in relation to the Russian rouble (thus reducing its purchasing power ten times) each account holder could withdraw from his account only one single sum, once only, of 1,000 Rbls (by the then valid actual rate this amounted to about £7 sterling). This devaluation, increase of prices and lowering of wages, soon brought down the standard of living in Latvia to

the Russian level. Actually, these steps implied the confiscation of the national wealth of Latvia by a foreign country. Urban real estate, with the exception of small-size one-family houses, was also nationalized.

But sovietization affected other walks of life too. In politics there was only one party—the Communist Party; in the realm of thought only one philosophy and dogma, that of Leninism-Stalinism which controlled the press and other propaganda media, science, art and education. Political education and the Russian language became the main subjects taught in all schools, including elementary schools. The pupils were obliged to join the so-called Red Pioneer organization, while grammar school and university students had to be members of the Communist Youth, the preparatory stage to membership of the Communist Party. In the universities, the knowledge of Leninism-Stalinism and military education took up half the syllabus in all subjects. The departments of theology were closed, and the faculties of law, economics, history and philology were re-organized by purging the curriculum and discharging professors who would not comply with the tenets of Marxian historical materialism. The teaching of Latvian history, Latvian literature and language was subject to radical changes. The process of russification was far more intense and thorough than it had ever been under the old Tsarist régime. The general rule was: everything Russian must be extolled, everything western European discredited.

Most of the broadcasts from the Latvian radio stations were in Russian, only Russian films were featured, and in the main only Russian problems were discussed in the press. The administration is now dominated by the Russians; the management of industrial and commercial enterprises is made up mostly of Russians, but Latvian specialists are attached to them to do the real work and to act as scape-goats in case anything should go wrong. Even in the Latvian Communist Party only half of the members are Latvians, the rest being Russians. (It is significant that of the thirteen members of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party six are Russian.)

Naturally enough, with all this russification, the Soviet Constitution was introduced into Latvia and the administration re-organized on the Soviet pattern. One of the outstanding features of this reorganization was the fact that a number of government functions, such as foreign affairs, national defence, monetary policy and industrial policy were transferred to the Government of the Soviet Union. Others, such as public education, justice, agriculture, local finances, and the so-called local industry were nominally left with the Soviet Latvian Government.

Having seized power in the Baltic area, the Russians at the outset were lavish in handing out assurances that the local inhabitants should

not fear any oppression or reprisals. But their real methods and designs soon became known. They first attacked the Church and the Army and then came the wholesale terror applied to the population, culminating in the deportations of 13-14 June 1941. Legal and economic restrictions, indirect persecution, through the promotion of the movement of the godless are characteristic of Russian methods. No divine services could be held outside Church premises without permits issued by commanders of local Russian garrisons or local leaders of the Communist Party. This order implied that divine services in cemeteries, clubs, schools and private homes were either entirely prohibited or restricted. Baptisms, church marriages and funerals were forbidden to members of the Communist Party and trade unionists, and to their families. The Communist Party and the Political Police controlled all divine services and churchgoers. Under the Nationalization Law of July 1940, all church buildings and lands became the property of the Communist State. Excessive rents and other taxes made it practically impossible for the congregations to support their churches and church premises. The rent which congregations had to pay for churches was ten times the rent paid for housing space. The houses of pastors, congregation officials and organists which as a rule were adjacent to the church were alienated and as a result it was impossible or difficult for them to pursue the duties of their office. Being unable to find lodgings, the pastors were forced to move from their congregations and travel great distances to hold divine services. Religious instruction was removed from the School Curriculum. Anti-religious instruction was made a compulsory subject in all schools. The publication of theological or religious books, Church calendars, bibles and hymn-books was prohibited. Church holidays were prohibited and divine services were not allowed to be held during the working hours of such days etc.¹¹

One of the first Soviet moves was to liquidate the Latvian Army and Home Guard. The Russians could not tolerate a national army, fostered in the spirit of the Latvian Riflemen and the War of Liberation, loyalty to its country and the Christian faith. Its peacetime force was about 25,000 men, well trained and disciplined. First came the appointment of political commissars, attacks against commissioned and non-commissioned officers and a general undermining of discipline. Later a number of the officers and soldiers were incorporated in the Red Army as its 24th Territorial Corps. The rest were demobilized. Their documents of demobilization, as was later proved, were to provide a valid reason for persecution by the Soviet authorities. In 1941 the Territorial Corps was stationed at Litene, near the Soviet frontier. Realizing that it would be impossible to kill the national spirit in the Latvian soldiers, the Corps was

dissolved. Officers and non-commissioned officers were arrested and either executed or sent to concentration camps.¹² The Katyn mass graves of Polish officers are not the only example of Soviet work of that kind. At the end of 1942 many graves of Latvian officers were found in Latvia and in neighbouring areas. Near Vainode, on the Latvian-Lithuanian frontier, a mass grave was found in 1942 in which 300 (according to some

5. Порядок разделения семьи выселяемого от главы.

Ввиду того, что большое количество выселяемых должно быть арестовано и размещено в специальные лагеря, а их семьи следуют в места специальных поселений в отдаленных областях, поэтому необходимо операцию по изъятию, как выселяемых членов семьи, так и главы их, проводить одновременно не объявляя им о предстоящем их разделении. После того, когда проведен обыск и оформлены соответствующие документы для личного дела, в квартире выселяемого, оперативный работник заполняет документы на главу семьи, вкладывает их в личное дело на него, а документы, оформленные на членов семьи, вкладываются в личное дело выселяемой семьи.

Сопровождение же всей семьи до станции погрузки производится на одной подводе и лишь на станции погрузки главу семьи помещают отдельно от семьи, в специально предназначенный для глав семей вагон.

Во время сбора в квартире выселяемых предупредить главу семьи о том, что личные мужские вещи складывать в отдельный чемодан, так как будет проходить сан.обработка выселяемых мужчинам отдельно от женщин и детей.

Passage from written instructions to members of the NKVD, concerning the separation of the father from the rest of his family.

5. The procedure of separation of the father from the family of those marked out for displacement.

Considering that a great number of people, marked out for displacement, have to be arrested and accommodated in special camps, and their families to proceed to places of special settlement in distant regions, it is necessary to imitate the operation of separa-

sources 400) Latvian and Lithuanian officers, victims of the Red Terror, were buried.¹³

The liquidation of the so-called anti-Soviet elements among the civilians commenced in 1940. The Soviet Penal Code was introduced which was applied retroactively to all acts which were qualified as counter-revolutionary by the Soviet laws and which had been committed during the period 1918-40, *i.e.* during the period of Latvian independence. These cases were tried by secret NKVD tribunals. In Latvia, during the first Soviet occupation, 6,041 persons received sentences for alleged anti-Soviet activities and 1,488 persons were executed. In all the three Baltic countries this number totalled about 17,000.

Among the prominent victims of the Red Terror were General Praul, Chief of the Latvian Home Guard, General Goppers, retired, who was the founder and leader of the Latvian Boy Scout Movement, and Lt.Col. Lūkins, Adjutant to the President of the Republic. Several officers, including General Bolšteins, committed suicide.

Wholesale deportations were begun, carried out on the basis of lists prepared in advance. The first to be deported were members of the Latvian government, headed by K. Ulmanis (21 July 1940), and other well-known politicians. Large-scale deportations were carried out in all the three Baltic countries simultaneously on 13-14 June 1941, in accordance with a secret instruction prepared by Comrade Serov, Vice-Commissar of Public Security of the Soviet Union. Railway freight documents (such was the term used by the Russians) under which the deportees were sent to Russia enable us to estimate their number and establish some of the places of their destination.¹⁴

The names of most Latvians who have been deported have been registered with the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva. The following list gives details of deportation:

tion of the families from the fathers simultaneously without their being informed about the impending separation. After a domiciliary search has been made and the necessary personal documents prepared, the operating functionary will fill in the documents of the head of the family, subjoining them to his file, and those of the family, after their completion, to the file of the family considered for displacement.

The whole family shall be taken to the station of departure in one vehicle and only at the station will the father be separated from his family and accommodated in cattle-trucks, specially provided for the heads of families.

The head of the family shall be instructed at his home, during the preparations for departure, to pack his personal things into a separate suit-case, since the sanitary treatment of the male travellers and their luggage will be carried out separately from that of the women and children.

Agriculturists; farmers and farm hands	5,381
Industrial workers, engineers, factory owners	5,820
Transport, automobile, railway, etc. workers and operators	2,942
Defence and police forces	5,194
(among them 1,084 missing or murdered army officers)	
Government officials	2,556
The professions (intellectuals)	1,128
Students, school children	4,773
Pensioners, homeowners etc.	251
Housewives	2,296
Occupation unknown	3,909
	Total 34,250

Of these there were 23,016 men, 7,218 women and 4,016 children. Subsequently discovered names have brought the total up to 35,828 (of this number, 14,693 were deported on 13-14 June 1941). The distribution according to sex, area and occupation was as follows: 8,436 men, 6,257 women (both categories including children); 3,540 from Rīga, 2,942 from Vidzeme, 2,146 from Kurzeme, 2,655 from Zemgale, and 3,558 from Latgale. By occupation: 3,838 farmers and farm hands, 780 industrial workers, 196 owners of firms, 538 former officers, 353 former policemen, 650 government and 544 municipal officials, 350 school teachers, 46 judges, 56 lawyers, 70 physicians, 44 pharmacists, 23 pastors, 20 professors and lecturers, 61 engineers, 27 agronomists, 549 office employees, and 150 railroad men. Of those "non-gainfully employed": 112 homeowners, 84 pensioners, 125 students, 1,977 grammar school pupils, 1,188 children under 6 years of age and 1,953 housewives. The occupation of the rest is not known.

During 1940-41 two percent of the total population of Latvia was deported, and, be it noted, these deportations were carried out within one year and in time of peace. All political views, from right-wing extremists to some Latvian communists who had expressed dissatisfaction with the Russian methods, were represented among these "saboteurs" and "enemies of the people".

The deportations were carried out in a ruthless manner. People were taken by surprise, in the middle of the night, and they were allowed to take with them little more than the suit they had on. Members of a family were taken in lorries to the railway station where they were separated (men from the rest of the family, at times even children from their parents) and put into freightcars which had iron bars fitted across the windows, and which were quite bare of the most elementary comforts. Later it was learned that the journey had been extremely difficult, people



The Year of Terror: the House of the Latvian Society, Rīga, in 1940. For the Russians to cover the face of this house with their bolshevik propoganda in such a manner as may be seen from the illustration above was a deliberate affront to the national pride of the Latvians. The Latvian Society played an important part in the National movement during the latter half of the 19th century and later during the twenty years of independence.



Victims of the Russians in the courtyard of the Central Prison, Rīga, in 1941. The retreating Russians murdered all arrested and imprisoned people.



1st Latvian Special Battle Battalion leaving for the Eastern Front on 18 September 1941.



Latvian legionaries on a narrow-gauge railway in the Volkhov section of the front line.



Colonel A. Silgailis, a prominent officer of the Latvian Legion, and his orderly, at his command post by the Velikaya river near the Latvian frontier in 1944.

suffering from hunger and most unhygienic conditions. Other large-scale deportations followed, as is shown by evidence found after the German occupation.

This evidence also revealed that most of the Latvian men were sent to an area within a triangle bounded by the Arctic circle and the Urals in northernmost Russia, arctic regions of Siberia and some Siberian regions of a less harsh climate. Many perished in hard labour camps during the severe winter of 1941. The inhuman conditions prevailing in these camps which form an integral part of the Soviet planned economy are too well known.

The feelings among the Latvians during the first Soviet occupation cannot be understood by anyone who has not himself lived under Soviet rule, subject to its domination. The certainty that there is practically no chance of leaving the country legally, that flight, extremely difficult, if successful would bring disaster to one's family, the constant fear of being awakened at night by NKVD agents and taken away to an unknown destination without any reason being given, the constant necessity of professing love and admiration for a system which is actually loathed and feared, the impossibility of trusting one's friends or even members of one's own family, confinement to Soviet information and propaganda, an extremely low standard of living and similar things made people long for any change since anything, it was argued, would be better than life under this oppressive omnipresent régime which had a thousand eyes and ears and a multitude of suspicions.

On 22 June 1941 Germany attacked Soviet Russia, and the first advance of the German troops was astoundingly rapid. As early as 1 July Russian troops were expelled from Rīga. For the Latvians this day was felt as a day of liberation. The National Anthem and other patriotic songs were broadcast over the Rīga radio. Latvian flags were flying all over the city, Soviet emblems were burnt in a multitude of small fires which were kindled in the streets which were crowded with people who felt an intense joy at being freed from the Bolshevik nightmare: they congratulated each other on having escaped the Red Terror. It is not surprising, then, that the German soldiers were greeted with flowers, as they were in White Ruthenia, the Ukraine and the Caucasus. This feeling even penetrated the Soviet army which prompted many Russian soldiers to surrender *en masse*. But this was dispelled in a few weeks as soon as it became clear that these Germans had brought with them a new threat of slavery. German political blindness made pro-Soviet partisans of Ukrainian patriots and through their barbarous treatment of Soviet prisoners the Germans convinced the hesitating elements that they were safer in the ranks of the Red Army. The illusion was short-lived in the Baltic

countries. However, conditions there were different from those in any other German-occupied area. Underground or open resistance against the German occupation forces, and, at the same time, the necessity of fighting with them against the Bolsheviks marked this period of occupation in the Baltic countries.

As has been pointed out, the Germans were represented as liberators, and naturally enough it was believed that all the consequences of the Soviet occupation would be obliterated: independence would be restored, and all sovietization laws abrogated. Indeed, as soon as the Germans attacked Russia, partisan units began to operate in the Baltic area. These partisans were chiefly composed of former members of the national armies and home-guard units who had taken to the woods.

In Lithuania the partisans liberated Kaunas, proclaimed an independent Lithuania and formed a Lithuanian government which was liquidated by the Germans on 5 August 1941. In Estonia the partisans played an important part in the protracted fighting for that country. In Latvia, too, the partisans had been active in disorganizing the Bolshevik rear. Latvian administrative units were quickly set up in the country, and army and home-guard uniforms were worn again. An administrative apparatus was created within a few days, and the Germans were thus faced with a *fait accompli*. Throughout the entire occupation the Germans never wholly succeeded in abolishing this apparatus which helped to preserve a little something for the Latvians. Naturally, when the Russians left, work in schools, churches and cultural institutions was resumed.

This skeleton administration, which was created more or less spontaneously by the Latvians themselves during the first weeks of the German occupation, was quite different from the "government" created by the occupation authorities during the last years of their stay.

Only to-day when some of the material in the secret German archives has become available, can we see the real German plans for the Baltic area. The collection of documents published by the State Department of the United States under the title *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, is revealing. A few months before the outbreak of the Russo-German war, the guiding principles of a German "eastern policy" were laid down. A memorandum concerning the colonization and assimilation of the Baltic countries was drawn up on 2 April 1941: "In the case of these areas the question arises whether they should be allotted the special task of becoming a German settlement area in the future, the most suitable racial elements to be assimilated. If this is set up as an aim, the areas also require very special treatment in the general task. The necessary removal of considerable sections of the intelligentsia—particularly in Latvia—to the Russian nucleus area would have to be organized. The settlement of

a German rural population in considerable numbers would have to be started—possibly a large contingent of German settlers suitable for this purpose could be taken from among the Volga Germans, after the undesirable elements have been eliminated. Settlements there of Danes, Norwegians, Dutch and—after the war has been brought to a victorious end—of Englishmen too, might be considered so that, in the course of one or two generations, this area can be joined up with the German nucleus area as a new germanized country. In this case we must not neglect the deportation of considerable groups of racially inferior sections of the population from Lithuania.”¹⁵

Instructions which were given to the newly appointed Reich Commissar of the Ostland, Lohse, give another clear picture of the German designs in this region: “The aim of a Reich Commissar for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and White Russia (last two words added in pencil) must be to strive to achieve the form of a German Protectorate, and then transform the region into part of the Greater German Reich by germanizing racially kindred elements, colonizing Germanic races and banishing undesirable elements. The Baltic Sea must become a German inland sea under the guardianship of Greater Germany.” Thus we see that germanization, colonization and banishment are to be the guiding principles. The instruction proceeds: “With regard to this process of germanization or resettlement, the Estonian people are already considerably germanized to the extent of 50 % by Danish, German and Swedish blood and may be considered a kindred nation. In Latvia the section of the population capable of being assimilated is considerably smaller than in Estonia. In this country stronger resistance will have to be reckoned with, and banishment on a larger scale will have to be considered. A similar development may have to be reckoned with in Lithuania, for there, too, the immigration of racial Germans is called for in order to promote very intensive germanization (on the East Prussian border). White Russia will first of all have the difficult task of admitting some of these elements who are expelled from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and from the Polish section of the Warthe territory . . .”¹⁶ In a declaration of 16 July we find an order by Hitler that all these decisions are secret: “Such declarations were superfluous because we would do everything wherever we had the power, and what was beyond our power not be able to do anyway . . . Therefore we shall emphasize again that we were forced to occupy, administrate, and secure a certain area, it was in the interest of the inhabitants that we provided order, food, traffic etc. hence our measures. Nobody shall be able to recognize that it initiates a final settlement. This need not prevent our taking all necessary measures—shooting, resettling etc.—and we shall take them . . . Our conduct therefore ought to be: (1) To do nothing

which might obstruct the final settlement, but prepare it only in secret. (2) To emphasize that we are liberators . . ." The *Führer* emphasizes that the entire Baltic area will have to be incorporated into Germany.¹⁷

The German aims were obviously to annihilate the Baltic peoples, and to prepare their territories for German colonization. For obvious reasons these aims did not remain secret during the war, for Germany refused to recognize the sovereignty of the Baltic States. Referring to the frontier-settlement treaty with Russia of 11 January 1941 in which Germany had recognized the incorporation of the Baltic countries with Russia, the Germans now claimed them to be Russian territory which they had conquered, in other words war booty. On 31 July 1941 a decree was published providing for the establishment of the so-called Ostland Reich Commissariat, which included the three Baltic countries and White Ruthenia. The Reich Commissariat was headed by a Reich Commissar who had Commissars General in each of the four areas. All matters were to be settled by a German civilian administration which was responsible to the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Areas whose headquarters were in Berlin and whose chief was Rosenberg. The official German political and economic policy was presented by the Reich Commissar's official press organ *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* in its issue of 13 October 1941. It ran as follows: "At the commencement of the German-Soviet war on 22 June 1941, private property did not exist in the countries under Soviet rule, so nobody can claim to be a legal proprietor. By sacrificing the blood of German soldiers, all these countries have been liberated. The German Reich, therefore, became the legal heir to the Soviet inheritance." As a result of this doctrine, the "liberation" was not followed by a decree restoring private property and an annulment of the nationalization measures, but by an announcement that all state and private property in the Baltic States was to be the property of the German Reich.

On 16 January 1942 a German-state-owned company *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft Ostland* (Agricultural Company for the Ostland Inc.) was formed with the task of "managing all former landed property of the Soviet Union". A number of other Ostland companies were also formed for the management of industries. A bank, known as *Notenbank Ostland*, was created which issued occupation marks, a currency which was on a par with the German Reichsmark but not valid outside the Ostland.

The purpose of the retention of the Soviet nationalized land became clearer when about 30,000 Lithuanian farmers of the Memel and Suvalki regions were evicted from their homes and settled in eastern Lithuania while German settlers came in to take their place.

However, when the German armies became lost in the vast plains of

Russia, and when they began to suffer the whole series of reverses which led to their final defeat, then the colonization plan had to be shelved. Not until 18 March 1943 was a decree issued which denationalized rural and urban landed property. In accordance with this decree, but under the supervision of competent German commissars who were to judge the merits of each case, farms and houses were to be returned to their former owners *as a gift*. An address made by the District Commissar of Zemgale, Baron von Medem, on 28 March 1943 made it quite clear what kind of "gift" this return of private property was. He said among other things: "You who are receiving back your property and all others who will receive it in the near future, must remember and never forget that you have not the slightest right to this land; this land for which German blood has been shed is being given to you as a gift. After the victorious end of this war, historians will state that our action of returning to you your land is a unique expression of German magnanimity." The representative of the Latvian farmers stated in his reply that "this German gesture has retrieved Bolshevik injustice." But denationalization proceeded slowly. In Latvia the Germans returned 23 percent of the farms, in Estonia twelve percent and in Lithuania only six percent.

Some few other smaller industries were to be denationalized, but these plans had to be shelved for in 1943 all the inhabitants of Ostland were mobilized for the war effort. Meanwhile the living standard of the local population continued to fall. Food and other supplies to the cities were inadequate. The *Herrenvolk* were given higher wages, larger food and other rations, which could be bought at special shops, other than those for the "indigenous people".

There were also a few attempts to introduce "colonial" methods in the Baltic countries. For instance a high German railway official issued an order in 1943 according to which "non-German" railway men were to receive corporal punishment for minor misdemeanours such as absenteeism, drunkenness, and the like.¹⁸ This official was almost immediately removed from his position and the order revoked, but the idea expressed in that order was characteristically German. Von Holst, a Baltic German who had returned to Latvia with the German Army, and who, during the first stage of the German occupation, was in charge of cultural affairs, closed all Latvian institutions of learning. However, he was later transferred and most of his orders were cancelled.

Attempts to germanize Latvian schools also failed. Actually, in point of fact, German control and influence never reached beyond certain formalities which had to be observed. The plan to annihilate national Baltic universities also failed. However, Latvian historians were not permitted to work on any historical subject; they were charged with falsi-

fictionation of history. Likewise, the faculty of theology in Riga could not resume its activities before 1943.

As regards terrorism and deportations the Germans were worthy successors to the Russians. The wholesale annihilation of the Latvian Jews and Russian prisoners of war was terrible in itself but it was by no means the only measure the Germans took in this respect. They set up concentration camps in the Baltic countries which were no better than those in Germany. Such a concentration camp was to be found at Salaspils in Latvia where there were about 20,000 internees; there were others at Klooga in Estonia and at Dimitra in Lithuania.

Almost as soon as they entered the country the Germans commenced the massacre of Jews. The ruthlessness was such that even the German Reich Commissar Lohse had to intervene, as he did at Liepāja. In the larger cities the Jews were segregated in ghettos. Most of them in the ghetto in Riga were killed by special Nazi teams during the week 30 November—7 December 1941. One of the teams was Stahlecker's *Einsatzgruppe* which, according to its own reports, during three months up to 15 October 1941 had killed 71,105 Jews in Lithuania, and 30,025 in Latvia, in addition to 3,387 non-Jews. The total number of Baltic Jews murdered during the German occupation was about 200,000 in Lithuania, 60,000 in Latvia, and 4,000 in Estonia which had a very small Jewish population. Moreover, the Germans brought Jews from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Holland to be murdered in the Baltic countries. Protests against these wholesale massacres from such people as the Latvian Lutheran Archbishop Grinbergs were of no avail.¹⁹

About 25,000 Balts were killed in the concentration camps in the Baltic area. During 1943 and 1944 another 10,000 were transferred to camps in Germany (chiefly Stutthof near Danzig, but also Neuengamme, Mauthausen, etc.). One dictatorship had succeeded another; the methods were the same, but over a longer period and under the urgency of war the German terror was more thorough and extensive.

Deportations to Germany were carried on under the cover of the so-called Labour Service. The *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* described the Labour Service as follows: "The *Arbeitseinsatz* is a registration of manpower carried out by the State for the purpose of harnessing it to work in certain regions where there is a particular shortage . . . The manpower is drafted in certain districts in order to engage in particularly important work in other regions. Naturally therefore, the allocation takes place not on a voluntary but on compulsory (*pflichtmässig*) basis." The *Arbeitsamt* (Labour Board), the German agency which handled this particular question, antagonised the Latvian population by transferring young Latvians to Germany. Occasionally Latvian protests were successful, for example

one such protest prevented the deportation to Germany of 10,000 young women. Mobilization for labour service was illegal under the Hague Convention as far as it covered the rights of the occupying power. However, Rosenberg's attitude in this respect was as follows: "The provisions of the Hague Rules of Land Warfare which deal with the administration of a country occupied by a foreign power are not valid, since the USSR is dissolved and the Reich, as a result, has the duty of exercising all the power of government and other usual powers of sovereignty in the interest of the inhabitants. All measures which the German administration deems necessary and suitable for the execution of this comprehensive task are therefore permissible."²⁰

Concluding the above survey of the non-military aspect of the German occupation, mention should be made of the fact that the economic measures which the Germans adopted were, on the whole, clearly directed against Latvian interests. However, consciously or not, the Germans favoured the rural population at the expense of city dwellers, especially industrial workers, thus driving a wedge between the Latvian people themselves. Although the compulsory deliveries of farm produce were great and the prices paid for them by the German authorities low, still, through a system of premiums (mainly bonuses for purchases of liquor or textiles) the farmers could satisfy their requirements (particularly by selling produce on the black market) more or less satisfactorily, but it was at the expense of people in the cities.

The political hopes and aspirations of the Latvians, and the German views on them, are reflected in the two following quotations. One is from Goebbels's diary (16 March 1942): "I read a report of the SD about the situation in the occupied East... In the East, nationalist currents are increasingly observable in all the former Baltic States. The populations there apparently imagined that the German Wehrmacht would shed its blood to set up new governments in these midget states which at the end of the war, or possibly even during the war, would veer over to the side of our enemies. That is a naïve, childish bit of imagination which makes no impression on us..."²¹ Here Goebbels rightly interpreted the attitude of the Baltic peoples. Later, in 1943, one Friedrich Lange, in a book on *Small and Large Nations* published by the *Zentralverlag der NSDAP* complained of the pro-British sympathies of these peoples and their hatred of the Germans: "The three Baltic Border states Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have felt themselves safe in the lap of England and imagined that country to be strong enough even to provoke more or less the German Reich. The German language and German or *Volk*-German as well as Reich-German art and being were oppressed in all the three states, but in the wildest and most provoking manner—in Latvia; land-robbery,

called an "Agrarian Reform," broke the backbone of the real estate of the Baltic Germans . . . The President of the Republic, Ulmanis, animated by the British orientation stated quite officially when he took up his post that he would take care to exterminate the last traces of German being in Latvia within a period of ten years . . . All that and still more . . . was permitted to the aggressive Latvian nation, for it knew that England stood behind it, and the English boss guided the separate hostile action against Germans or approved them. When England on 3 September 1939, broke the peace in declaring war the whole Latvian, as well as Estonian and Lithuanian problem appeared in another light, and England as a factor strange to this space fell out . . ."



* The frontispiece of a special miniature edition of E. Virza's *Straumēni*, a gift of publisher Mr. M. Goppers to the Latvian soldiers, Christmas 1942. The dedication reads: to the Latvian soldiers on the Eastern Front, *Zelta Abele* (The Golden Appletree).



Zviedri nāk -

angļi palīdzēs — amerikāņi devuši mums solījumus! Vieni trīs pasargās Latviju no bolševismā.

Tādās muļķības bija dārdamas vēl jūlija sākumā. Kur tagad ir zviedri? Kur angļi? Kur amerikāņi? Un kur palieku pļāpas, kas griebe ar tik muļķīgām banānu ražot šajā kara laikā mūsu tautā? Tie ir glābi atabogēti! Tikai vīcu karavīri ir Latvijas uzstāšanās draugu grūti brēdi.

Neat ar glāvējiem tenkotiņiem! Latvijai pašreiz vajadzīgi ne pļāpas, bet vīri!

A poster prepared and spread by the German occupation authorities. Text: "*The Swedes are coming*—the British will help us—the Americans have given us promises! All three will keep Latvia free of Bolshevism. Such nonsense was heard as late as the beginning of July. Where are the Swedes now? And the British? And the Americans? Where are the chatter-boxes who wanted to create confusion in our midst by such frivolous rumours? Cowardly, they have fled! The German soldier is Latvia's only faithful friend in a critical time. Down with the cowardly rumour-mongers! Latvia now needs men, not chatter-boxes!" Autumn 1944.



Latvian refugees from Vidzeme moving south across a Daugava bridge in Riga. August 1944.



Latvian refugees on board a fishing boat crossing the Baltic to Sweden, in November 1944. The voyage was hazardous not only because of the small size of the vessels, but also because the German occupation authorities persecuted what they termed "travellers to Sweden". Moreover, during the last stage of the German occupation many boats with refugees were captured or sunk by the Russian military patrols.



CONCLUSION

At the end of the Russian occupation in 1941 considerable groups of Latvian national partisans were operating in the country. They might have formed the nucleus of a renewed Latvian army, for the hatred which the Russians had brought upon them through their occupation was so intense that Latvian volunteers—if they had been organized in a *Latvian* army—might have played a significant rôle in the general course of events. However, such an idea was unacceptable to the Germans. As early as the middle of July 1941 the German police chiefs prohibited the wearing of Latvian military and Home Guard uniforms and ordered the surrender of all firearms and ammunition. However, they did not disband the partisan units but formed them into so-called Police Battalions. Some of these battalions were sent to the Eastern Front (*e.g.* to the Leningrad sector) as early as the end of 1941 and in the first months of 1942. Later most of these battalions were scattered in small units along the entire front from Finland to the Black Sea. The Germans also sent detachments of Latvian

* *The Latvian Legion.* Design for a stamp to be issued for the benefit of the relatives of the Latvian legionaries. The evacuation of Rīga interrupted the printing.

rural police and certain categories of the Home Guard to these Police Battalions with the promise that they would be released after a few months. Later they were told that they had enlisted for the duration of the war. The German behaviour caused great bitterness, all the more so, as those who had been in the auxiliary police service in the country and who were sent to the front against their will were country people who occupied leading positions in economic and other fields and their departure caused considerable difficulties.

As early as 28 August 1942 the Commissar General of Estonia announced that Hitler had "consented" to the formation of an Estonian Legion. A brigade of this Legion fought on the Nevel front. However, this formation of an Estonian Legion was compulsory. Conditions were much the same in Latvia.

In the autumn of 1942 the Germans opened informal negotiations with the Latvian local authorities. The Latvians made counter-proposals asking for the restoration of Latvia's international status and of the Latvian army. The German views at that juncture are evident from the following letter, dated 11 December 1942, from Himmler to the Chief of the German SS and Police in Latvia: "An examination of the 'Latvian 100,000 Men' question shows the following: The Latvian Self-Government has addressed to the Reich Commissar a request to permit restoration of the Latvian Army up to 100,000 men. This is an old trick to try to gain special political advantages with the aid of an army. I have rejected this request as completely impractical and highly dangerous and have made the following proposal, provided the SS Chief gives his approval: To make a unit of racially valuable volunteers under the orders of the SS Chief. They should be used as Police Battalions for fighting bandits or else, if appropriate, as a Latvian Legion. I have asked Reichsleiter Rosenberg to instruct Reich Commissar Lohse not to approach the Reich Marshal with such a harebrained scheme, since the SS Chief alone has jurisdiction in these matters. G. Berger. SS-Gruppenführer." Lohse informed the Latvians accordingly that the Germans would not tolerate any demands from them and that they would gain the final victory without the help of Latvian soldiers.¹

At a special meeting the Latvian directors general were informed, on the basis of the quoted secret instruction, that Hitler had permitted the formation of a Latvian volunteer legion to be known as *Waffen SS Legion Lettland*. The Latvians declared that they understood the need of fighting the Bolsheviks, but that the conditions prevailing in the country precluded volunteering. The Latvian representatives did not know, they

said, whether the *Führer* had permitted the Latvian Legion or had ordered its formation. In the first case, they did not know who had asked for permission, and in the second case—to whom the order had been addressed (Minutes of 29 January 1943).

The negotiations showed that it was impossible to form a volunteer legion. The events that followed made it clear that the Latvian Legion was compulsorily drafted by the Germans. The Germans, on account of the Hague Convention, avoided however the use of the terms—mobilization and draft.

The Germans commenced in February 1943 the registration of commissioned and non-commissioned officers. At the same time the Commissar General of Latvia ordered the *Arbeitsamt* to mobilize the annual classes 1919-1925. An *ad hoc* SS *Ersatzkommando Ostland* thereupon started the mobilization of the registered officers and non-commissioned officers, while of the 50,000 mobilized men 25,000 were sent to the so-called auxiliary volunteer units (*HIWI-Hilfswillige*) of the German Army, 10,000 were attached to labour units, particularly to the *Todt* Organization and only 15,000 were assigned to the Legion itself. Most of the men in the labour units were later made *HIWI*, which was entirely under German control. At the outset the Legion was scattered in small units along the eastern front.

The Latvian local authorities endeavoured to improve the status of the mobilized men and to achieve their concentration into purely Latvian units. The position of the Latvians was extremely serious. They were entirely surrounded by one occupying power, while the dark shadow of the other was looming ahead. There was no chance of voicing one's real opinions and there was no hope whatever of help from outside. Specifically the aims at that time were (1) to achieve a restoration of Latvia's international status, and (2) to ensure that no new mobilizations would be effected, or at least to obtain assurances that such mobilization would not be carried out before the Police Battalions were recalled from the eastern front, or, if this were not possible, to join the battalions in a Latvian Legion; (3) to insist that the command of the Latvian Legion, if it were formed, should be given to a Latvian, and that the chief of the Legion, and the commanders, including regimental commanders should be appointed with the approval of the Latvian local authorities; (4) except for the Latvian Legion there should be no other Latvian soldiers, (5) the Legion should receive proper training on Latvian territory for at least six months, (6) if sent to the front, the Legion should be used only for the defence of the Latvian frontier and it should be placed under the command of the German Army, not the SS; (7) the Latvian equipment of

arms and supplies should be the same as for Germans, and (8) that people should not be tricked into enlisting in the military units.

The majority of these demands were formulated in a letter, dated 23 February 1943, from the Latvian local authorities to the Commissar General of Latvia. Later on, the Inspector General of the Legion consistently endeavoured to realize these demands.²

Not all of these demands were secured when the Latvian Legion was formed. The Germans feared a concentration of some 60,000 to 70,000 soldiers in a national unit and would not allow them to be stationed on or near national territory. Seventy-five percent of the mobilized, as in the case of Estonians, were scattered along the eastern front and only twenty-five percent were enlisted in the Legion.³ Nonetheless, the command of the Legion became the legal centre of the Latvian internal defence.

The Legion wanted to have the same standing as the Latvian Rifle Regiments had during the First World War, except that in the Legion, the divisional commanders and their staffs were German. However, as the German officers did not know the Latvian language their influence was limited. A Latvian spirit in the Legion was secured both by officers and the rank and file who had been reared in the traditions of the Latvian Army and the Rifle Regiments. Orders were given in Latvian, the ranks of officers and non-commissioned officers were as in the Latvian army. The evening roll-call was held, and then as in the Latvian Army the hymn *God Is My Fortress* was sung, and the Latvian National Anthem played. The legionaries wore on their arm a badge with the Latvian colours and the inscription *Latvija*. The Latvian National Day was observed on 18 November 1943 for the first time, in accordance with the traditions of the Latvian Army with a parade in Rīga.⁴

The status of the Legion has been definitely established by the military authorities of the Western Allies.

A USFET letter, dated 8 August 1946, file AG 383.7 GAP. 7 AGD. Subject: Clarification of Discharge Procedure for Baltic Nationals PWS, as well as Third Army TWX GNM CA-91, dated 26 August on the same subject, states that members of the Latvian and Estonian national units who had been conscripted were not to be regarded as either members of the *Wehrmacht* or the SS and that they were not subject to automatic arrest but were to be discharged under *Wehrmacht* category and their discharge units were to be marked "Latvian Legion" and "Estonian Legion".⁵

The German capitulation at Stalingrad on 2 February 1943 marked the beginning of the German retreat on the front. Until the spring of 1944

the front was close to Estonia's border, and in August war was raging in Vidzeme. Vilna fell on 13 July, Tallin on 29 September and Rīga on 13 October. Only the so-called "Fortress of Kurzeme", for whose defence the Latvian soldiers did so much in an effort to stave off the Red tide, held out to the very last day of the war. The Latvian soldiers fought for their country.

The first division of the Legion, later known as the 19th Division, was formed on the Leningrad front early in 1943. It fought bitter fights in the Volkhov sector where large-scale operations were conducted in January 1944 when the Russians made repeated attempts to penetrate the front in order to cut off the German troops in the Leningrad sector. On 19 January the retreat, under constant and heavy fighting, began. Often the Division was encircled and forced to fight its way out. When it reached Pskov, it was moved into position along the Velikaya river. There, on 29 February it met the second division, known as the 15th Division, which had been formed in Kurzeme. However, this second division lacked battle training and was scattered among German regiments in small units. After heavy fighting at Ostrov and Opochka both divisions retreated into Latvian territory. Both had suffered extremely heavy losses. The 32nd Regiment under Colonel Aperats after swimming across the rivers Velikaya and Issa, was practically annihilated at Zilupe. This unit, tired out and short of ammunition, had held up for a whole day (17 June) the encircling movement of an entire Russian army corps. This enabled other Latvian units to retreat and to take up the fight in Vidzeme at the Lubāna lake (2-10 August), Kārzdaba (20-21 August), More (26-30 September) and finally in the Fortress of Kurzeme. During the fighting around the Lubāna lake, when the enemy crossed the Latvian frontier Colonel Lobe addressed an appeal to his countrymen to enlist in the territorial reserve units. This appeal was successful. Shortly after the withdrawal of the 18th German Army from Estonia, Rīga fell (13 October). The Latvian units crossed the Daugava on 9 October proceeding towards Kalnciems (an artillery regiment made the crossing as the last unit on 13 October) and took up positions in the Džūkste—Dobele sector. Most of the remaining men of the 15th Division were transferred to the 19th Division, but some units were sent to Pomerania for additional training. The Germans evidently did not want to leave large Latvian units in Latvia. In Pomerania these units were used to dig; they were given no training and no equipment. The 19th Division was left in Latvia and, after bitter fighting in Vidzeme, retreated to Kurzeme, which was cut off from Germany by the rapid advance of the Russians. The Kurzeme bridgehead sustained six large-scale Russian attacks during the following

winter. The Russians tried to conquer, both for reasons of prestige, and in order to have access to the ice-free ports of Liepāja and Ventspils for naval operations against the German coast.

The first Russian attack commenced on 15 October. It was directed against the Dobele-Džūkste sector held by the 19th Division which had crossed the Daugava on 6 October and had just taken up its new positions. For two weeks the Russians assaulted the Latvian lines, but failed to penetrate them. This first battle of Kurzeme had not ended before the Russians launched a large-scale attack in the Skrunda-Saldus sector. After twelve days this offensive collapsed. Ten days later, the offensive was repeated in the same sectors. In individual sectors the Russians attacked up to sixty times. This time also the Russians did not achieve any sizable results. By the middle of December the third offensive commenced in the Saldus sector, which gradually came to include a large section from Vaiņode to the Latvian sector at Dobele and Džūkste where the fighting was particularly heavy. A counter-attack launched near Dobele on 5 January 1945 regained ground lost during previous fighting. On 12 January the Soviet offensive on the Vistula front had crushed German resistance and new Russian attacks commenced against Liepāja and Saldus. During twelve-days' fighting the Russians achieved minor successes. The fifth battle of Kurzeme began with an attack in the Džūkste sector on 16 February. The Latvian units had to make a minor retreat, but the Russian advance was halted. On 19 February the Russians attacked in the direction of Tukums, but were stopped two days later. The sixth battle started on 17 March at Saldus, where the Russians were successful initially. A shock group composed of three fresh Soviet Guards' divisions, which attacked on a front of four kilometres, was then opposed by the Latvian 19th Division. After twenty-four hours' fighting, the Soviets had to replace these divisions with new ones on account of their losses. The situation was saved, but nevertheless the front line was drawn in and from 21 March to 3 April the Latvians had to cover this operation. This was the last battle in Kurzeme, since the Soviets transferred most of their forces to the Berlin front.

On 8 May 1945, the Germans capitulated. The 19th Division had held its sector in the Dobele region from October 1944 to the very last day of the war. The 15th Division managed to break out of the Danzig area and make their way to the Neubrandenburg-Neustrelitz region where they were again used as labour battalions for digging trenches. On 27 April one of its regiments was fully armed for the defence of Berlin, but this

regiment headed westward, reached the American lines near Magdeburg and surrendered to the Americans.

On 29 April 1945 the Inspector General of the Legion, General Bangerskis, issued the following order to the Latvian soldiers: "Our military units, most of which are practically unarmed, must leave the eastern front in order to avoid being taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks. They should proceed westwards in a disciplined manner and let themselves be interned by the British, Americans or French . . . Your reward will be the knowledge that you have fought for your country and people and that you have done everything that could have been asked of you. May this knowledge give you faith and endurance in the unknown and unpredictable future. As always, let us not pray for ourselves, but let us pray together: God save and bless Latvia."⁶

Reverting to Kurzeme, we see that after 8 May the Russian authorities began large-scale deportations to Russia of the Kurzeme population and the refugees who had fled to Kurzeme from all parts of Latvia in an effort to escape the Bolsheviks. These refugees had hoped against hope that somebody somehow would halt the Russian advance. Nobody believed in a German victory but they believed that the western powers would halt the Bolshevik advance and confine Russia within its frontiers of 1939. This belief was not abandoned by the people and soldiers in Kurzeme until the very last day.

The Latvian Legion fought gallantly against the Bolsheviks. As during the First World War the Latvian Riflemen had risen to defend their country so did the Legionaries during the Second World War. They knew well enough that both the Germans and the Russians were their enemies, but hoped that both would be defeated in the end.

The Latvian poet Andrejs Eglītis has depicted the tragedy of his people in a poem of a rare poetical inspiration and force, with the title, *God, Thy Earth Is Aflame*.

The Legionaries firmly believed in an independent Latvia. The opinions held by the Legion can be seen in an address by the poet A. Eglītis, which was delivered to the legionaries during a period of heavy fighting in the Džūkste sector in Kurzeme. It runs as follows: "... only we who are fighting at the front can speak of a free and independent Latvia, because the Germans know that if they try to stop us we will shoot them and leave the trenches. Yet the Germans will not give us a free Latvia, they have told us so over and over again and stated it quite plainly in their orders to the civilian population. We are now offered autonomy and various national committees. We reject all that, but for the time being we have

no alternative but to fight to the bitter end. We demand a free Latvia and that is the reason why you are here today in these trenches. In Latgale and Vidzeme the Russians indulge in wholesale murder, rape and deportations. Yet while you are at the front, the people still have some protection. In Kurzeme, this last portion of Latvian territory, refugees from all parts of Latvia are crowded. What will be our lot? We are the last to oppose the East. All Kurzeme stands behind their soldiers and believes that a miracle from the west will save us. We have no choice—we must fight!"

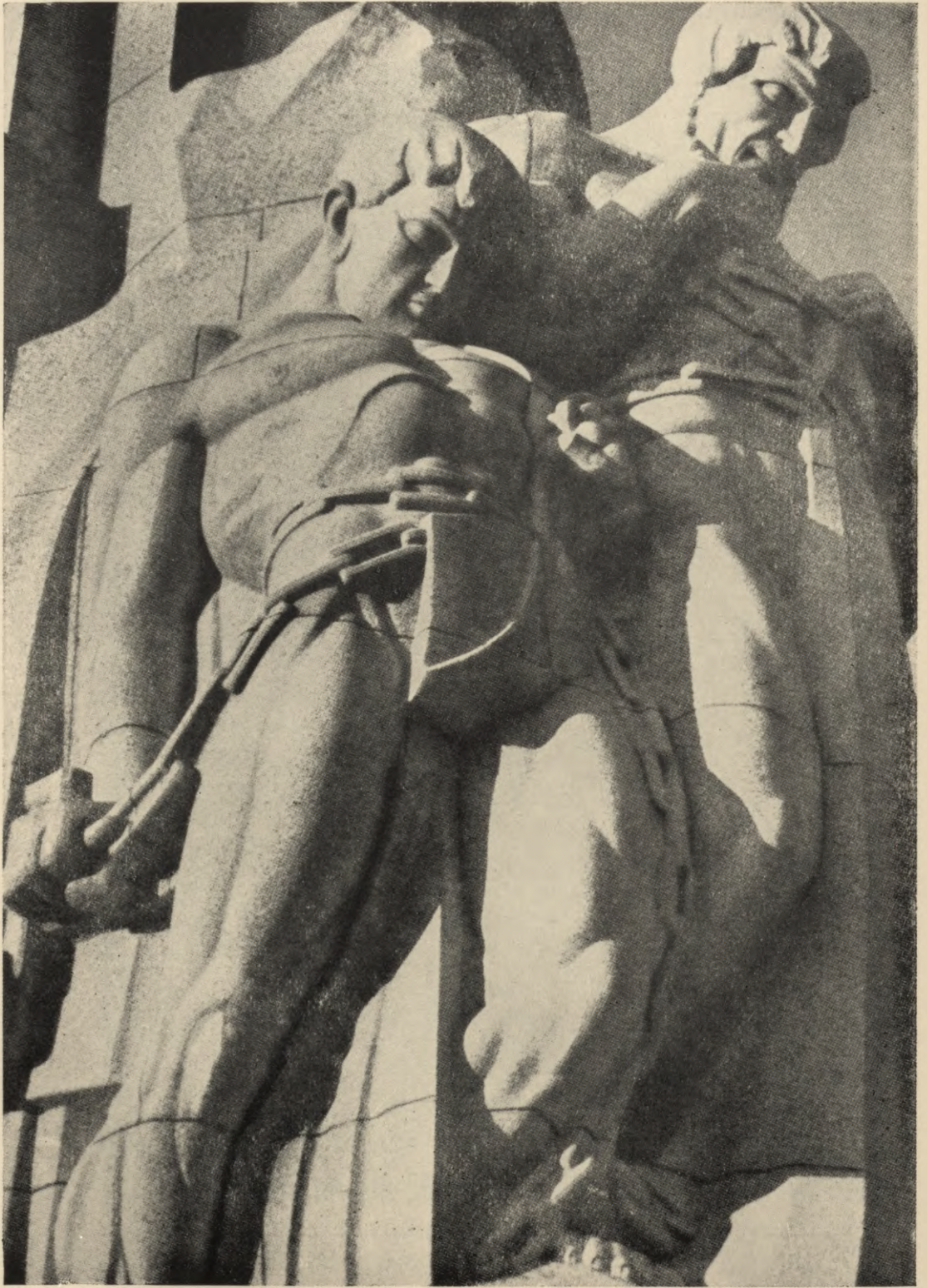
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Ten years have passed since the fateful events in June 1940. Latvia has seen alternate occupations by the Red and Brown imperialists, suffering not only under the grim laws of war, but also from the alliance of two aggressors in 1939 and the collapse of this alliance in 1941. Both totalitarian states had the same designs in the Baltic area: incorporation. The form—a Soviet Republic or Ostland—is of minor importance.

These years have levied a heavy toll of human lives and of material and spiritual values on the Latvian nation. However difficult its present situation, the postwar years, paradoxically enough, have brought a certain improvement in its future outlook. During the last years of the war and the first postwar years the Latvian demand, formulated by its legal representatives abroad and Latvians in exile, for the restoration of an independent Latvia was regarded by the West as one of the factors which complicated future relations with the Soviet Union. Although it was seldom denied that the Latvians and other Balts had a right to independence, it was believed that Soviet expansion would be limited to areas which Russia seized in 1939-40 plus a part of east Prussia. It was argued that it was better to let the Soviets have their way in the Baltic area than to insist on a just settlement of the Baltic problem and thereby jeopardize the chances of a settlement with Soviet Russia. The illusions that the capture of the Baltic States would be an isolated case have now been dispelled. Exploiting the western world's only too natural and legitimate longing for a real peace and the confusion in western views on the Soviet Union resulting from the latter's status of an ally in the Second World War, the Kremlin has persistently pursued a dynamic policy in the postwar years. While after the war the Western Powers demobilized their armed forces, the Soviet Union concentrated her efforts on perfecting her war machine. The postwar world is covered by a network of international treaties, the League of Nations has been replaced by the United



Latvian youth responds to the appeal of Colonel Lobe on 20 August 1944.



The Chain-Breakers. Detail from the Monument of Liberty, Riga.

Nations, but an iron curtain cuts old Europe in two. The Baltic countries, and eight other countries with 120 million inhabitants, have become what is now known as Soviet satellites. Of Europe's 24 capitals, twelve are behind the iron curtain. In all these countries the Bolsheviks apply the same system of sovietization as first tested in the Baltic countries. All this means, that now the countries and peoples controlled against their will by the Soviet Union are no longer limited to the Baltic area. The Baltic problem has grown into an eastern European problem whose political, strategical and economic complications cannot be disregarded. The real face of the Soviet régime, its methods of imposing its will on the Russian and a large number of non-Russian peoples, and its foreign political objectives are now known to the western world. This is certainly an improvement from the Baltic point of view.

To the Latvian, thinking over the history of his country, two things promise hope to his people. The first is that in spite of centuries of oppression the people themselves have been able to maintain an independent cultural background; and secondly that many Empires are like giants with feet of clay.

*

Small nations have always led a precarious existence, and it is in the relations between the large nations and these small nations that one sees plainly and with horror that it is naked power alone which is decisive in shaping world events. Although the fate of small nations is not therefore to be envied, the fate of great powers too is not always sweet. Science, that great benefactor and tormentor of humanity, has now invaded the realms of the human spirit thus making it more and more difficult to lead a vigorous independent existence. And still—these units have existed for centuries and thousands of years and it seems that they will continue to exist even now in spite of great human losses, in spite of mass movements of nations which in our days are not called carrying into slavery, but mass deportations.

Yet the present is a moment that comes and goes, and like a medal it bears two inscriptions: on times that are gone, and on times that are to come.

For the times that are past let us read the words of Ecclesiastes:

"Sorrow is better than laughter:
For by sadness of countenance
The heart is made better."

And on the other side of the medal let Isis talk to us of the day when she may say:

“I have taught men mysteries
 I have shown how to honour the altars of the Gods
 I have shattered the state of the tyrants
 I have made law more powerful than gold and silver
 I have made man recognize truth.”



NEBĒDAJĒES, KARA VĪRĪ,
 SIDRABOŅA SAULE LĒC

* A design of the coat-of-arms of Latvia by A. Cirulis. Motto reads: Stop worrying, warrior, a silver sun is rising!

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- ¹⁵ J. Ulfeld, *Legatio Moscovitica*, in A. Starzewski, *op. cit.*
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- ¹⁸ A. Volanus, see his speech, held in Riga on 12 September 1599.
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- ³ P. Einhorn, *Historia Lettica, Scr.rer. Livon.*, II, 5 96.
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- ⁶ Cf. Hylzen, *Inflanty*, p. 338.
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- ²¹ Cf. M. Stepermanis, *Vecā Stendera sabiedriskie uzskati, Izglītības Ministrijas Mēnešraksts*, 1936.

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- ³ Cf. *Cenno su gli avvenimenti militari ovvero saggi storici sulle campagne del 1799 al 1814 del Conte M. Dumas. . . . Tomo ventiseiesimo* p. 38, *campagna del 1812; Napoli 1843*.
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- ³ G. Weill, *L'Europe du XIXe siècle et l'idée de nationalité*, p. 115.
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- ⁵ Kronvalds, *Tautiskie centieni*.
- ⁶ V. Maturi, *Enciclopedia Italiana XXIV*, p. 464.
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- ⁹ C. R. Jurgela, *History of the Lithuanian Nation*, p. 423—468.
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- ¹² William Sommer, *Geschichte Finnlands*, p. 207.
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- ¹⁴ *LKV*, p. 21842.
- ¹⁵ H. Kruus, *Histoire de l'Estonie*, p. 164.
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- ¹⁷ Professor M. M., *Latvijas ekonomiski-ģeografiskie pamati*, p. 105—107.
- ¹⁸ J. Meuvret, *Histoire des pays Baltiques*, p. 161.
- ¹⁹ Professor M. M., *op. cit.*
- ²⁰ E. Stērste, *La letteratura lettone moderna, Lettonia, Il Mondo d'oggi, 1939*, p. 87 et seq.
- ²¹ *Soviet Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 36, p. 53 et seq.

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- ³ A. Švābe, *The Story of Latvia*, p. 34.
- ⁴ E.g. *Der Grosse Krieg in Einzeldarstellungen*, Hft 31 and particularly 39.
- ⁵ P. S. Kurlov, *The Fall of Tsarist Russia*.
- ⁶ *The Latvian Rifle Battalions*, vol. I (*Latviešu Strēlnieki I*).
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- ³ J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk, the Forgotten Peace*.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 429 et seq.
- ⁵ A. Winnig, *Am Ausgang der deutschen Ostpolitik*, p. 5.

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- ⁸ A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1920—1923*, p. 240—241. Cf. G. Albat, *Recueil des principaux traités conclus par la Lettonie avec les pays étrangers 1918—1928*, Vol. I, p. 5.
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- ¹¹ *A Study of History* by Arnold J. Toynbee. *Abridgement of volumes I—VI* by D. C. Sommerwell, p. 407.

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- ⁴ F. W. Pick, *The Baltic Nations*, p. 84.
- ⁵ Cf. *La riforma agraria in Lettonia*, *Bollettino Internazionale di Agricoltura*, Roma, pp. 406—414, 443—451.
- ⁶ Professor M. M., *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- ⁷ H. Heaton, *Economic History of Europe*, p. 490 *et seq.*
- ⁸ J. Rutkis, *op. cit.*; cf. his cartograms in *Latvju Enciklopēdija* I.
- ⁹ A. Švābe, *The Story of Latvia*, p. 42.
- ¹⁰ Cf. M. Skujenieks, *Atlas Statistique de la Lettonie*, p. 52.
- ¹¹ A. Švābe, *Latvija 30 gadus, 1918—1948*, p. 28—30.
- ¹² Cf. *Atlas Statistique de la Lettonie*.
- ¹³ Professor M. M., *op. cit.*, p. 118.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- ¹⁵ F. Balodis, *Latvia and the Latvians*, p. 274.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274.
- ¹⁷ A. Švābe, *The Story of Latvia*, p. 41. Cf. also A. Bīlmanis, *Latvija*, p. 80; and E. Håstad, *Den författningpolitiska utvecklingen i Balticum, Ha de rätt att leva*, Stockholm 1943, p. 101.
- ¹⁸ F. W. Pick, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93; cf. also *Estonia*, Stockholm 1948, p. 7.
- ²⁰ A. Švābe, *The Story of Latvia*, p. 42.

CHAPTER XVIII

- ¹ A. Rei, *Nazi-Soviet Conspiracy and the Baltic States*, p. 41.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- ³ *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939—1941*, p. 78.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- ⁵ *The Baltic Review* I 6, 1946, p. 281.
- ⁶ *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939—1941*, p. 152.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153—154.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 267—268.
- ¹⁰ A. Švābe, *The Story of Latvia*, p. 63.
- ¹¹ *The Lutheran Church of Latvia behind the Iron Curtain*.
- ¹² A. Plensners, *Informācija par Latviešu leģionu*.
- ¹³ A. Bīlmanis, *Latvia in 1939—1942*, p. 363.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 365.
- ¹⁵ *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. VIII, p. 677.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 690—691.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. VII, p. 1086 *et seq.*
- ¹⁸ *Deutsche Reichsbahn Bahndiensttelegramm*, 20 Nov. 1943, Riga.
- ¹⁹ *The Lutheran Church of Latvia behind the Iron Curtain*.
- ²⁰ *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. III, p. 710.
- ²¹ *The Goebbels Diaries 1942—1943*, p. 126.

CONCLUSION

- ¹ C. Collins, *Latvian-Jewish Relations. Fought the Soviets*, *The Baltic Review* II 2, 1948, p. 27 sq.
- ² A. Plensners, *Informācija par Latviešu leģionu*.
- ³ A. Plensners, *op. cit.*
- ⁴ C. Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 60 sq.
- ⁵ A. Plensners, *op. cit.*
- ⁶ A. Plensners, *op. cit.*

INDEX

(* = Illustration. M = Map. Roman figures = Plates.)

- Adalbert, St.**, 46, 125, XVI
Adam of Bremen (Adamus Bremensis) 23, 40-3, 80, 1, 4, 7, 8, 92, 111, 125, 158
Aists (aestii) 3, 37, 9, 41, 77, 89, 104, 6, 121
Akurāters 312
Albanians 18, 34-6
Albert 118, 129, 130, 2, 5, 7, 141, 5, 7, 171, 129*, 131*
Aleksey (Tsar) 210, 223, 4, 254, 265, 7
Alexander (Field-Marshal) 353
Alexander I 282, 3, 8, 292
Alexander II 293, 9
Alexander III 305, 9, 320
Alfred the Great 38-41
Algirdas (Olgerd) 152, 3, 161
Allied military missions 353
Alūksne 239
Alunāns 305
Amber route 36, 7, 48
Americans 411, LVII
Anglo-Saxons 40, 1
Aperāts 409
Apsītis 310
Apulia (Apule) 75, 82, M 10, 11
Arabs 98, 106; geographers 33-6, 41-7, 50, 92, 3, 101, 5, 6, 9
Arne 81, 96, 8
Archaeology 7-9, 19, 22, 29-32, 3, 43, 4, 48-55, 72, 3, 6, 94, 114-7
Asars 311, 2
Aspāzija 317, XLIV
Auseklis 307-310
Auzāns 333
Avars 102, 5

Baldwin of Aulnes (Balduinus Alnensis) 137, 8, 144, 5, 9, XII
Balodis F. 3, 7, 8, 48-50, 53, 91, 116.
Balodis J. 349, 350, 5, 375, 6, XLII, XLV, LIV
Baltic 3-5, 13-17, 20, 1, 36, 7, 42, 54, 78, 82, 7, 97-102, 105, 7, 112, 3, 118-122, 156, 161, 3, 178, 207, 264-281, 325, 40*, V
Baltic Duchy 342
Baltic Germans 274, 292, 3, 7, 8, 305-9, 313, 325, 353, 383, 404; **Historians** 1-11, 114, 175, 195, 203, 228, 248, 273, 4, 287, 295, 6
Landeswehr 346, 350-3, 6; **Nobility** 4, 5, 8, 10, 68, 149, 170, 2, 186, 195, 6, 205, 6, 228, 9, 232, 243-5, 255, 269, 287, 290-3, 329, 342, 350, 363; **Privileges** 6, 194, 206, 244-6, 268, 273
Baltic Sea 6, 14, 17-21, 5, 32, 7, 41, 8, 78, 83, 4, 7, 94, 7, 9, 101-4, 125, 130, 152, 7, 178, 182, 192, 207, 8, 222, 3, 253, 265, 6, 283, 347, 76*; **dominium maris Baltici** 78, 87, 157, 192
Baltic States 344, 360, 7, 378, 380-3, 387-390, 396, 400, 2, 3, 412, 3
Balts (Baltic Group) 3, 17-19, 23, 4, 30-4, 6, 41-4, 55, 7, 77, 88, 94, 101, 3, 5-9, 119, 124, 132, 29* 35*, 40*, 45*, 47*, 54*, 67*, 83*, 169*, M 4-8, 13, II
Bandava M 14
Bangerskis 336, 411
Barons 60-3, 307, XXXIII
Bartholomaeus Anglicus 42, 3, 158
Basques 18, 59
Baeda Venerabilis 38
Berķis 355, LIV
Bermont-Avalov 353, 5, XLIII, LIII
Bernard, St., 126-9, 132
Biarmia 47, 8
Birka 88, 99
Biron 244, 5, 253-5, 263*, LIII
Blaumanis 307
Bolgars (Bulgars) 41, 4, 5, 9, 105, M 10, 13
Bolsheviks (Communists) 314, 337, 9, 341, 2, 346-356, 397, 400, 1, 411
Bolšteins 394

Brandenburg 210, 222, 6, 253
Brastiņš XI
Bray, Count de, 278, 9, 295
Brest Litovsk 339, 342-7, 356, 7
Briedis 331, XXXVII
Brigadere 302
Britain 265, 6, 283, 319, 320, 344, 383, 398, 404, 411, XLIII, LVII
Brīvzemnieks 307
Buga 32, 56, 107
Burt 353
Byzantines 34, 43, 4, 76, 101, 5, 110

Calendar Rebellion 201-3
Cartography 46, 7, 93, 157-9, 211, 2
Catherine I 239;
Catherine II 269, 271, 4, 5, 7, 281, 2
Ceklis M 14
Celts 18, 57, 94, M 5-7
Cēsis 170, 188-190, 201, 6, 8, 352, 3, 151*, 162*, 209* M 11
Charlemagne 39, 102, 5, 122, 8, 182
Charles IX 208, 213, 231, 252, 3
Charles X 224, 7, 8, 253
Charles XI (Peasants' King) 227, 8, 233, 4, 6, 8, 9, 268, 9, 272, XXII
Charles XII 227, 236, 251, 265, 7, XXXIII, XXXV
Chernigov (Tchernigov) 32, 165 M 10
Christine 224, 7, 8, 232, 3, XXII
Cimze 297, 8
Civitates 82, 9
Communist Party 374, 386, 392, 3; see **Bolsheviks**
Concentration camps 396, 402
Constantine Porphyrogenitus 44, 93, 104-6
Constantinople 42, 8
Cossacks 223, 254, 322, 3, XXXVI
Counter-Reformation 178, 191, 200-220, 228

- Cracow 31, 124
 Cromwell 249, 252*, 6*,
 XXVII
 Čakste 316, 339, 374,
 XXXIX, XLIV—XLVI
 Curones, Curetes, Corres,
 see Kurs
 Czechs 41, 124, 154, 335,
 M 13
Dainas, see Latvian folk-
 songs
 Danes 21, 42, 3, 51, 78, 9,
 81, 2, 4, 6, 7, 96, 8, 102, 122,
 132, 5, 144, 230, 243, 398, 9.
 Danube 18, 102, 122
 Danzig 42, 181, 192, 208,
 231, XVI
Daugava (Dūna, Dwina,
 Dzwina, Duna, Dyna,
 Wina, Weina) 14, 21-3,
 49, 50, 5, 81, 4, 5, 8, 94, 8,
 107—112, 114, 7, 8, 121,
 135, 6, 140, 202, 222,
 253, 7, 267, 284, 322, 3,
 330, 2, 354, 409, 1*, 35*,
 76*, 221*, 5*, I, II,
 XXIII, XXVII, LI,
 LVIII
Daugavgrīva 89, 330
Daugavpils 352, 5
Daugmale 49, 75, 92, 4, V
Denmark 80, 1, 7, 121-4, 144
 156, 7, 161, 7, 182, 5, 6, 8,
 190, 265, 6, 294, 190*,
 191*, M 14, 19, 20
Deportations 366, 395, 6,
 402, 3, 411
Dianus 84, 5
Dinsbergis 298, 9
Dnieper 18, 22, 3, 44, 9, 84,
 94, 106, 7, 9, 111, 121, 40*,
 76*
Dobe M 14, XI
Dobele 139, 142, 4, 409, 410,
 139*, M 14
Domesnās (Tumisnis) 98,
 X
Dorno 84, 90, 8
Dorpat see Tartu
Duonelaitis 66
Durbe 134, 8, 141
Dusburg 69, 157
Dutchmen 19, 231, 399
Duvzare M 14
Džūkste 409-411
Eberhardt 354
Egil 80, 1, 6-8, 98
Eglītis 411
Einhard 39, 40, 105
Einhorn 43, 58, 202, 219,
 238, 260-2
Eisen 277
Elbe 36, 42, 102, 121, 2, 4
Elger 217, 235*
Endzelins 56, 307
England 253, 6, 380, 404
Eric XIV 205, 6
Ermanaric 39, 77
Estonia 3, 14, 15, 25, 32,
 49, 54, 78-81, 86, 7, 93, 7,
 100, 115, 179, 206-8, 212,
 3, 228, 268, 274, 288-291,
 303-5, 314, 325, 342-8,
 351-6, 378, 380-9, 397-
 409
Estonian folklore 60, 2, 5
Estonians 17, 21, 33, 58, 80,
 2, 5, 7, 94-105, 113, 5, 7,
 136-8, 144, 9, 161, 202,
 269, 295, M 9, 11-14
Etruscans 37, 94
Finland 13, 25, 30, 49, 54,
 86, 93, 124, 205, 8, 265, 8,
 283, 303, 4, 5, 9, 324, 343, 5,
 356, 7, 380, 3, 4, 67*,
Finnish folklore 60, 2, 5.
Finnish tribes 17, 21, 31, 4,
 42, 103, 111
Finno-Ugrians 19, 21, 55, 9,
 136, M 5-8, I-II
Finns 19, 33, 6, 7, 44, 60, 2, 5,
 85, 107, 283, 51*, 67*,
 M 4, 11
France 265, 283, 4, 294, 411,
 XLIII
Frederick II of Prussia 271
Frotho 84, 98
Fürecker 238, 9, 257-260
Gailis (Gayle, Gayll) 141, 9
Galinds 30, 7, 108, M 11
Gambia 250, 255*, M 22
Gauja 22, 213*
Gedimin 151, 2
Georgia 358
German colonial policy 20,
 30, 78, 201, 7
German colonization 323-
 5, 342, 3, 398-401
Germans 3, 18, 19, 31, 3, 6,
 55, 9, 77, 8, 105, 111, 113-
 124, 135-143, 148, 151, 2,
 161-3, 171, 2, 6, 181, 4, 5,
 188, 9, 204, 257-263, 273, 9,
 294, 313, 5, 323-5, 7, 9, 342,
 3, 411, 2, 40*
Germany 211, 223, 243-5,
 265, 280, 303, 319, 320,
 345, 6, 354, 379, 387-9,
 397-411
glabae adscripti 148, 170, 2,
 196
Glück 238, 9, 260
Gnezdovo, see Smolensk
Goebels 403
Goldman 316, 329, 330,
 343, XXXVII, XLI
Goltz 349, 350, 2-4, 7, XLIII
Goppers 331, 3, 394, 333*,
 XXXVIII, LI
Goths 17, 31-4, 9, 65, 77, 8
Gotland 50, 73, 81, 8, 96, 9,
 11*, VI, XVI
Gough 353, 4
Greece 18, 9, 37, 43
Grewingk 310
Grinbergs 402
Grins 332
Grobiņa 88, 245, M 11
Grosvalds 330, XLV
Guagnini 43, 193, 204, 211
Gustavus II Adolphus 208,
 213, 221-4, 227-233, 237,
 253, 4, LVII
Gustavus V LI
Haithabu 78, 88, 99.
Handuvanus (Anduanus)
 84, 5
Hanseatic League 78, 152,
 3, 6, 7, 164, 175, 6, 250
Hellespont 84, 5, 8, 90, 8
Helmoldus 100
Henning 59, 219
Henricus de Lettis 26, 87, 9,
 116-8, 129*
Herder 2, 23, 62-4, 6, 104,
 152, 286, 7, 295
Herodotus 34, 6
Herrnhut 280
Hilchen 199
Himmler 406
Hindenburg 321, 331, 343,
 326*
Hitler 406, 7
Holland 157, 164
Holmgård, see Novgorod
Hungarians 19, 101, 5, 9,
 122, 154, 189, M 13
Huns 77, 102
Hupel 278
Idumeja M 14
Ikšķile (Uexküll) 135,
 141, 9, 332

- Illyrians 34,5, 55, M 5
 Imen 80,4, 94-6, 109
 Imera M 14
 Indo-Europeans 18,9, 30,4,
 52-75, I
 Ingermanland 265,8
 Innocent III 129, 130
 Isidore of Seville 38, 157
 Ivan III 167,8, 181
 Ivan IV 120, 160, 170, 188,
 9, 214, 252, 265
 Jacob (Duke) 243,5, 248-
 253, 256,7, 367, 250*, 252*,
 254*, 255*, XXVII
 Jannau 277
 Jansons 311
 Janševskis 317
 Jarmericus 90
 Jelgava (Mitau) 141, 210,
 251,6, 296, 327, 334, 347,
 354, 246*, 263*, XXVI,
 L, LIII
 Jenghiz-Khan 118
 Jersika (Gerzeke, Gercike)
 22, 49, 113-8, 135, M
 11, 14
 Jesuits 7, 58, 71, 201,2
 Jews 372, 402
 Jogaila 153,4
 Jonval 61,2,4
 Jordan of Auleja 73,4
 Jordanes 23, 78, 103,4
 Jurjāns 71, 317
 Kalevala 60,5
 Kalevipoeg 60,5
 Kalmar 156, 165
 Kalniņš 332, E.:353 XLII;
 P.: LI
 Kalpaks 347,9, 351, 363,
 351*
 Kaluga 103
 Kasparsons XLIV
 Kaudzīte 310
 Kauguri 288
 Kaunas M 4, 11
 Kaupo 116, 132,5, 149
 Keenan 353
 Kēgums L
 Keistutas 153
 Kēkava 332
 Kettler 186,8, 204,5, 244-6,
 252-4, 217*
 Khazars 44, 50, 79, 98,
 105, 112, 181,1*, M 8, 10,
 13
 Kiev (Kunigard) 22, 101,
 115,7,8, 165, M 4, 13
 Kimble 38,9, 93
 Klaipēda, see Memel
 Kliuchevsky 94, 107,9
 Kohl 296
 Koknese 49, 114,5,7, 135,6,
 149, 165, 267, 199*, M 11,
 14, XXXIV
 König 149, 150, 199*
 Kossinna 77,9, 94
 Krauklis XXIII
 Kriviches 49, 108, 111,2,
 M 13
 Kroders 312
 Krodzenieks 5, 6
 Kronvalds 5, 301, XXXIII
 Kuldīga 247*
 Kurbisky 184,8, 190
 Kurish 27, 82,6, 91, 248,
 257,11*,28*,76*,97*, XII
 Kurish Kings 84,9, 116;
 koniņi 149, 173, 218,
 XXIV
 Kurland 30, 42,3,9, 73, 115,
 134,8, 144, 222, 260,1,8,
 271, 131*, 176*
 Kurland, Duchy of 20, 22,
 149, 186, 201, 210, 222,
 231, 242-264, 271,9, 283,
 190*,1*, 242*, 251*, 252*,
 M 19-22, XXXII
 Kurs (Curetes, Curones,
 kurši) 27, 31-3, 42,3, 55,
 73, 80,2,4-9, 92,9, 111-2,
 5,6, 125, 137-140,9, 152,9,
 171, 54*, 160*, M 9, 11,
 V-VII, XII
 Kuŗsa 16, 22, 82, 11*, 67*,
 95*, 100*, 119*, 247*,
 M 1, III, VI, XVIII
 Kurzeme 31, 43,9, 78, 80,
 1,6,8, 93,6-8, 149, 171,
 218,9, 261, 284,6, 290,2,7,
 306,8, 313, 322,3,6, 333,4,
 339-345, 363, 409-412,
 75*, 99*, 261*, 285*,
 359*, 378*, VI, VII,
 XXVIII, XXXII,
 XXXVII
 Kviesis 374,6, LI
 Lāčplēsis 337*, XLVI
 Ladoga 80,4, 94-6, 105,7,9,
 113
 Laidoner 351, 375
 Lannoy, Guillebert de, 27,
 43, 87, 154,9
 Lamekins (Lammechinus)
 22, 89, 116, 137,8, XII
 Latgale 16,18,232,308-310,
 340-5, 352,5, 363, 412,
 359*, 378*, M 1, II,
 IX, XXXII, XLVIII
 Latvia 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13-17,
 21,3,5, 32, 50,1,4,5, 75, 79-
 81, 92,9, 106, 112,5,7, 121,
 132, 140,8, 286, 290,1,
 303-320, 322-5, 330,9 340-
 7, 355-391, 397-400, 402,
 4,8-411, 413, 15*, 26*,
 27*, 52*, 67*, 129*, 359*,
 M 15, I, V
 Proclamation 344,5, XL
 Russian occupation 385-
 397, 405; deportations
 386, 395,6; kolkhozes
 390,1; nationalization,
 confiscation, sovietiza-
 tion 390,1,7, 400; terror
 393-5, LV.
 German occupation 397-
 404; deportations 402,3,
 411; massacres 402,
 LVII, LVIII
 Latvian
 Agrarian reform 28, 363
 -7, 404, 27*, M 3, XLVII
 Agriculture 362-7
 Aizsargi (Home Guard)
 376, 386, 393, 405,6,
 XLI-XLIII
 Army 346, 353, 393, 405-
 8; see Troops, Riflemen,
 Partisans, Legion
 Art 372
 Book 216*, 217*, 235*,
 259*, XXIII, XXIV
 Castle-hills 7, 74,5, 91,5,
 116,7, 90*, 91*, 95*, 139*,
 XI
 Castles 116,7, 143, 212,
 90*, 91*, 92*, 247*
 Church 392,3, 402
 Constituent Assembly
 342, 373,4, 378*, XLIV
 Constitution 373,4-6, 389
 Costumes 71-3, 211,2,
 67*, 281*, 282*, IV,
 XIV, XV, XVIII,
 XXII, XXIX, XXX,
 LII
 Cults 57-9, 62,9, 70, 125,
 261,2; of Mothers 58,9,
 70, 260, of Sun 57,8, 62,8
 Democratic Bloc 344
 Economy 315,6, 365,8
 Education 370,2
 Festivals 68, 70, 258, 286
 Folklore 2, 5, 9, 24, 34,

- 52,3, 63,6,8, 71, 87, 260
 Folksongs (dainas) 5, 9, 21,3,8, 53, 57-70, 92, 174, 6, 258-261, 280,6,7, 295-7, 307
 Foreign policy 377,8
 Forests 25, M 2
 Freemen 173, 199*, XXIV, XXVIII
 Geographical Regions, 17, 15*, M 1
 Geology 13 sq.
 Government 336, 344-354, 363, 372, 381
 History I-II, 114,6, 147, 273,4, 391-402
 House 73,4, 83, 295, XVIII
 Industry 315, 369
 Jāņi 70,1, 258, 286, XXX
 Language 9, 19, 33, 52,5, 6, 77, 215-7, 238, 257, 262,3, 297, 371
 Law 373
 Legends and Tales 9, 66-8
 Legion 406-412, 405*, LVI, LIX
 Literature 215-7, 238, 257 sq., 298,9, 307, 310,7, 371
 Marriage 60,1,8,9, 219, 220
 Minorities 367, 372,4
 Monument of Liberty LX
 Music 202, 317, 370-2, XXXII
 Mythology 26, 56-9, 62,5, 7, 260-2, 307, 310; God's Sons 57,8, 62; Sun's Daughters 58, 62,8
 National Council 342,4
 National Movement 303-318
 National Song Festival 53,9, 60, 72, 372, 384, XXXIII, LII
 Ornaments 72,3, 1*, 11*, 51*, 52*, 67*, 75*, 97*, 99*, 100*, 119*, 177*, 261*, XIII-XV
 Parliament (Saeima) 373-6, XLVI
 Parties 311,2, 372,4-6
 Partisans 355, 397, 405
 Peasant 5-9, 24,7,8, 194-9, 202-6, 230-6, 240,1, 251,6, 268,9, 272-9, 289-296, 308, 312-4, 344, 363, 400, 152*, 261*, XX, XXIV, XXX
 People 1-4,9, 20,1, 76, 121, 244, 257,8, 286,7, 295-7
 People's Council 344
 Population 361-3,6
 President 373-6
 Provisional Council 340,1
 Refugees 322,3, 339, 366, XXXIX, LVII
 Riflemen 327-336, 340,1, 408, 411, 319*, 336*; Christmas Battles 332-6; Imanta Regiment 335,6; Troitsk Regiment 335,6; Schools 370, 398, 401, LIV
 Social Legislation 370
 Troops 325-9
 University 317, 370,1, LIII
 War of Liberation 337-357, 337*
 Latvians 2-7, 18, 28, 30-3, 42,3,6, 49-53, 55-9, 62,3, 76-99, 106-8, 112-8, 121, 4, 133-9, 149, 152, 161, 176, 250,7,8, 260,2, 279, 287,8, 295-8, 304,5,8, 310, 8, 321-331, 403, 413, 51*, 52*, 83*, 95*, 129*, 131*, 145*, V, VI
 Latvian Society 372, XXXIII, LV
 Lautenbachs 310
 Leida 173, 234
 Leitāns 298,9
 Lenin (Ulyanov) 338,9, 347
 Lerchis-Puškaitis 67,8, 310
 Letgallia 176*, M 12, IX, XIII, XV, XVIII
 Letgallians (letgaļi); 31,3, 116, 125, 136,7, 13*, 54*, 75*, 95*, 177*, M 9, 11, IV, IX, XIII, XV, XVIII
 Lielupe 22, 55, 98, 138, 140,2,3
 Liepāja 88, 249, 316, 349, 380, XXVI, XLI, XLIX
 Lithuania 27, 49, 54, 73,8, 82, 118,9, 124, 135,7, 140,4,5,8, 151-4, 8, 161-5, 175,7, 181, 185-191, 199, 207, 210, 222,6, 303,4,9, 343-7, 357, 380-9, 397-404, 76*, 153*
 Lithuanians 18, 22, 30-3,7, 46, 52,6-9, 62,4-6, 70, 87, 106-114, 116-9, 124,5, 136,8, 141,2,9, 153, 161, 187, 304, M 9,12,14
 Līvontāls 298,9
 Livonia 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 20,7, 57, 78, 81,8, 97, 100, 116, 120-186, 189-199, 201,6,7, 210,3, 221-241, 248, 256,7, 262-270, 272, 367, 129*, 131*, 146*, 155*, 190*, 191*, 200*, 241*, 250*, M 17, XIX
 Livonian Confederation 147,8, 151-176
 Līvis 51, 80,5, 92, 111,6, 132,5,6, 141,9, 202, 54*, 197*, M 9, 11
 Lobe 409
 Lohse 398, 406
 Lokerus 84
 Louis XVIII 283
 Lübeck 135, 156
 Lubenau 218
 Lublin 178, 189
 Ludza M 18
 Madeginte 150
 Madis 141
 Magnus 243,5
 Manassein 309
 Mancelius 184, 216, 238,9, 257,8, 261, 259*
 Mancini 301
 Marienburg 153,4, 120*
 Mazovians M 13
 Mazzini 301
 Medem 400,1
 Megava M 14
 Meierovics 342, 377, XLV
 Mela 38, 42,4
 Memel (Klaipēda) 30,2, 88, 357, 11*, III
 Menius 287
 Merkel 2, 5, 63, 120,1, 148, 278, 287,8, 296, 305
 Mežotne (Madsuna) 91,3, 141,3, 90*, 91*, XI
 Mindaugas 116,8, 125, 145
 Molotov 379, 381,2,7
 Moscow 32, 103,8, 152, 165, 170, 192,3, M 4
 Mozhaisk 108
 Müller, Laurentius 72
 Münster 212,7,9, 220, 200*
 Munters 380-2

- Munthe 134
 Muscovy 148, 152,7, 163,5,
 7,8, 181, 183-194, 197,
 201,6-8, 210-4, 223, 258,
 264, 270,2, 183*, 190*,
 191*, 209*, 225*, M 19,
 20, XIX
 Mutual Assistance Pact
 380
 Nadravs M 11
 Nameitis (Nameisis, Na-
 meise) 116, 141,2,8
 Napoleon 283,4, 294, 301,
 XXXI
 Narva 167, 176, 266,7,
 XXIII
 Neikens 298,9, 310
 Nemunas (Memel) 20,1,
 32, 88, 106, 151, 76*
 Nestor 79, 81,2,4, 97, 109-
 113
 Netherlands 265, 294
 Neurs 34
 Neva 25, 79, 88, 124, 156,
 294
 Nicholas I 292,9, 305; II
 321, 337,8
 Niederle 31, 103-5,8
 Niedra 350,1
 Nordenskjöld 157,9
 Normans 79, 93
 Northmen 31,9, 47, 77-9,
 82,5-7, 100,6, 122
 Norwegians 398
 Norway 25, 79, 88, 124,
 156, 294
 Novgorod (Holmgård) 22,
 7, 44,8,9, 85,6, 98, 107,9,
 111-5,7, 120, 134, 148,
 156,7, 161,5,6, 184, M
 10, 13
 Oder 18, 79, 103
 Oka 112
 Olaus Magnus 159, 212,
 231, 160*
 Olavs 339, XXXIX
 Order (Sword, Teutonic)
 19, 22, 30,3, 63, 78, 117-9,
 126, 132-5, 138-172, 175,
 7-181, 184-6, 190,3,5,6, 201
 -4,7,8, 220,2, 230,4,6, 244,
 250, 262, 273-5, 284,6,8,9,
 294, 321,4, 120*, 122*,
 129*, 131*, 139*, 146*,
 151*, 155*, 162*, 163*,
 166*, 213*, 246*, XVII,
 XXIV
 Orlov 313, XXXIV
 Ostland 324, 398-402, 412
 Othere 41
 Oxenstierna 221,8
 Ozols 311,6
 Pan-Slavism 109-112
 Paolucci 284, 290
 Päts 351, 375,7
 Peasants 5, 7-9, 24,7,8,
 148,9, 168, 170-4, 193-9,
 204-6, 212, 229-231, 234,
 6, 240,1, 255, 269, 272,3,
 289-294, 308, 52*, 261*,
 XX, XXV, XXVIII
 Pechenegs M 10,13
 Peipus 324
 Penikis 149, XXVIII, LI
 Peter (Duke) 244,5
 Peter I 195, 227, 230, 254,
 264-9, 272, 381
 Pēterburgas Avizes 307
 Piebalga 235,6
 Piemare M 14
 Pilsate M 14
 Pilsudski 357,8
 Piltene 164, 243,5, 271,
 300*
 Plākis 32
 Plettenberg 163,7,8, 170,7,
 9, 162*, 163*, 166*,
 XVII
 Pliny 26, 36, 93
 Plinius, Basilius 183,4, 215
 Poland 7, 19, 30, 54, 82,
 123,5, 148, 152, 164,5,9,
 170,7, 181, 185-192, 195,
 7,9, 200, 208-213, 222-8,
 241-5, 250-3, 265-271, 283,
 294, 302-4,9, 324, 355-8,
 367, 381, 399, 190*, 191*,
 203*
 Poles 19, 28, 30-2, 41, 66,
 103,7, 111, 135, M 13
 Polyans 109, 112, M 13
 Polochanians 109, 111, M
 13
 Pomorians 224, 230, M 13
 Port of Semigallia 88-92,
 138-141
 Poruks 317
 Possevino 192,3, 201,2,
 211,3, 237, XIX
 Pripet 32, 77, 109, 324
 Prussia: Old 23, 32,6, 49,
 54,5,7, 70,3, 78-81, 85-9,
 92,4,5,9, 109, 118, 121,4-6,
 137-140, 143-8, 152, 175,
 240, 120*, XVII; Duchy
 of 20, 177,9, 210, 222-8,
 230, 244,5, 253, 266, 190*,
 191*; East Prussia 51,
 321,3,7, 342-4
 Prussians, Old (brus) 3,
 23, 30-3,7, 41-4,6, 52, 7-9,
 63-5, 73,8, 82,5-9, 92,5,
 107,9, 111, 118, 124-6,
 132-4, 143, 152,4,9, 161,
 199, 83*, 120*, M 9,
 XVI
 Pskov 32, 49, 112,3,5,7,
 148, 161,8,9, 177, 181,4,9,
 192, 200, M 10, 11
 Ptolemy 32,6-8, 46, 159
 Pumpurs 310, XXXIII
 Radimitches M 13
 Radziņš 355, XLV
 Radziwill 156, 186, 193,
 208, 210, 253
 Rainis 311,7, 318*, XLIV,
 XLVI
 Rakte 141,4
 Rastrelli 20, 255,6, LIII
 Rebellions 301-321
 Reek 352
 Reformation 178-182, 191,9
 Rei 382,5
 Reval (Tallinn) 161,2, 179
 Revolts 134,8, 141, 161,
 288,9, 296, 308
 Revolution, French 270,
 282-300
 Revolution, 1905 311-5,
 XXXIV-XXXVI
 Revolution, Russian 336-
 340
 Rēzekne 355
 Ribbentrop 379, 387
 Rīga 20, 30, 87,8, 135,7,
 142,7, 161,2,5,7, 179, 182,
 4, 212-5, 308, 316, 127*,
 142*, 163*, 166*, 200*,
 203*, 225*, 228*, 360*,
 M 4, 11, XVII, XX-
 XXII, XXXI, XXXVI,
 XLIII, XLIX, LII
 Rimbart 43, 80,2,4,6, 89-
 92, 96-8
 Rolavs 312
 Rosen 271-4
 Rosenberg 399, 403,6
 Roumania 30, 105, M 13
 Rousseau 282,7, 301
 Runic stones 81, 98, X
 Rurik 81
 Rus 44,6, 50
 Russia 22, 39, 54, 74, 81,
 96-9, 107,9, 117-9, 124,
 151, 169, 170, 242,3, 248
 -253, 264-284, 288, 293,

- 4,9, 303,4, 319, 320,1,3,6,
343, 350-3,6, 377-402,
405, 409-412
Russians 20,8, 50, 62,6,
92,3,9, 101, 111-7, 120,
135-141, 151-4, 168, 177,9,
184-9, 204, 264-273, 289,
291-4, 303,4, 307-310,
313-6, M 14, XXXI,
XXXIV, XXXV
Russification 303,4,7,9, 310,
391,2, XXXIV
Russow 174, 186
- Salaspils (Kirchholm)**
165, 232,6, 253
Sambians M 11
Samland XVI
Samogitia 142-5, 151-4,
164, M 11
Sanudo 158,9
Sarmates M 6,7
Satellites 413
Saxo Grammaticus 43, 80,
2-7,9, 90,2,6-8, 105, 240
Saxons 17, 21, 39, 77,8,
121-3,5, 135, 141, 266,7
Scandinavia 13-5,7, 20, 34,
8,9, 42,9, 51, 73, 77-81,
84,7, 94,5,8,9, 102, 115,
124, 156, 182, 52*, 97*,
99*, III, V, VI
Schultz 276,7
Scott, Sir Walter 297
Scythians 34
Seeburg 82, M 10
Sels 31,3, 115,6, 136, M 14
**Semigallia (Simkala, Zem-
gale)** 33, 49, 92, 116, 161,
100*, 119*, 131*, 139*,
150*, X
Semigallians (zemgaļi) 31,
3, 86,8, 92,8,9, 111,2,5,6,
138-144, 159-161, 171,
11*, 90*, 91*, M 9, 11,
III, V, VIII
Severians M 13
Siberia 181, 256, 269, 282,
303,4, 314, 396
Sidrabene 26, 144, XI
Sievers 288,9
Sigismund Augustus 195-7,
205,6, 268, 273
Sigtuna 87,9
Silene M 14
Silgailis LVI
Skalbe 25, 317, 331
Skalvs M 11
Skarga 192, 201, 271, 282
- Skujeniēks** 376, XL
Slavs 18,9, 23,4, 31-6,9, 41,
4,6, 50,5,7, 77, 82,4,5,7,
100-119, 122-5, 132, 40*,
45*, 47*, 83*, M 4-8, 11-
13, XVI
Šmits 34-6, 57-9, 63,4,7,8
Smolensk (Gnezdovo) 49,
108, 112,5, 165,9, 181,
261, M 10
Snorre 78, 80,5,6,8, 97
Soviet 335, 347,8, 355, 361,
5, 377, 380-397, 400,
410-3
Spārnene M 14
Sproģis 295, 307
Stalin 347, 381-3
Stender 279, 280, 298
Stephen Bathory 123, 164,
181,7-9, 192,7, 200,1,4,8,
211,2, 237, 203*
Stērste 309
Sudins 37
Svābe 8, 63, 81,4, 117,8
Sweden 7, 15, 25, 50, 73,
88, 93,4,9, 121,4, 145,
156, 161,7, 178, 182, 185-
192, 206-210, 213, 221-
243, 248-253, 265-9, 272,5,
283, 294, 305, 365, 382,
190*, 191*, 241*, M 21,
X, LVII, LVIII
Swedes 19, 21,2, 43,8, 51,
62, 79, 81,2,7, 97,8, 102,
111, 399, 221*, M 19-21
- Tacitus** 3, 26, 37,9, 54
Tālava 22, 113,5,7, 136,7,
M 14
Tāļivaldis 136
Tallent 353
Tallinn 78, 144
Tannenberg 154,6, 163,4,
321
Tartars 118, 151-4, 165,9,
170,8, 184,7,9
Tartu (Dorpat) 49, 62,4,
112,3, 136, 162,4, 179,
238
Tentelis 3, 7, 8, 147
Terra Mariana 147,8
Tērvete 75, 141-3, M 14
Thracians 34,6, 44, M 5, 6
Tobago 250
Tontegode 149
Toponymic 29, 107, 114
Treitschke 154, 163
Tribunals 393
Truso 41, 88, 99, 143,
M 10
- Tschernigov** 32, 165, M 10
Tula 32, M 4
Tver 32, M 4
Ukraine 223,4, 324, 342,3,
397
Ulmanis 344,5, 350-2, 360,
374-6, 395, 404, XL,
XLI, XLV, XLVI, LI,
LIV
University 237,8, 316,7
Upmale M 14
Vācietis 335,6
Valdemārs 5, 305-9, 306*
Valmiera 213*, 220*
Valters 312, XLI, XLV
Varyags 85, 97, 111,2,5
Venta 22, 32, 81, 300*,
XII
Ventava M 14
Ventspils (Windau) 88, 249,
380, XLIX
Versailles Treaty 301, 344,
5,6, 353, 360
Vesike 116
Vidzeme 16, 31, 49, 88, 92,
8,9, 140,1, 172, 264-9,
273-280, 286-293, 296,7,
307, 313, 324, 340-5, 350-
2,5, 363, 409, 412, 15*,
213*, 259*, 378*, M 1,
IX XXXIV, XXXVII
Vienna 14, 283
**Viesturs (Viestard, Vest-
hardus)** 116, 140,1
Vikings 17, 333,4, 42,3,6,8,
50, 66, 76-100, 115,6, 152,
76*, 83*, M 11, V, X,
XVI
Vipper 9, 199
Virza 24, 317, 329, 404*
Visby 99, 135
Vistula 18, 20,1, 31,2,7,9,
41, 50, 77, 103,4, 121,
320, 35*, 40*, I-II
Visvaldis (Wissewalde) 86,
117,8
Vitebsk 49, 94
Vitols 317
Volga 18,9, 22, 32, 41,4,5,
9, 50, 94, 106-9, 111
Volkhov 111, 166, 409
Vyshinsky 386,9
Vytautas 32, 153,4, 164,5
Walter 297
Waterways 7, 22, 44, 117,8
Watson 295-7
William (Duke) 245-7
William of Modena 137
Winnig 346

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Wischmann 260 | Zālītis 316, 330, XXXVII, | 313, 323, 361, 400,1, 378*, |
| World War I 17, 315, 319-336, 361,5,9 | XXXIX, XLI | XI |
| World War II 7, 369, 379 | Zamojski 206,8, 210 | Zemgals 344,5, 374, XL, |
| Wulfstan 38, 41, 80,9, 159 | Zariņš 382, XXXIX, LI | LI |
| Yatvegians 31, 106,7, M 11 | Zemgale (Semigallia, Sim- | Zemītāns 351, XLII |
| Ymera 129* | kala) 20-2,6,7, 33, 41, 81, | Zhdanov 389 |
| | 6, 98,9, 112, 257,8, 271, | Zinzendorff 280,1 |

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(For abbreviations used see p. XIX)

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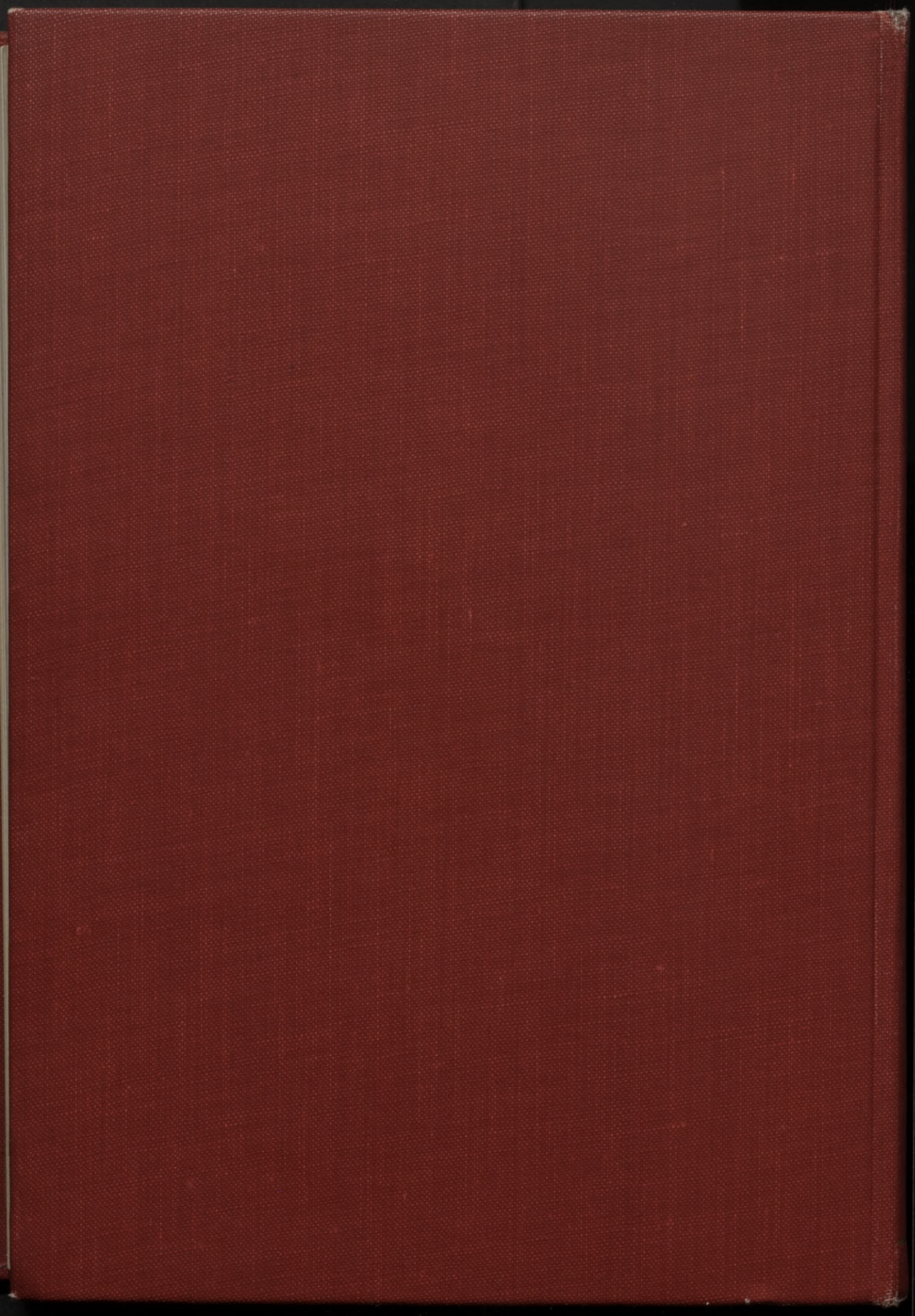
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by

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and

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Latvian writers have at all times taken a lively interest in West European literary trends which, in turn, have enriched Latvian literature and formed part of its organic development. The Latvians, like any other nation, have their own national characteristics which find expression in Latvian literature and contribute to the cultural values of Europe as a whole. It is the purpose of the present book to introduce the reader to some of the typically Latvian values.

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