

THE STORY OF LATVIA

A HISTORICAL SURVEY

by

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The Western Allies started the Second World War in defence of Right against Might. These principles found their expression in the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms. In the early stages of the war the position was clear. In the course of the war, however, this clarity was clouded over by circumstances. One of the great aggressor nations who had hitherto passively, and also actively, supported Hitler, was compelled to leave that camp and go over to the other side, suddenly becoming the ally of the Western democracies. As a result of this, many small European nations, among them also Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, became victims of aggression.

I

THE BALTIC PROBLEM IS AGE — OLD.

The Baltic States question is not the result of the Second World War; it is an old international problem, as old as the Dardanelles and the Balkans. Therefore, in all the European Wars the Baltic has been the battlefield for the great contesting parties of world politics and warring ideologies.

In spite of the differences in race and extraction (the Finns and Estonians are Finno-Ugrians; the Latvians and Lithuanians, Indo-Europeans), the close early contact, the gradual movement from East to West, the consequent prolonged Scandinavian influence, as well as the subsequent community of destinies, forged these people into one area of culture and family of nations, characterised by such well-known expressions as "East Baltic race," "Baltic languages," "Baltic nations," "Baltic States" and "Baltic Entente." This community is exactly parallel to such other cultural and historic communities as the Slavs, the Teutonic people, the Romanic people, the Anglo-Saxons.

Standing guard to Western civilisation at an outpost, the Baltic people have lost much of their former territory and of their manpower, but they have carried out their mission heroically; that is why their future cannot be judged by their present population figures as a purely demographic problem, but they must be treated according to their role in the past and their importance in the future.

LANGUAGES AND PHYSICAL FEATURES.

The North-Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea are inhabited by the following peoples: In Finland and Estonia live the so-called Baltic Finns a group of peoples consisting of the Finns proper and their kinsfolk the Ingrians, Estonians and now nearly extinct Livs (the latter in the territory of Latvia). They speak their own languages, quite different from the German and Slavic languages, different also from Latvian. All Finnish languages and dialects belong to the Finno-Ugrian group of the Uralo-Altayan family of languages.

In Latvia and Lithuania the aboriginal peoples are the Balts proper — the Latvians (also named Letts) and Lithuanians. Together with the Borussian (Ancient Prussian) language, which became extinct in the 17th century, Latvian and Lithuanian (the only two of the languages still alive) form a distinct "Baltic" branch of the Indo-European family to which belong also Indo-Iranian, Greek, Latin, Slavic, Germanic, Celtic and other branches.

In comparison with other living European languages, Latvian and Lithuanian have kept much more of the wealth of ancient sounds and forms. Therefore, it is no wonder that linguists who study Comparative Linguistics value very highly the monumental Latvian Grammar (840 pages) by the distinguished philologist Prof. J. Endzelins. It is not without reason that Latvian and Lithuanian are called the Sanskrit of Europe. The first written Latvian words are found in documents dating from the 13th century, but the first complete text is that of the Lord's Prayer, printed in 1550. Therefore, the misconception, rather widespread in the Western world, that the Baltic nations speak the Russian language, or some dialect closely related to it, cannot be denied sufficiently emphatically.

There are few areas in the world where language borders are so distinctly delineated as in the Baltic. The Russian speech ends with the Russian frontier; west of it, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian are spoken.

This language border is also an anthropological frontier. The Baltic man differs considerably in his physical and mental characteristics from the Russian. In spite of the difference in language between the Finno-Ugrian Finns and Estonians and the Baltic Latvians and Lithuanians, the anthropological differences between them are smaller than between them and the Russians. There are considerable common features, and anthropologists group them all together as the East-Baltic race, classifying it as a sub-Nordic type closest related to the Scandinavian man. The Latvians are one of the tallest peoples in Europe, the average height of men being 171 cm., of women 160 cm. Still taller are the Livs (an almost extinct Finno-Ugrian tribe living in Latvia), coming closest to the Scots (174.6 cm.) and the Norwegians (174.4 cm.). Latvians are also among the peoples with the heaviest brain men 1378 grammes, women 1243 grammes. Excavations of skulls show that in the 5th to 7th centuries the ancestors of present-day Latvians were dolichocephalic but gradually developed into a brachycephalic type with a tendency towards mezocephalism. The majority of Latvians, sixty per cent, have grey-blue or blue eyes and soft straight and fine hair of a dark blond colour with a golden tinge. Latvians with grey eyes and brown hair are in the minority and they are descendants of the assimilated Livs, whose predominant eye colour is grey (seventy-five per cent) and hair brown (seventy per cent).

CHARACTER AND MENTAL FEATURES.

The difference between the Baltic peoples and the Russians in mentality is even more striking and is clearly noticeable even to a superficial observer. The Russians are a passive type of mankind. They are an emotional people. Work they regard as an evil that has to be suffered. The Baltic peoples are active; they are men of will and reason. They regard work as a moral good, and indolence, slovenliness and untidiness as the greatest vices. Even in poverty (and in their history the Latvians have experienced plenty of that) they maintain high standards of cleanliness and ordered life. In contrast to the Russians, who have always had a tendency towards dreaminess and a metaphysical contemplative search for God and the ultimate truths, and who try to find salvation and escape from the harsh realities of life in religious depths or social and political Utopias, the Baltic people are realists and possess a natural talent for organisation. Even in the Tsarist Empire, Latvians who wandered into Russia always got themselves jobs as organisers and managers in the large country estates, in banks, insurance firms or business houses. The Latvians do not build castles in the air; instead they follow their realistic aim, and even in the most adverse conditions soon establish foundations for their individual and national life. They do not stop halfway but tenaciously follow their aim, which they do not set sky-high, but within the realms of practical possibilities. There is a proverb well known in the Baltic: "We know how to live even on a dry branch." In the course of history there have been many attempts at colonising the Baltic lands and it has always been proved that neither the Germans nor the Russians can compete with the Baltic peoples. In the unfavourable conditions, on land that is not naturally fertile, and with summers that are short, the newcomers could not survive because they could not work so hard and did not know how to organise life so well. Even at the beginning of our era the Roman author Tacitus could write that the Aestii (as the Baltic peoples were called in those days) cultivated their crops more diligently than the indolent Germans. Medieval authors have described the Balts as humane, peaceful and hospitable people.

In contrast to the active, but mentally inferior, Teutonic people, the Prussians and Saxons, who regard war and obedience to the Führer as the highest national virtue, the Baltic peoples loathe any drill — but have, nevertheless, in all wars shown themselves as fearless fighters with a contempt for death. The Baltic peoples are natural sceptics and individualists; they have an inborn sense of proportion and a sense of humour. Therefore they do not easily fall for exaggerated promises, and even in the remotest province the peasant listens to a demagogical speech or article with a cool and reasoned criticism. He always reserves his right to compare words with deeds at a later date. Therefore democracy is in the flesh and blood of the Baltic people. They do not like dictatorial behaviour, either in their own circle or in society. They have a sense for justice and demand respect for the natural rights of every individual. Since time immemorial woman has been man's equal in the Baltic. A German chronicler of the 13th century writes in amazement: "Here women ride on horses the same as men." In contrast to the Slav woman, who is the man's slave, and meekly submits herself to all his whims, a married Baltic woman is as independent in her sphere of activity as the husband is in his. This emancipation is not a result of an electoral Reform Bill, it is a feature of the national character, a spiritual patrimony inherited through generations. In this connection we might quote an official statement from the U.S.A.: "In respect of literacy they (i.e., the immigrants from Latvia) are above almost all the immigrants from Central and Southern Europe. Many Latvians here have attained a high level of intellectual development. Undeniably they come from good stock and Latvia can be proud of them."

Also in respect of culture the Baltic is an area separate from Russia. Even quite outwardly the difference is clearly visible. Both the sacred and profane architecture of the Baltic capitals has followed the West European styles, whereas in Russia, from the 10th century, the Byzantine architecture had set roots. The Baltic people are either Roman Catholic or Protestant; the Russians, Greek Orthodox. The books and newspapers in the Baltic languages are printed in Latin characters, whereas the Russians use their own script. At the frontiers between the Baltic States and Russia end also such essential elements of European civilisation as Roman Law and the Canonic Law. Whilst the Baltic is a province of the Roman Law, the Russians have had their own system.

Such great streams in European civilisation as feudalism, Renaissance, humanism and all the modern movements in art, literature, economics, sociology and politics have in their ebb and flow washed the Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, but they never reached Russia, which has always been governed by trends of its own.

It would be wrong to say that this independence of the Baltic lands, this formation of their own cultural area, is a product of the later Middle Ages and of Modern Times, when the Baltic came under the German, Swedish and Polish influences. It is true, prolonged foreign domination has left its effect on the Baltic peoples, but that is only a peel around the individual kernel of their own culture which the Finno-Ugrians and Balts brought to the Baltic like a golden apple in their hands when they first arrived.

ANCIENT CULTURE.

Arhaeologists and historians consider that the first inhabitants of the Baltic lands, who began to populate them immediately after the Ice Age, i.e., about 9,000 B.C., were hunters, but the forms of culture of the so-called Stone Age were as yet too primitive to allow of conclusions about the

ethnic relations of this people. In the Neolithic Age (3,000—1,500 B.C.) the Baltic area perhaps was populated by Finno-Ugrian tribes who as yet did not know agriculture, and whose only domestic animal was the dog. But towards the end of this period (about 2,000 B.C.) a new wave of colonists flowed into the Baltic area from the South. They settled down in East Prussia, Lithuania and Southern Latvia. This invasion continued in the Bronze Age (1500—500 B.C.) and the older Iron Age (500—0 B.C.). During these periods two cultural routes are playing a great part in the development of Baltic culture. One of these leads over East Prussia to Central Europe; the other across the sea to Scandinavia.

Some forms of graves, tools, arms, and burial customs lead one to suppose that the continuous development of these prehistoric cultural forms of the Baltic is sufficient to prove that the bearers of this civilisation were the forefathers of the present Baltic nations. Thus, the ethnic history of these people can be traced back to about 2,000 B.C. At the beginning of our era the common original Baltic culture had already branched into the Western (later Borussia or Ancient Prussian) and Eastern (later Lithuanian and Latvian) cultures. Even in that age, as is shown by archaeology and linguistics, the relations in culture and trade between the Balts and the Finno-Ugrians were considerable and close. At any rate, this development took place some time before the Teutons established direct contact with both races.

During the next period — the so-called Roman Iron Age (0—400 A.D.) — the peasant culture of the Baltic made remarkable progress. This can be partly explained by the very lively trade relations between the Baltic and centres of the Roman Empire, particularly with the Danube Basin. The Balts exported amber, which at that time was valued higher than gold, and expensive furs. In return they received Roman manufactured goods and coins. At this period the Eastern Balts began to split up into Lithuanians and Latvians, and the Finno-Ugrians into Finns and Estonians. The former began to cross the Finnish Gulf and settle down in present-day Finland.

The Roman Iron Age is remarkable because even at that time the Eastern border of the three Baltic peoples was almost identical with the later ethnic and political frontiers. Beyond this border at that time were very sparsely populated territories of Eastern Europe; this proves that these frontiers have not been established in a struggle with some other nation, but developed naturally, as the natural cultural boundaries of the Baltic nations and as the maximum reach of these civilisations.

Only during the next period, the so-called Era of the Barbarian Invasion (400—800 A.D.) did the Slavs begin to move northwards from the steppes of Southern Russia. This migration began under the pressure of the sub-Black Sea Goths and several Tartar-Turk tribes. The Slavs moved into the woodlands inhabited by some of the extreme Eastern Balt tribes. The total area inhabited by Balts at that time was very wide and covered White Ruthenia, extending deep into Central Russia as far as Tula and Chernigov, to the regions where the rivers Dnieper, Oka, Volga and Daugava have their sources. Under the pressure of Eastern Slavs (the Russians), one Balt tribe, the Latgali, moved down the River Daugava (Western Duna) and joined their kinsfolk in Latvia, gradually pressing the Estonians further north.

VIKING INFLUENCE.

About the same time began the migration of the Vikings, i.e., the Scandinavians overseas. They started to establish colonies: one, for example, in East Prussia, near Elbing, another in Latvia, near Grobina (formerly Seeborg).

The period that followed is called the Viking Age (800—1150 A.D.), as during that period the Scandinavian expansion into the Eastern Baltic increased, and their influence reached as far as the Volga and down it to the Caspian Sea, as well as to the Black Sea and Byzantium.

This expansion ended with the adoption of the Christian civilisation. The Vikings who had become the rulers and kings of Russia, became slavonised and started organising the Russians for unceasing attacks on the Baltic lands. On the whole, however, this combined Viking-Russian aggression was unsuccessful. The Baltic peoples had learnt from the Scandinavians better use of weapons and military and political organisation. For short periods the Viking-led Russians succeeded in establishing a tributary overlordship, but they were soon driven away and independence was re-established. Thus, the Chronicles tell us that in 1106 the Russians of Polotzk organised an attack down the Daugava against Zemgale (Semigallia — a Latvian Kingdom), but lost 9,000 men and were completely beaten. However, in spite of the occasional restless times and periodic wars, the Viking period gave the Baltic peoples many valuable contacts and stimuli. Large deposits of Arabic and Anglo-Saxon coins have been found, dating from that period. This clearly shows that the cultural tentacles of the Baltic peoples went as far South as the Arabic Caliphates and Iran and so far North-West that they had gained an insight into the Anglo-Saxon world.

Let us only mention that at that time the Baltic peoples already had their own monetary system (the so-called oserings) and their own system of weights and measures. They had partially adopted the Orthodox Christianity. They had their own penal codes, their own kings, their own states, their own national administration and taxation, their own strategically arranged lines of fortified castles. It is quite clear, therefore, that the lands inhabited by the Baltic nations were a very pronounced independent cultural area. On the other hand, the Slav territories, which in present days encircle the Baltic lands from the East and from the South, have always been much poorer in material culture and their civilisation much more monotonous. In the borderlands the Slavs make use of many elements that have been borrowed from the Balts. This is particularly noticeable in the ancient Balt territory, White Ruthenia.

THE BALTIC CIVILISATION IS WESTERN.

A closer analysis of the ancient Baltic civilisation shows: First, it had a pronounced peasant and democratic character. There were, even in those early prehistoric times, towns and harbours inhabited by craftsmen, merchants and soldiers, but they were not large enough to impress their character upon the country. Secondly, in its development the structure of this civilisation has been considerably Westernised, though beyond the Daugava line there are also traces of contacts with the Near East. Thirdly, all the Baltic nations have common traits in their material and mental civilisation, although each nation has its own national features partly due to inherited racial characteristics and partly to the fact that the Finns and Estonians were more in the cultural sphere of influence of Northern Europe, whereas the Latvians, Lithuanians and Borussians (Ancient

Prussians) through their contacts with Central and Western Europe, were more influenced by the culture of these latter areas. This is noticeable, for example, in two peculiar types of farm-dwellings and settlements: a primitive type in the North of the Baltic area, and an advanced type in the South. Neither of these types of farm-dwelling, however, extends East over the historical cultural boundary of the present Baltic States. The same applies to national costumes, always considered one of the best expressions of the spirit of a nation. The Baltic national costumes which nowadays are enthusiastically admired by Britons and Americans in Germany when they see them worn by refugees, are replicas of models that are over 1000 years old, found in archeological excavations. The tradition and art of weaving, knitting and silver-forging did not perish even in the darkest hours of history. Every connoisseur will tell that this national art is neither Slav nor Germanic in its forms, ornament and colour schemes. The consciousness of nationhood and common fate is testified also by the huge number of folk-songs (the Latvians alone have about one million of them). These songs are different in each nation; they differ in melody, theme and poetic structure. And there is nothing borrowed from either the Slavs or the Germans.

It is sufficient to compare the present level of culture of the Baltic peoples and some of their prehistoric neighbours, such as the Mordvins or Cheremis, tribes dwelling in the Upper Volga regions, to understand of what enormous importance it was to the Balts that they were able to tear themselves out of the pincers of the Eastern Slavs and get away from the area of Central Russia.

UNDER THE PRESSURE OF SLAVS THE BALTS ABANDON TERRITORY TO SAVE THEIR CIVILISATION.

Of course, the new homeland near the Baltic Sea was much smaller than the territories inhabited by the Balts previously. Being peasant people, the Balts found it very difficult to leave fields and meadows which they had cultivated with love and care, and many stayed behind. As time went on these got scattered by the numerically stronger Slavs and their remnants were russified. Chronicles report of a Baltic tribe, the Galindi, who were fighting with the Russians near Moscow in the 10th century, and even later. It was mainly young people and active patriots who left their ancient homes in search of a new ground where the cultural and national identity of the Balt peoples was not in danger. Those who left were people who refused to live under foreign domination. Thus the immigrants were weaker in quantity than the Balts had been originally, but strong in quality, as only the determined and dynamic elements undertook the hardships of an unknown new life. This elite of virile colonists was the ethnic kernel from which developed the present-day Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nations.

Now, when within one generation two World Wars have rolled over these three nations like bloody avalanches, their total number will not exceed 5 millions. That is less than there are inhabitants in London or New York. It would, however, be wrong to judge their future from the standpoint of power politics only, or to treat them merely as a demographical problem. It must not be forgotten that they are nations with a culture that is 4,000 years old, whose man-power may be small, but whose cause is great.

THE BALTS HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS OTHER CIVILISED PEOPLES.

It is not feasible that people who have shown their worth throughout centuries will be allowed to perish just because it suits the imperialistic aims of one State which refuses to observe the principles of the Charter of Freedom accepted by it; which refuses to pay any attention to international treaties solemnly entered into by itself and then wilfully broken at the beginning of the war.

In the historical development of human civilisation, the Baltic nations are a cultural unit as are the Anglo-Saxons, the Romanic peoples, the Slavs or the Arabs. If it were not so there would not be such generally accepted concepts as the Baltic languages, the East Baltic race, Baltic folklore, Baltic ethnography, Baltic history, Baltic region, Baltic States, etc., in the same way as there are similar concepts in respect of the Arabs, Romanic people, Celts, etc. Numerically the Baltic people are as small as the Greeks, the Irish, the Dutch or the Belgians whose right to be their own masters is undisputed. The Baltic people inhabit a territory of about 80,000 square miles (170,000 square klm.), and even the smallest of the Baltic nations, the Estonians, possesses a territory that is twice the size of Belgium. Anyone who owing to ignorance or indifference thinks that the world would lose nothing if the Russians were to succeed in clearing out, by forcible deportations, the Baltic peoples from the Baltic lands, should think over the matter again, and consider if he would have been equally indifferent if, shall we say, Hitler had succeeded in Germanising the Dutch or turned Normandy for ever into a province of the Third Reich, or cleared the Greeks out of Greece.

It is obvious that there is only one possible answer. Small civilised nations have the same right to life, in their own country, as have the big ones.

II

THE BALTIC SEA — A BONE OF CONTENTION.

In the battles for the *Dominium Maris Baltici*, the Baltic States and nations have always defended the principle of *Mare Omnium*, *Mare Liberum*, whereas the Great Powers have always tried to turn the Baltic into a *Mare Clausum*, *Mare Nostrum*. As for the British people, the freedom of the seas has been for the Baltic States a principle on which their life depends. Only the odds in this struggle for freedom, which the Baltic nations have met, have been heavier than those which the British people have had to face, and the Baltic nations have not always remained victorious, but nevertheless they have not given in and even in our own time are carrying on this age-long fight. They are determined to be free and to secure the freedom of their sea.

THE BALTIC SEA — THE HOME OF AMBER.

Let us now focus our attention on the Baltic Sea and examine the part it has played in European history and the destinies of the people who live on its shores.

The Latvians are one of the oldest Indo-European peoples and, as we have seen, they have been living on the shores of the Baltic since 2,000 B.C.

The original habitation of the Baltic peoples comprised a considerably wider area than in modern times: to the East it spread as far as Moscow; in the South it covered the whole of White Ruthenia and a part of Poland as well, as far as the delta of the Vistula. Under the pressure of expanding Slavic tribes, the Balts by and by retreated westwards and northwards, finally settling down in their present-day territory. Inevitably, they met a new enemy, the Germans. Thus, having been grain between these two millstones — the Slavs and the Teutons — for thousands of years, the Baltic peoples had formed into a hard nut, adamant and difficult to crack. They had suffered from wear and tear, yet never yielded to complete destruction.

Because of the River Daugava — the Northern Hellespont — and the Baltic Sea with its trade in amber, the entire world was open to the Balts. Recent excavations bear evidence that from the beginning of the Christian era the cultural relations of the Balts reached as far as Rome, Byzantium and Persia. With regard to mental life too, the Latvians have not been living in the state of splendid isolation of a Robinson Crusoe; quite on the contrary, they have partaken of the knowledge of good and evil in many a Garden of Eden.

The Baltic Sea plays the same part in Northern Europe as the Mediterranean in the South. Both separate and unite the peoples living on their shores. And, thanks to amber — the "Northern Gold" — there were very early connections and trade relations between the two. The term "Baltia" was used already by Pliny the Elder. An American historian says: "In prehistoric times perhaps no single factor more fundamentally affected the international affairs of the globe than the trade in amber." Baltic amber has been found in Italy, Greece, Egypt, the Caucasus and Turkestan. The Greek philosopher Thales gave amber the name "electron" as early as 600 B.C., and therefore electricity, the prime moving force of our present-day civilisation, will for ever be associated with amber and its home, the Baltic.

At the beginning of our era, amber was flowing by tortuous land routes from the Baltic to the Adriatic, as is testified by finds of amber deposits near Breslau of 275 and 550 kilogrammes (i.e., over 500 and 1,000 pounds respectively).

The Baltic Sea is to be regarded as a gulf of the Atlantic Ocean as since the Ice Age the two have been connected by the straits between Denmark and Sweden.

THE BALTIC SEA – CRADLE OF THE VIKINGS.

The Baltic peoples had always close ties with the Scandinavians. The latter tried throughout the first millennium of our age to gain power also over the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and established colonies there.

On the other hand, the Baltic peoples played an important part in the migration of the Vikings. Some Balt peoples, as for instance the Galindo tribe, wandered, together with the Goths, as far south-west as Spain. In later Viking times the Balts took part also in the Norman expeditions to the East, as far as Byzantium. A bronze statue of a Viking bearing in hand the traditional Latvian wreath of oak-leaves bears witness that the Latvians participated in the Viking expeditions into the wide world.

At that time the Baltic Sea began to be known as the Eastern Sea (Ostsee) because the great Viking trade route to the East (Austrvaegr) went from Gotland across the Baltic Sea and along Latvia's biggest river, the Daugava, into Russia.

In the era of the Crusades the Baltic peoples had attained the same level of civilisation as the Scandinavians, That the Latvians regarded the Russians as their most dangerous enemy is shown by the fact that of the 320 fortified castles in prehistoric Latvia, 158 were set up in defence of the Eastern frontiers of Latvia.

THE GERMANS APPEAR ON THE SCENE.

Screened by the ideology of the Crusades, the Saxon and Westphalian dukes organised the Teutonic "Drang nach Osten." The standard of the German colonial policy bore the bloody slogan: "He who does not wish to be christened shall die!" In 1158 the Port of Lubeck was founded, and thereby the Baltic Sea was opened for further operations. For the first time in history Germany became a Baltic power. The struggle between Germany, Denmark and Russia for *dominium Maris Baltici* had begun. The German unlocking of the East developed according to the following pattern: First went the merchant with his measuring rod, then came the priest with the Cross and finally the Knight with his sword.

About 1200 A.D. the German Crusaders started an offensive against Prussia, Latvia and Estonia. These campaigns were financially supported by German trading companies craving an outlet to the Russian markets, whereas the military operations were guided by the Order of the Teutonic Knights who, after the failure of their mission in Palestine, were switched over to the Prussian and Baltic front, according to the design of the Emperor and the Pope. During this period the only effective resistance to the Germans was shown by the Baltic peoples. The Russians lay crushed under the heel of Genghis Khan, and the Danes, after several set-backs, had to remain content with small conquests in Northern Estonia. Although the number of the Latvians at that time (12th and 13th century) is estimated to have been about 250,000 only, they resisted under the

leadership of their kings for 100 years (1198—1290). After this century-long heroic fight for their independence the Borussians (Ancient Prussians) and Latvians finally had to give way to the superiority of German weapons and the limitless supply of warriors from Western Europe. The military experience which the Knights had gained in Palestine and their superiority of arms, as well as the lack of consolidated leadership among the Baltic peoples, finally decided the issue.

THE SWORD IS MIGHTIER THAN THE CROSS.

In 1207 the incorporation into the Holy Roman Empire was started. The intentions of Rome were of the best, but as so often in life, good intentions were not enough. In vain the Pope bestowed upon the Latvians the liberty pertaining to the "Children of God" under the protection of the Catholic Church, and granted King Kaupo an audience in Rome, in 1203. In vain the Pope declared the Baltic to be an ecclesiastic state *Terra Marianna*, and sent his Nuncios to govern it. The sword of the Teutonic Knights cut to pieces the Charter of Liberty issued to Latvia (Lettia) by the Pope's Chancellery. As late as 1299, two Latvian ambassadors proceeded to Rome to plead in vain for protection against the acts of violence committed by the Teutonic Order: the Latvian kings were slaughtered, the aristocracy deported. In addition, many ten thousand adversaries of the new feudal system left their country and went — as "Displaced Persons" — to Lithuania. These exiles had the object in view of continuing their struggle against the "Bearers of the Sword and Cross" at the Prussian frontier.

An "iron curtain" came down over Latvia and hid her fate from the rest of the world. Even the name of the country disappeared from the official documents, having been replaced by the new term, Livonia. This country served as an asylum to the younger sons of the Westphalian nobles. Everything was subdued to the oligarchy of some 300—500 Knights of the Order, who for a long time lived merrily on the fat of the land. Livonia's sole outward enemy, Russia, lay crushed under the Tartar's yoke. However, in the 16th century the Tsars of Muscovy shook off the Mongols, and, in the name of the Third Rome, as they styled themselves, pounded with a heavy fist on the Eastern gate of Livonia for an obvious purpose — the *dominium maris Baltici*. The Livonian War lasted for 25 years (1558—1582). The Teutonic Order was secularised, and the Russians were forced to withdraw within the borders of Sarmatia. A new power with imperialistic aims in the Baltic arose — Poland. The East of Latvia was turned over to Poland, as her province, while the Western part formed the Duchy of Courland, a nominal dependant of Poland. This Duchy had a proud history of its own. Under Duke Jacob (1642—1682) the Duchy experienced her heyday, for all practical purposes being an independent power.

WHO IS TO DOMINATE THE BALTIC SEA?

During that time the Duchy of Courland became one of the main sea powers of Europe, offering serious competition to the Netherlands and Britain. The Duke's fleet consisted of 44 men-of-war, 15 unarmed ships and 60 merchantmen; a considerable sea power for those days, when Sweden possessed only 30 ships and Denmark 20. The Duke was inspired by the doctrines of mercantilism, and his State flourished. He built 70 factories, acquired ore-mines in Norway and two colonies — Gambia in Africa, and Tobago in the West Indies. In 1664, however, these were transferred to England. The Couronian mercantile fleet as well as her navy propagated Latvia's

fame far and wide. But Courland could not hope to keep the Baltic by her military might; therefore her interests demanded the freedom of the Baltic Sea.

As Duke Jacob had regained his predecessor's throne with the help of King Charles I of England, and as he was related to the Stuarts as well as being a shrewd politician, he always tried, in his foreign policy, to build on friendship with England which, too, was interested to have the Baltic Sea free. He assisted the Royal House in their troubles with Cromwell, built ships for the Stuart Kings (62 men-of-war), and lent them grain.

The Duchy had gained such respect in Europe that William Penn considered it qualified to become part of his projected European Union.

RUSSIA MAKES A BID FOR THE BALTIC SEA.

However, the glory of Courland as a first-class European Power was brief, and the Duchy came to an end in 1795 when, as a result of the infamous Third Partition of Poland, Russia extended her Baltic possessions. But already previously it had been weakened through Russian dynastic policy in Courland. In 1711 the grandson of Duke Jacob married Anna, the niece of Peter I of Russia. Later she became Empress and thus the influence of the great Eastern neighbour of Courland was predominant, and Russia had established herself on the shores of the Baltic Sea. The policy which Peter I had started was brought a step further.

The Baltic Sea had always been an attractive bone of contention between various greedy imperialisms, which were as tides to an otherwise almost tideless sea.

As an outcome of the Thirty Years' War, Gustavus Adolphus had turned the Baltic Sea into a Swedish pond, at the same time extending the sphere of influence of the Protestant Church from Estonia to Latgale (Eastern Latvia) which, according to the peace treaty of Altmark (1629) was allotted to Poland, and Latvia was thus split up into three parts. During the great Northern War Sweden lost her position of a Great Power. Peter I, the father of the Russian Imperialism, "cut a window into Europe" on the Baltic shore. From 1710 the Russian Governors-General were seated in Riga, the capital of Latvia. In 1795 the Latvians had to cede also Jelgava, the old metropolis of the Duchy of Courland. The 500-year-old Eastern barrier of the Baltic was pulled down, and the Russian frontiers advanced from the swamps of Sarmatia to the clear waters of the Baltic. Russia became a European power. Its frontiers were washed by the tides of North and West European currents. It was a momentous turn of history. Up to that time Russia had been living in her semi-Asiatic isolation. Suddenly she became a Western power, not only learning from Europe, not only trying to imitate Western ways, but from that time onwards, again and again as opportunity arose, trying to dictate her will to Europe. Estonia and Latvia, which up to then had been the most Eastern outposts of Europe, became the most Western provinces of Russia. The Western robes did not become the Russian body and fitted ill in the Russian system, while Latvia always remained part of Europe spiritually in its way of life and thinking, though politically cut off from the rest of the Western world.

BALTIC THE BATTLE-GROUND OF OTHER PEOPLE.

It was not without foundation that a Russian Governor-General, the Duke Shuvalov, made the following boastful statement: "The historical mission of the Baltic provinces is to serve as a

battlefield for the problems of the highest politics in Europe." Since the Crusades, Latvia and her inhabitants have experienced the rise and fall of as many empires as there are cardinal points under the sun: Teutons, Poles, Swedes and Russians.

Such, however, was the divine Providence that the Latvian sun was to rise above the swordblades of the Warriors after the First World War. Nine battalions of riflemen, among two brigades of Latvian soldiers, fought on the side of the Allies and covered themselves with imperishable glory on the battlefields in 1915–1917 and vanquished the worst Latvian heraldic enemies — the Lion and the Griffon. Two Empires — Russia and Germany — ceased to exist, and on their outskirts, between the Baltic and the Black Seas, was embodied the political vision of President Woodrow Wilson, the right of self-determination for all nations.

Through the actual military operations and a loss of man-power of the civilian refugees, the 2.5 million population lost 700,000 of its number, i.e., 28 per cent of its total strength. Having lavishly shed her lifeblood, devastated and impoverished, on the 18th of November, 1918, Latvia rose again as an independent State, enacting the ideals of national and social rights. After an interregnum of 700 years the red-white-red banner was hoisted on the top of the Castle of Riga. On 11th August, 1920, the peace treaty was signed by which the Soviet Government recognised without reservations the independence and sovereignty of the Latvian State, and renounced for ever all claims which Russia had ever entertained with regard to the Latvian country and people.

The "Conseil Suprême des Puissances Alliées" recognised the Latvian State *de jure* on 26th January, 1921, which event entailed the admission of Latvia as a regular member of the League of Nations.

Therefore we see that the Baltic question has not sprung up as a result of the Second World War; on the contrary, it is an international problem of very old standing, the same as that of the Balkans or Dardanelles.

III

FROM FREEDOM TO THRALDOM.

With the exception of the Lithuanians, the Baltic peoples lost their political independence as well as social and economic freedom in the Crusades that the Germans used as a guise for their *Drang nach Osten*. In the so-called Livonian Wars, Western Latvia became an independent duchy (the Duchy of Courland), which under the influence of the doctrines of mercantilism developed into a colonial and Sea Power of considerable importance, but which, however, after the great Northern War, came into the sphere of influence of Russia.

The Russian Empire created by Peter I gradually annexed all the lands on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, and finally, in the 18th century, it also absorbed the Polish Kingdom and the Duchy of Courland.

Too often Baltic history has been written as a chapter of the colonial expansion of the big powers into the Baltic area. Very little is said about the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, the people who inhabit the countries, but much is related of Teutonic Knights, Polish or Swedish Kings, Russian Tsars and their Governors. The historians of the past who wrote that kind of history were not interested in the inhabitants of a country, their fate and well-being or way of life. The Common Man was not regarded as a factor in history-making; he was only the carcass for the vultures.

NIGHTFALL.

After the end of the 13th century the politics of Estonia and Latvia were decided by Germans and the history of both these nations from that time onwards is similar. Only Lithuania, after King Gediminas formed an alliance with the King of Poland (1325), managed to retain her independence and even to enlarge her domains in the direction of White Ruthenia, which was incorporated. However, the Lithuanian nation acquired little except the Roman faith (1387) from the united Polish-Lithuanian Great Power status. The State languages were White Ruthenian and Polish. Lithuanian aristocracy was made equal in rights to that of Poland, and the gulf between the landowners and the peasants became wider and wider. The cultural links and common development between the Lithuanians and the other Baltic nations were interrupted, and the history of the Lithuanian people became a local variant of the Polish lower classes.

We do not intend to give a detailed picture of the history of the Estonian and Latvian people. We shall content ourselves with giving only a rough sketch of the most characteristic Zodiac signs under the ægis of which the destinies of the Latvian peasant and artisan have developed, how he plodded through the 700-year-long night to the dawn of the era of liberalism heralded by the great French Revolution.

After 1203, when the Pope received in audience the first Catholic King of the Livs, Kaupo (this name means James in the Liv language), the great Roman light dawned over the Baltic (*lux ex occidente*), and the Byzantine sun (*lux ex Oriente*) which had been shining up till then gradually faded out. In 1209 the Latvian King Visvaldis, whose kingdom lay in Eastern Latvia, and who belonged to the Orthodox Church, turned his gaze westwards and was made a German Duke. Five years later the dynasty of Talivaldis (rulers in Northern Latvia) exchanged their Greek faith

for that of Rome. The Holy See sent special legates, the Italian Cardinal Gullielmo de Modena (in 1225) and the Belgian Balduinus de Aulnes (in 1230) to Riga, where they concluded treaties with the King of Zemgale (Central Latvia), Vesthardus, and Lammekinus, King of the Curonians (Western Latvia).

The intention of the Vatican was to create in Livonia national Latvian and Estonian kingdoms administered directly from Rome. These plans, however, did not materialise, as the Germans had different ideas and their Knights were on the spot, whereas the Pope was in Rome and could reach his new provinces only by sending envoys from time to time. Thus, in practice, the Pope's authority remained purely nominal. The Latvians, however, pinned their hopes on him, and as late as 1299 the king of Zemgale sent ambassadors to Rome, in the hope of staving off German aggression by diplomatic means. The Pope, however, proved powerless.

LATVIA A GERMAN COLONY.

When a hundred years later Latvia was visited by the first royal visitor from abroad, the Earl of Derby (later King Henry IV of England), he already found Latvia a German colony with a small and sterile landowning upper class, who spoke German, and a wide Latvian peasantry. The German plan was to proceed in, Latvia in the same way as they had gone about the colonisation of Pomerania and Prussia, where German peasants had gradually been planted and local ones exterminated or Germanised. The Teutonic Order could not, however, realise this plan in Latvia and Estonia in the same way, as the German peasants refused to go so far and would not undertake the arduous sea voyage. Thus the German gentry remained merely a dominant minority, a separate caste. At the beginning it was not close, and anyone who dressed in German fashion and spoke the language belonged to it. All the rest of the inhabitants of the land, irrespective of race and language, were called "non-Germans."

Having lost their national leadership, decimated by wars and plagues, sinking deeper and deeper into debt, the Latvian and Estonian peasants finally, in the 16th century, became serfs. They were *glebæ adscripti* and their legislator and judge was the Lord of the Manor. The reception of Roman Law, Humanism and the Reformation (from which for a short while some Latvian rebels misguidedly hoped for a change of social conditions) only widened the gulf between Germans and non-Germans. Quoting a German chronicler: "Livonia was hell for the peasants, paradise for the clergy, a gold mine for the squires and merchants."

At the same time as the Russians were groaning under the Tartar yoke, the German yoke grew stronger and stronger in Estonia and Latvia. This darkness of German feudalism did not come suddenly, however; it developed gradually, and from the dusk of the 13th century the night darkened deeper and deeper into the black serfdom of the 16th century. Occasionally the darkness was broken by frightening blazes of peasant revolts which coloured the Baltic sky red like the Northern Lights. These revolts, the most serious of which was that of April 23rd, 1343, in Estonia, achieved nothing. They all ended in blood and flames, and only worsened the peasants' position economically as well as politically. The reason for these revolts was always the same — the German disregard for treaties they had signed in the 13th century, which guaranteed the peasants personal liberty and property rights.

RIGA — VENICE OF THE NORTH.

Until 1561, Livonia was a confederation of 5 ecclesiastic States — 4 Bishoprics and the State of the Teutonic Order. Side by side with these there was Riga, the metropolis of Livonia. Situated at the mouth of the River Daugava — the Eastern Rhine — Riga held the key position, and strengthened by its Hanseatic ties, it developed into a Merchant Republic coveted by all. On the Baltic Sea, Riga was as rich and powerful as Venice was on the Adriatic. The more than 1000 km. long Daugava, which rises in the same region as the Volga and the Dnieper, brings to the sea on an average 54,700,000 litres of water daily (roughly about 1,000,000,000 pints). Near Riga it reaches a width of 1400 metres (almost a mile). Thus Riga is the key, not only of the Baltic region, but of the whole Russian plain, and it is not without significance that Riga's coat-of-arms bears the symbol of crossed keys over a gate in the wall. Thanks to the rule that "a guest can trade only with a guest" — by guest being meant "a foreign trader," Riga became the chief middleman in deals between merchants of the Netherlands, Denmark and the Hanseatic League, on the one hand, and Lithuania, White Ruthenia and partly Poland, on the other. The only serious competitor was Danzig. And that is the reason why, in 1409, the Latvian metropolis granted a loan of money to Henry IV, King of England, so as to divert English trade from Danzig to Riga.

TEUTONIC ORDER WANTS TO BE SOLE MASTER OF THE UNITED STATES OF THE BALTIC.

This prominent and attractive position of Riga explains why, when the outer wars with the Baltic peoples were finished, the Teutonic Order engaged itself in several civil wars against Riga (1297—1397) and her nominal overlord, the Archbishop. The Order wanted to achieve in Livonia the same position as it had in Prussia — to be the sole master of the "United States of the Baltic" and control trade in the Baltic Sea.

However, thanks to the "balkanisation" policy pursued by Rome, the Teutonic Order lost its dominant position at the beginning of the 15th century, after the crushing defeats dealt to the Order by the United Lithuania and Poland in 1410 and 1435. Thus in the first part of the 15th century Livonia returned to the federal system. In 1421 a parliament (Landtag) of 4 factions, representing all the 5 member States, was convened, but it could do no successful work because the political differences between the Prelates and the Knights and the economic differences between the towns and the landowners could not be smoothed out.

SQUIRES AND BURGHERS FIGHT OVER THE SKIN OF THE PEASANT.

As the only producer of goods in the country (with the exception of a small community of German craftsmen) was the Estonian and Latvian peasant and artisan, both the towns and the squirearchy were interested in his labour.

This conflict of interests went on for 500 years and split the German society in the Baltic. The burghers wanted the peasants to be free to come to the towns and sell their produce freely; the gentry, again, tried to knit a very complicated and close mesh of legal nets around their estates so that no peasant could escape or sell his goods in the free market. The squire alone was supposed to control the market. The Baltic towns and cities therefore became a haven of freedom to the Latvian and Estonian people. The 13th and 14th century records of Riga show that a considerable

number of Latvians were trading and working there. However, after the entry of Riga into the Hanseatic League (1282) the rights of Latvians were gradually limited. The pursuit of wholesale trade was banned to non-Germans after 1354, when they were forbidden to enter Wholesalers' Guilds. This was followed by a prohibition of Germans to enter into partnership with non-Germans, and thus the whole foreign trade became the monopoly of the Germans and only retail business remained open to Latvians. Non-Germans were gradually being pushed out of their position in city administration, and their rights and privileges were thereby more and more curtailed as they had no opportunity of defending themselves. In 1469, the Latvians in Riga were deprived of the right to acquire real estate. In 1684 this rule was extended also to the suburbs. At the end of the 14th century the craftsmen's guilds also began a campaign against the Latvian craftsmen, insisting on their being prohibited to do skilled work. Parallel with the purely German guilds, however, there always existed mixed or purely Latvian trade unions, such as the unions of smiths, bricklayers and weavers, as well as the fraternities of transport workers and dockers. These organisations nurtured Latvian master tradesmen and within them developed the Latvian written word for purposes of religious cult. As the Livonian towns and cities were very rigidly conservative in their institutions — the City Council of Riga, for instance, established in 1226, existed without change for 660 years — the position of Latvians in them remained practically unaltered until the reforms of the 19th century.

The same was not the case with the peasant. In the 13th and 14th centuries, with the exception of a very small group of thralls, consisting of war prisoners, criminals and insolvent debtors, Latvian peasants were free men who had to do 4 days' service per annum and to bear a comparatively light Church tax (*decima*) and a small State tax (*census*). The taxation unit was the *uncus*, a plot of land that could be cultivated by two horses.

KNIGHTS BECOME LANDED GENTLEMEN — PEASANTS SINK DEEPER INTO MISERY.

But in the 15th century the position of the peasants became rapidly worse, particularly in the Bishoprics, where the big vassals, feeling no respect towards their ecclesiastic overlords who had little or no real power, were acting as independent dukes in their feudal domains, exercising complete jurisdiction over their subjects. When the external wars were over the vassals doffed their armour and became landed gentlemen. Not wanting to be outshone by their rich merchant brethren in the cities, they began to be interested in developing large manors, creating them by throwing out peasants from their cultivated land and farms. The vassals came from a very low grade of German nobility (*ministerials*) and were uncultivated, uncouth, brutal and conceited. They spent their time in hunting, debauchery and sexual depravity, copying the lax standards of their Masters of the Teutonic Order. That sort of life demanded money and the economy based on peasants' taxes in kind was not adequate, so the German Lords concentrated on grain export to the Netherlands, Sweden, England, Spain and even Italy.

From 1368—1560 the price of rye rose sevenfold. But that did not satisfy the greed of the squires and they borrowed large sums of money from churches and monasteries, who played the part of banks in medieval Livonia. Such loans considerably speeded up the development of this early agrarian capitalism.

While the manors were small, they were managed by thralls and hirelings. But bad harvests, plagues, and a faulty monetary policy were pushing the peasants deeper and deeper into debt, so that finally it became meaningless to convict debtors to thralldom. A large number of people were floating around from region to region trying to escape their masters. Runaway peasants tried to make their way into towns. The parliament (Landtag) of 1424 started liquidating debtors' thralldom in Livonia and by 1455 the term "thrall" disappeared from official documents. Instead, in 1458, the first law was passed, in the Bishopric of Tartu, prohibiting peasants from leaving their land without the permission of their Lords. Similar laws followed elsewhere and thus the tying of peasants to the land (*glebæ adscriptio*) had begun. The agricultural worker had become the same as houses, woods or villages — a thing that belongs to the estate (*res soli*). At the beginning, however, this did not apply to landless peasants and country craftsmen, but only to farmers. The legal ties, however, were mutual. The farmer was prevented from leaving his farm and his land, but neither had the Lord the right to evict the farmer. In the middle of the 16th century, when Roman Law was embraced in Livonia, astute lawyers began to apply to the peasants stipulations from the Justinian Code which, in Rome, applied to slaves (*servi*) and not to free men (*liberi*).

IVAN THE TERRIBLE DRAGS THE BALTIC PEASANT STILL FURTHER DOWN.

The 25-year-long Livonian War completely ruined the peasants of Estonia and Eastern Latvia. During the Tartar domination the Russians had acquired the cruel Mongolian war methods, and Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) brought them to even greater refinement by introducing sadistic Secret Political Police (*Oprichina*) practices. Rape of women, murder of children, mutilation of men, robbery of property, burning of houses. All this had to be suffered by the hapless Latvian and Estonian people for a whole generation. As the United States Ambassador William Bullitt significantly points out in his book, "The Great Globe Itself," all this was taking place in Russia and the Baltic at the time when Shakespeare lived, when Queen Elizabeth was on the English throne and Magna Charta had been in existence already 350 years.

THE POLISH KING STEPHEN BATHORY ATTEMPTS REFORM.

The Baltic was freed from Russian occupation by the young Polish king, Stephen Bathory, in 1582. He demanded of the Livonian Landtag that the squirearchy should reduce peasant service and abolish *ius vitae ac necis*, pointing out that the Baltic barons oppressed their serfs to such an extent as was unheard of even in heathen and savage countries. Alas, however, the king died prematurely in 1587 and things remained very much as they were. For 18 years there was peace in the Baltic, but with the exception of a few half-hearted attempts at reform, it gave nothing to the peasants. In Poland itself serfdom had existed since 1496, and in this republic of the landed gentry the *Shlahta* (the gentry) was everything and peasants "less than nothing," to use the phrase of an English ambassador to Poland.

WARS, BLOOD AND MISERY AGAIN.

In 1600 the religious and dynastic war of the House of Vasa began between Poland and Sweden. With brief intervals it lasted for 29 years and was fought on Baltic soil. A half of the farm

buildings were destroyed, and owing to the lack of livestock only one-third of the peasants were able to work on their farms.

In the second year of the war, Charles IX of Sweden (then not yet on the throne) demanded of the Baltic barons that they should allow peasant children to be sent to school and that the squires' jurisdiction should be replaced by State courts, saying that in the Christian world it was infamous to keep peasants in slavery. This humane and courageous programme was carried out by the successors of Charles IX, and the Swedish rule is therefore the brightest spot in Baltic history before 1918.

SWEDISH RULE BRINGS LIGHT.

Of particular importance were the reforms of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XI. Gustavus Adolphus from the battlefields in Germany gave orders to his Governor-General in Riga which changed the whole character of life in the Baltic. He established State courts and took the jurisdiction out of the hands of the barons. This system remained in force for 250 years. He ordered High Schools to be opened in Riga, Tartu and Tallinn in 1630; he caused a Baltic University to be opened in Tartu (1632), which was available to peasants' sons and later played a prominent part in the emancipation of the Estonian and Latvian nations.

With his daring social reforms of 1680—1696 the revolutionary King Charles XI gave new meaning to the life of Latvian and Estonian peasants. The German Lords nicknamed him contemptuously "Peasant King." These acts of his, in their juridical courage and social justice, have few equals in 17th century Europe. He carried out the so-called Reduction of Estates. According to this, about five-sixths of the Manors, all those that had once given administrative or military service and since 1550 were just privately managed by Knights of the Teutonic Order or vassals of the Bishops, were taken over by the State and given out on hereditary lease. The service that every peasant had to give was definitely fixed and stated in an official document, the so-called Work Roll. Land was surveyed and revalued. The so-called right of Patronage, i.e. the right to appoint parish priests was also taken away from the landowners, thus the Squires' Church became the State Church. With the support of the King, the Bible was translated into Latvian and Estonian. Although, owing to the premature death of King Charles XI, serfdom remained formally in force, yet this old vessel had now received the new wine of enlightened absolutism, and Latvian and Estonian peasants were well on the way to becoming a Fourth Estate as they were in Sweden. The peasants had become so well off that they were able to grant credit to Charles XII in his war against Russia. They had also so much political wisdom that they enlisted with enthusiasm in his forces. They had done this already in the time of Gustavus Adolphus. Fighting on his side, they not only fought for Western civilisation but also for their own freedom.

THOU SHALT NOT LEAVE THY LORD.

Considerably worse off were the peasants in the Polish satellite state, the Duchy of Courland, whose dukes owed a nominal allegiance to the Polish King. It was, in fact, a republic of land-owning Lords with a weak duke at its head. The constitution itself, modeled on the bad example of Poland, prevented the ruler from doing anything for the benefit of the subjects. The Duke himself was the largest landowner and in his own estates, of course, he could do what he liked; on

the whole the position of the peasants in the Ducal estates was much better than in the private manors. It must not, however, be forgotten that during the rule of Duke James, who brought Courland to the pinnacle of its greatness through his mercantile policy, the heaviest burden of hard work in his shipyards and industrial enterprises, as well as in his colonial ventures, had to be borne by Latvian peasants under conditions that would make any modern labour inspector wince.

A special Polish Committee passed a Code in 1617, the *Statuta et Leges Curlandiæ*, which remained in force for 200 years. It was greatly under Roman influence and stipulated that the peasants were in the private power of the Lord (*potestas privata*). Peasants are termed slaves (*homines proprii*) and later commentators deduced that Latvians were not persons, but things, negotiable articles (*res in commercio*). The Lord could determine the service of peasants according to his own judgment; he had complete jurisdiction over his serfs, including the right to exercise capital punishment. In fact, the Lord within his own estate was a sovereign ruler.

Though legally in bondage, the Latvian and Estonian peasants were never spiritual slaves. They never recognised serfdom as legal and corresponding to natural and divine laws; they regarded it as a means of terror of the Baltic gentry, without which it was incapable of ruling a foreign land. The period of serfdom turned into one long protracted partisan warfare, which took either active form through constant riots, or passively expressed itself by constant breaking of the first commandment of feudalism, viz., "Thou shalt not leave thy Lord." The folksongs are full of biting irony and sarcasm about their lords and masters. These the peasants sang with glee, or else they listened breathlessly to the tales of the Chronicler, Henricus de Lettis (1226), who told of the legendary exploits of their forefathers in their wars for liberty. Having listened to these tales, with the divine light of another, better world, they returned to their own miserable everyday drabness.

Foreign kings and masters came and went. To them the Baltic was either a *place d'armes* for their wars, or an object of economic exploitation, but to the Latvians and Estonians this land of theirs, so liberally drenched in those two precious juices of life — blood and sweat — was the beginning and the end of the visible universe. Some proud and dominating spirit — it makes no difference whether he be called the God or the Devil of the Baltic — called the people to endurance and once again to endurance. He whispered magic formulas from ancient heathen places of sacrifice, from sacred trees, from the castle hills of the forefathers, from the ruins of homesteads burnt in the wars.

BARRIER OR BRIDGE?

However difficult it was under German or Polish masters, the Balts knew that under the Russians life would be worse still. Therefore, irrespective of the period, the form of government, the social conditions, history has always put the same challenges to generation after generation of inhabitants of the Baltic lands. In essence these problems never change and they spring from the geography of the Baltic. They sum themselves up into this: to be a barrier or a bridge to Russia, to a land where forms of warfare and government condemned by Western Europe have always existed? Worst of all, this historical challenge was understood by the Baltic German gentry and during the Great Northern War they became traitors. For that reason one of the most prominent connoisseurs of that period, Carl von Schirren, himself a German Balt, burnt his final *magnum opus* in manuscript, as he had come to the conclusion : "The Baltic squirearchy bears more guilt than glory."

As is well known, as a result of the Great Northern War, the 500-year-old frontier between Asia and Europe was destroyed. For the first time in their history, two Western European nations, the Latvians and the Estonians, were incorporated into the Eastern barbarian world, which Peter the Great (1682—1725) himself wanted to Westernise in order to increase the war potential of his empire. He thought that a slave, while remaining a slave, could all the same work consciously and freely. He wanted to combine despotism with freedom. He tried to force Western civilisation on his people by the whip and the gallows. Nowadays the role of the apostle of civilisation (it goes under the name of democracy now) is assumed by the diligent pupil of Peter and Ivan the Terrible — Joseph Stalin.

WESTERNISATION OF RUSSIA.

In this connexion — in the extension of Russia to the West and the absorption of Western nations — it is of symbolical significance that the first constitution Russia ever had was proclaimed in Jelgava, the metropolis of the Duchy of Courland (1731), where a little while later Louis XVII and his Court sought refuge, and that after the death of Peter the Great the young Duke of Courland, Ernest Biron, became Regent of the whole vast empire (1737—1740). West and East were meeting. These facts were not an accident: the Baltic was the stage on which one of the most significant dramas of world history was played, the Europeanisation of Russia. The Baltic was the gate through which Russia entered Europe, and this is perhaps the most important event of the last 250 years.

The connection of the Baltic and Russia lasted about 200 years and with it also Russian tendencies towards Europe. This was true not only in respect of ideas but also of persons. The Baltic was often referred to as a "foreign corner of Russia." Because of this Russian respect for Europe the Baltic barons gained an enormous influence; they flooded the court, the army, the navy, and the civil service. As late as 1867 only 25 per cent of all higher officials in Russia were of Russian stock and 74 per cent of all generals were German.

It is obvious that under such conditions the real master of the Baltic was not the Russian Government but the Baltic nobility. Although nominal Governments of Riga and Tallinn had been established already by Peter I, in fact there existed an oligarchy of about 250 German landowning families. They began this new era of their power with a decree addressed to the Latvian peasants and published in 1719. It began with these words: "Run-away peasants shall have their noses and ears cut off." Replying to an enquiry of the Russian Ministry of Justice, the highest authority of the nobility, the College of Landrats, declared in 1739, that since the 13th century the peasants had been slaves in the sense of the Roman Law and the lords had complete right (*ius dominii*) to their land, movable property, and persons.

The darkest period in the history of Latvian and Estonian people began. After the enlightened rule of Sweden, all that Russia could give the Latvians and Estonians was vodka, court-martials, punitive expeditions, forced labour in Siberia and slavery. The position was so bad that in 1777 Rev. A. Huppel, who knew conditions well, could write: "Both these nations (i.e., the Estonians and the Latvians) are complete slaves, the absolute property of another man. They are not persons, but goods, things that are sold or exchanged against horses, dogs or pipes." And, indeed, if we look at the Baltic newspapers of the 18th century, we see them full of advertisements giving

notice that at such and such a place there will be a Public Auction of Serfs. In these sales children were separated from their parents, wives from their husbands.

In June, 1941, the Baltic peoples were no longer slaves, but the Russians similarly separated parent from child, wife from husband, and deported to forced labour 34,250 Latvians, 38,450 Lithuanians and 60,973 Estonians. That is how the circle of Westernising the Russian people, begun by Peter "the Great", has ended.

IV

EMANCIPATION AND RENAISSANCE.

As soon as economic conditions permitted, the spirit of the Latvian nation, forcibly kept dormant for so long, rose and great progress was made in education, culture and social life. The Latvian nation was taking its place in the direction of life in its own country.

DAWN OF LIBERALISM.

At a time when in the Baltic and in Russia slavery was being legalised and corroborated by legislation and bad social habits, the Congress of the U.S.A. was passing (in 1776) the Bill of Rights, and the same was being done by the National Assembly of France 13 years later. The mighty slogan, *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité*, shook the foundation of the old regime. The philosophy of Rationalism and of Natural Rights had forged new, powerful weapons in man's fight for freedom — the political doctrine of inalienable rights, of the freedom of the citizen and of the sovereignty of nations. These were the same ideas which, in other words, have been expressed by Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Atlantic Charter. They express the spirit and the democratic principles of our Western world.

These revolutionary ideas were broadcast by Napoleon's soldiers in Eastern Europe also, but only in Poland and in the Baltic did this seed fall on fertile ground. The Baltic peasants, Estonians and Latvians, rose in a series of revolts (1771, 1784, 1802) and flung the Western ideas in the faces of their oppressors. They demanded their citizens' rights and insisted on overthrowing bad governments, but, of course, they were too weak. This emancipation springs from the religious movement of Zinzendorf's Moravian Brethren, with its teaching of brotherhood, which gave to this pietist movement a deep national and social significance. In this brotherhood, in a free religious community, a Baltic serf sat side by side as an equal with a Czech craftsman and in mystical visions they saw *civitas Dei*, which would be realised in national republics. Although the Lutheran Church, which again had become the handmaid of the nobility, together with the Landtag, made representations with the Russian Government and achieved the forbidding of this Movement and the closing down in 1742 of the teacher's seminary that had been opened by the Moravian Brethren, the people had been awakened from their lethargic sleep. The first ranks of a national intelligentsia — teachers — had been created.

An East Prussian scholar, J. G. Herder, was also instrumental in the renaissance of the Baltic peoples. From 1764 to 1769 he was a teacher in Riga, and there, on the thresholds of Eastern and Western civilisations he discovered himself, found his mission. Inspired by the English philologist and later Bishop, Thomas Percy, who in 1765 had published his anthology "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," Herder created quite a revolution in the views of German society about the art and culture of the humble Baltic people. He collected and published in German translation, in 1778, Latvian and Estonian folk-songs. They testified that the slaves had created and preserved mental values unequalled by the book wisdom of the Baltic barons.

In one of his many articles, Herder says: "Humanity shudders with horror at the blood which was shed there. Perhaps the time will come when they will be set free, will be established again for Humanity's sake."

Even more important was the criticism of the Baltic Baronial regime exercised by the philosophers of the Enlightened Century. Various disciples of Rousseau and Voltaire, with varying degrees of courage and talent, were attacking this regime. A series of such pamphlets was also translated into the Baltic languages and spread among the peasants. In the first place we must mention Garlieb Merkel and his work: "The Latvians, in particular in Livonia, at the End of the Philosophic Century" (1796). This brochure caught the attention of the young Tsar Alexander I.

ATTEMPTS TO TRANSLATE LOFTY IDEALS INTO PRACTICE.

The ideas of freedom spread by Napoleon's agents roused Alexander I to activity and he wanted to show the world that he too was an enlightened ruler and was doing things for his subjects. For his agrarian experiments he chose just one province, Livonia, and as his instrument, the Landrat Friedrich von Sievers, with whom he had become friendly during his tour of the Baltic in 1802. Being an official of the nobility, Sievers forced the Landtag to pass a law in 1804, restoring the agrarian statutes of Charles XI of Sweden, only in a weakened version. As in Swedish times, the ground was again surveyed and an insurmountable barrier built between the peasants' land and that of the squire. Only in very severe cases of indebtedness and by a court sentence could a peasant be evicted from his farm. Otherwise it was his in hereditary lease. The service of the peasant was fixed according to a government tax. The peasants were not things any more, but persons again, who had the right to sue in court. They had their own local government and courts. If this law had stayed in force, Livonia would have developed a wealthy class of small-holders, although formally serfdom would still have been in existence. The squires sabotaged the law, got alterations in it and finally its repeal in 1819. The peasants, too, were children of the age and erroneously believed that personal liberty was of more worth than economic independence.

After the French were driven out of Courland, Alexander I ordered the nobility to do something for the peasants, taking as their example the law of Livonia of 1804.

THE FREEDOM OF THE SERFS A GOOD BARGAIN.

The Landtag of Courland, however, almost unanimously agreed to take as their example the Estonian law of 1816, which was based on the personal liberty of the peasants. Such an act was passed in Courland in 1817 and in Livonia, too, in 1819. The peasants got their personal liberty, but they were also freed of their land, which was all now the complete private property of the Lords. If the peasants wanted they could buy it at prices fixed by the nobles. This was an experiment and nobody knew how it would work out. The peasants paid dearly for their liberty, but to the world the Baltic barons could pose as benefactors and enlightened rulers, and followers of the spirit of the age, saying that of their own free will they had given up their traditional rights. In fact, as 30 years later one of their spokesmen admitted, the landowning barons had made a good bargain with the government. They had realised, said the spokesman, that there was an unparalleled opportunity to become the sole and unlimited owners of all the land. Even those

conservative nobles who in 1803 called anybody who spoke in favour of an emancipation of the serfs a senseless jacobin, had themselves become such. As usual, the Baltic squirearchy was not interested in principles, but only in preserving the power of their caste.

In order that the barons should not remain without labour, the freedom of movement of the peasants was restricted at the beginning to the borders of the parish — later extended to those of the government — and only in 1863 were peasants furnished with passports and allowed to settle in towns or emigrate outside the Baltic. As soon as the Laws of Freedom were passed there were peasant revolts because they realised that they had been cheated. However, punitive expeditions suppressed them and peasants had no choice but to work on the Manors as labourers or to stay in their own farms as short-term leaseholders on terms dictated by the Lords. The government did not interfere in agrarian relations and in practice all the institutions of serfdom remained in force — peasant service taxes and rent in kind, the police authority of the estate and corporal punishment. That is what the theory of Free Contracts advocated by Adam Smith looked like in the Baltic. Adam Smith was often quoted by the critics of the Law of 1804, who said that the restrictions which it imposed were against modern economic theories, that contracts should be negotiated freely. As a matter of fact at the beginning of the 19th century the position of the Latvian and Estonian people was worse than it had been at the end of the 13th century, after the conquest.

LAND IN EXCHANGE FOR RELIGION.

There followed several years of bad harvest and famine — 1838—40 in Livonia, 1844—46 in Courland. This drove the peasants to despair, and revolts broke out again and again. They were cruelly suppressed by military force. A legend spread that land was obtainable in the "warm countries." An agitation to emigrate to Southern Russia started. About that time an Orthodox diocese was established in Riga and wanted converts. The rumours about land on the shores of the Black Sea for those would discard their Protestant faith and embrace the belief of the Tsar were favourably tolerated by the Russian Church. In fact, several tens of thousands of Estonians and Latvians became Orthodox. Needless to say, they never saw the distribution of the land. The nobility, however, got worried and were stirred into action. They realised that something had to be done for the peasants. The Government appointed a special committee and in 1849 the squirearchy accepted the principles of the Liberal, Hamilcar von Fœlkersam, synthesising the principles of the laws of 1804 and 1819. The reactionary wing of the nobility was compelled to yield, in fear of the 1848 revolution that had threatened to spread also over the Baltic.

During the last 30 years the Lords had taken over into their own management one-fifth of the peasants' land. The new law legalised this situation. But a special land pool was created where all the remaining peasants' land was included, and it was not available to the Lords. Facilities should be given, to peasants to acquire this land by purchase. Service was limited and so also was the "freedom" of contracts, it being stipulated that they must be concluded for at least 6 years.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRIMEAN WAR.

When the Revolution of 1848 was suppressed and Europe had settled down to an era of reaction, the Baltic barons tried again to alter the law of 1849, to repeal it or at least to water it

down. However, after the lost Crimean War, in Russia itself the Reform Party came to power, and the liberally minded but German-friendly Alexander II was on the throne. In 1860, serfdom was abolished in the whole Russian empire, including also Lithuania and Latvia, the Eastern part of Latvia which, as a former Polish province, was administratively a separate unit and did not always share the fate of the rest of the Baltic. Forty million slaves in Russia were freed, but in contrast to the Baltic, they received land. Fearing that these laws, much more advantageous to the peasants, might be applied also to Estonia and Latvia, the nobles gave in and agreed that the 1849 law, which was only temporary and issued for 6 years, should now be made permanent. This law then became the foundation on which a prosperous class of Latvian and Estonian smallholders grew up. Land was not sold to peasants at current market prices, but by reckoning into monetary values the service which they had rendered. This made the land much dearer and special banks were opened which issued loans to the peasants. By a Government decree, 1868 was the date by which all service management of estates had to be abandoned. Therefore, the barons were in need of a lot of cash to buy tools, horses and machinery for an independent management of their estates by hired labour, as, even in 1860, 76 per cent of the Manors were still managed by peasants' service. The barons were therefore willing to sell land. The real liberator was thus money and the capitalist system.

In 1866 a new law ruling Local Government was issued, according to which the Manor was excluded from the peasant parish, and thus the squire's jurisdiction and police authority over the peasant community came to an end. The reign of the German master's whip over Latvian and Estonian backs was ended.

THE PEASANT BECOMES A CITIZEN.

Only now could these nations really show their worth in cultural and economic life. Modern Latvian and Estonian history begins with the reforms of the sixties. This period is usually called the period of Renaissance and the people active in it as New Latvians or New Estonians respectively.

These patriots had mostly received their education at the University of Tartu (Dorpat), reopened in 1802; and beginning with 1862 they also had the opportunity of studying in Riga, as the Riga Polytechnic Institute was opened. The peasants were poor and in the first part of the 19th century the number of Latvian university students was very small — from 1803 to 1850, only 33; but it rapidly increased: in 1851—60 there were 41 students, and in 1891 to 1900, 565. Altogether in the second half of the 19th century 1270 young Latvian men had entered the higher educational establishments. They chose mostly medicine, the branch that had the largest number of students, theology, law and engineering. Among the early students of Tartu, three men deserve particular mention : Krishjanis Valdemars, Krishjanis Barons and Juris Alunans. They broke away from the idea cultivated by the nobility that an educated Latvian automatically becomes German. They insisted that a graduated Latvian need not be ashamed to think and feel as a Latvian. Around these three men grew the whoa movement of New Latvians and they became its spearhead.

Kr. Valdemars was an economist and in numerous articles and memoranda he tried to explain to the Russian society and Government the problems of his people. He was particularly active in fostering Latvian education and encouraging his people to gather wealth. Seafaring, he insisted, was the most promising field. In the 1860's he founded several private schools for naval cadets on

the Latvian coast. Within 15 years about 6,800 young sailors had learned their trade there and helped the Latvians to become a seafaring nation.

Kr. Valdemars was also the father of Latvian journalism. It is true that the first newspaper in the Latvian language had already been established in 1822 by the Jelgava-born Irishman, Karl Watson, who was a clergyman in Zemgale, but that was an organ of the German clergy for Latvians. So the New Latvians established in the Russian capital their own paper *Peterburgas Avizes*, (1862—1865), and Kr. Valdemars was appointed its censor. The editor of this paper was the poet, Juris Alunans, whose translations of the world classics (Horace, Goethe, Schöler) laid the foundations for modern Latvian poetry. His near relative, Adolph Alunans, wrote and translated plays and he became known as the "Father of the Latvian Theatre."

THE SPIRIT OF THE NATION RISES IN SONG.

The second editor of the *Peterburgas Avizes* was Krishjanis Barons (1835—1923). He devoted his life to the collection of Latvian folksongs, building for himself a monumental memorial in seven thick volumes. It contains 35,789 main songs and 182,000 variants. All these had to be collected, written down from the memory of grandmothers and old country men. An army of schoolteachers and schoolboys enthusiastically helped Kr. Barons. Then the songs had to be checked, sifted, compared, systematised.

One of the biggest manifestations of the national spirit were the Song Festivals. Choirs all over the country trained for years and then gathered together in Riga or Jelgava into one mammoth choir and sang to an audience that too had come from all the corners of the land.

PEASANTS CONQUER CITIES.

Parallel with this cultural activity, profound economic changes were taking place in the Baltic as well as in the whole of Russia. Natural economy was being replaced by capitalism. There was a rapid building of railways; in 1861 the Riga-Daugavpils-Orel-Tsaritsin (now called Stalingrad) line was opened; in 1870 the Tallinn-St. Petersburg line; 1889 the Riga-Tartu-St. Petersburg line. Grain and other produce from Southern Russia came to Riga and the other Baltic ports. Foreign trade was brisk. In the period of 1897—1900 40 percent of imports and exports that came to Riga were destined for or came from England.

Gradually industries began to develop in the towns and landless peasants flocked to the towns. In 1866 the privileges of the Trade Guilds were abolished. Latvians and Estonians were allowed to take part in the elections of the municipal local government. While in 1862 Riga had only 61 factories, in 1875 the number had grown to 197, and the number of inhabitants from 104,000 (1867) to 182,000 in 1888, by 1914 exceeding the half-million (530,000). All this influx consisted of Latvians. Thus the character of the towns changed from small medieval communities of craftsmen and merchants who were mainly Germans, into centres of industry with a predominantly Latvian population.

THE WAVE OF RUSSIFICATION.

Simultaneously with the Russian economic expansion towards the West, the Baltic was swept by another tidal wave — Russification. The new Tsar, Alexander III, was no German friend as his

forerunner had been; he was no enlightened and liberal monarch. He was a rabid slavophile and ruled through the police. He was dead against the Baltic autonomy. In 1887 Baltic elementary schools were made equal to the Russian ones and children had to do, all their studies in Russian, a language they knew not a word of before they reached school. In 1888 the Russian Police Laws were introduced in the Baltic. In 1889 the Baltic got a modern system of law courts, but with Russian judges and the highest Court of Appeal in St. Petersburg. In order to weaken the influence of the national intelligentsia on the people, young Estonians and Latvians with academic degrees were not readily given jobs in their own countries, but were sent away to Russia. Thus, in 1891–1900, 54 per cent of all the Baltic university graduates were employed in Russia. But as the Germans did not succeed in Germanising the Baltic nations, so the Russian attempt was doomed to fail, and it did.

THE "NEW CURRENT" BRINGS RADICAL SOCIAL IDEAS FROM THE WEST.

The mental and political leadership of the Latvian people gradually went over to a movement called "The New Current," led and inspired by our greatest poet and playwright, Janis Rainis (1865–1929), together with the journalist, J. Jansons, and the barrister, Peteris Stucka. The movement based itself on the working classes and preached socialism. Their newspaper was *Dienas Lapa* (1886–97). The paper was stopped and 138 Latvian socialists sent to Siberia and other places. But this did not eliminate the socialist movement, it only drove it underground; and small secret Social-Democratic groups met and discussed their affairs and planned action. In 1904 the first Latvian political organisation, the "Latvian Social-Democratic Workers' Party" was established. Similar parties were established or did already exist also in Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. Their aim was a fight against tsarism and for the liberation of their people.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1905.

The Russo-Japanese war was very unpopular because the recruits had to fight 10,000 miles away from home. As early as 1904 there were already some mutinies among reserve soldiers. When the Russian armies suffered defeat at the hands of the Japanese, serious demonstrations and riots broke out in St. Petersburg and in the Baltic. In January 1905, there were demonstrations and clashes of crowds with the police in Riga, which soon spread to the country as well. In fact, whatever was the aim and character of this Revolution in Russia, in the Baltic it definitely had an agrarian character, and it was the biggest and most impressive of a series of peasant risings, of which Baltic history is so full.

The whole revolution had a fairly mild character; there were very few attacks on human life and the most serious aspect of it was the burning of manorhouses. There were wild rumours and the romantic excitement of fiery youth. The main grievance that had aroused the spirit of the peasants was the disproportionate distribution of land. The Latvian has a special, almost mystic love for the land and he felt it a sacrilege and great social injustice that side by side with a large landless population, 48 per cent of the soil should be held by 1250 big landowners who, on top of everything, were the hated German barons. Only 40 per cent of the land was in the hands of Latvian peasant small-holders, who were very heavily burdened by mortgages and various feudal

restrictions. The great mass of the landless country population was working as hired labour on the Manors, living there in primitive barracks, receiving a paltry wage and working from sunrise to sunset. As wages were so low it was not in the interests of the Lords to invest capital in machinery and try to raise the productivity of the land. The majority of them carried on a wasteful economy. They rapidly sold their extensive forests without any economic planning just in order to gain cash, which they spent at expensive foreign spas and famous resorts. V. J. Gurko, a member of the Russian State Council, has said: "Germans had compatriots in all ministries and especially at Court, and they used the most diversified methods to gain their ends ... The interests of a handful of German nobles were given closer attention than those of the Russian State and those of the majority of the local aborigines, i.e., the Latvian and Estonian population ... In the borderlands the revolutionary movement was most acute in the Baltic districts, where detachments of Latvian armed troops looted the castles and the manor houses of their traditional enemies, the German barons."

The Baltic nobles organised their own private police force in order to suppress the rising. Seeing this, the peasants began a partisan warfare against this force, their chief weapon being the burning of estates. In Livonia, 72 manor houses were burnt down, in Courland, 42. As the year went on the movement increased in depth and scope. In Russia, too, disorder spread. There were protracted general strikes and Tsar Nicholas II was compelled, on October 30th, to proclaim a constitution and promise a guarantee of civic rights. However, the revolution still spread. In Latvia, a conference of country teachers was called in Riga in November. About 1000 delegates took part and passed a resolution demanding the teaching of the Latvian language in schools. Thus the movement, besides its agrarian and social character, was gaining also national significance. The idea of a free and independent Latvian State was spreading like wildfire. In December, a congress of country parish delegates was called. They decided to interrupt all relations with government offices, to stop paying taxes to the nobility, and to elect local executive committees, who would manage the country until the election of a Latvian Constituent Assembly.

BREAKDOWN OF THE REVOLUTION.

These Executive Committees would take over the estates which their owners had left. They would also organise a defence force against the Dragoons and Cossacks, which the Landtag had called for the protection of the dominant German minority. In some places in Courland regular battles developed where even artillery was used. But, alas at the beginning of 1906 the Russian revolution broke down and with it the Latvian Battle for Freedom was lost. The German nobles took a bitter revenge. For a whole year punitive expeditions and courts-martial were active, meting out severe corporal punishments and ordering executions. During the battles of 1905 and the persecutions of 1906, over 2,000 Latvian patriots lost their lives, the majority of them by firing squads. Several thousands fled abroad, particularly to the U.S.A., where most of the present considerable Latvian colony are emigrants of those years, people who had rather go to a foreign land than live in slavery. Many Latvians were also sentenced to long years of exile in Siberia. This "Revolution of the Letts," as it is sometimes called, had a profound influence on future events. Although the revolution had mainly an agrarian character and was directed against the privileged baronial society, it also wanted to win freedom for the Latvian and Estonian nations (in Estonia events were very similar). Some constitutional issues were also involved. The revolutionaries

wanted to win for their nations, if not complete independence, at least the position of a Third Estate (*Tiers Etat*) in the so-called self-government of the Baltic Provinces, which was in reality to the barons a means of perpetuating the domination of Latvians and Estonians by the German minority.

OPEN FIGHT BETWEEN THE LATVIANS AND ESTONIANS, AND THE BALTIC GERMANS.

Thus, the age-long struggle between the Germans and the real Balts, the Latvians and Estonians, had come to the surface and broken out in an open civil war. Obviously, after that no collaboration between the defeated majority and the triumphant and ruling minority was possible. This age-long struggle flamed up again during the First World War and the subsequent War of Liberation (1918–1920), when the German barons ganged together with the Russian adventurer, "Prince" Bermond-Avaloff, and inspired by the German General, Count Ruediger von der Goltz, tried to prevent the rise of the new Baltic republics and to win the Baltic for Germany. The whole ignominious history of this degenerated outgrowth of the German *Drang nach Osten* was ended in 1940 with Hitler's recall of the remnant of the German minority from the Baltic to the Reich. The Latvians and Estonians saw them off with cat-calls and obvious expressions of relief. Therefore only people completely innocent of any knowledge of Baltic history can say that the Baltic refugees migrated to Germany in 1944 because of love for the Germans or the Nazis.

The revolution of 1905 only exacerbated the relations between the Latvians and the Germans, but it certainly had a unifying and galvanising effect on the Latvian people. For the first time a demand for a Latvian State had been publicly formulated. The Socialist Union, for instance, declared that all lands inhabited by Latvians must be consolidated into one self-governing Country – Latvia – with plenipotentiary rights of self-determination, in all its internal life, in its autonomous legislation and in the independence of its executive power. From here it was only one step to the final emancipation of the Baltic nations as independent States.

THE DEMAND FOR A FREE STATE IRREVOCABLE.

In spite of reaction, the Baltic nations soon attained their political maturity. However unfortunate was the Tsarist experiment in parliamentary rule, in other respects it was excellent political schooling for the Baltic nations. The elections for the Duma, the Chamber of Deputies, gave an official reason and opportunity for the Baltic peoples to discuss politics and to organise themselves into political parties. In the first Duma (1906), as well as in the second (1907), the Latvians had four deputies – among them also the first Latvian President, J. Cakste. Only when the electoral law was made worse, in the third (1907–1912) and the fourth (1912–1917) Dumas, were the Latvian deputies reduced to two – J. Goldmanis and J. Zalitis, who both, in later years, were War Minister in Latvian Governments.

The Russian Government resumed their policy of Russification. Latvian peasants were encouraged to emigrate to Siberia and Russian settlers were brought to Latvia, where government estates were given to them. The same line of policy was taken up by the Soviet Government in 1940, and again after 1945, with only one difference: in Tsarist days it was a slow and gradual

process, whereas the Soviets want to do it quickly, by mass deportations and a resettlement in the Baltic of demobilised Russian and Mongol soldiers.

At the beginning of the 20th century, however, the Latvian nation had reached such a pitch of cultural and economic development that a slow colonisation policy was not dangerous. In 1914, the figure of inhabitants in Latvia gained its peak — 2,5 millions. Economically, the Baltic gave a surplus to the Russian Exchequer. In 1913 only the Baltic Provinces, Poland and Ukraine gave a surplus — 1,033,2 million roubles — whereas all the other provinces of the vast empire showed a deficit. Thus it was these non-Russian lands that really maintained the empire. The territory of present day Latvia alone brought to Russia every year about 18 million dollars net profit, after deduction of all Russian expenditure on government departments and the diplomatic service. These figures finally dispose of the argument sometimes advanced that the Baltic States cannot exist economically without Russia.

At the beginning of the century the Baltic nations had matured so far that they were ready to assume their own independent life. All that was needed was the impetus which came with another revolution and its grandmother, the First World War.

V

THE FIRST WORLD WAR. STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE.

During the First World War, Germany again started upon her *Drang nach Osten*, but when Great Britain, France and the U.S.A. were victorious on the Western Front, Germany tried to improve her position by weakening Russia from the inside and with that purpose fostered the establishment of communism in Eastern Europe.

When the Russian, German and Austrian empires collapsed, the hitherto oppressed nations in the region between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea arose, and by own efforts and aided by the Allies realised Woodrow Wilson's noble vision about the self-determination of peoples, and fulfilled their desire for independence. Thus was frustrated the Russian dream of making the Baltic Sea the Sea of Social Revolution and of sovietising Western Europe, in order that under the guise of "Workers' Paradise" they could make Moscow the Third Rome (a dream cherished by them since the days of Ivan the Terrible) and from there direct a Union of Soviet Republics embracing all nations from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The second part of the 19th century saw the rise of a keen competition for the DOMINIUM MARIS BALTICI between Russia and Germany. Wilhelm II started the propaganda of his formula that the Baltic Sea was essentially a German Mediterranean. After the completion of the Kiel Canal in 1895, the German fleet could freely manoeuvre from the Atlantic Ocean to the Baltic Sea. Russia, fearing a cut-off from the Atlantic, got busy in developing the ice-free Norwegian fishing harbour, Murmansk. Wilhelm II tried to avert the attention of his cousin Nicholas II from the Atlantic, and to make him concentrate his gaze on the Pacific. The Baltic Sea threatened to become a German lake. After her defeat of 1905 in the Japanese War, Russia had to give up any dreams of dominating the Far East. She again concentrated on a Western expansion. A new danger to Russia had arisen. Great Britain, after the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905, was able to make use of the South Norwegian ports and, through the Belts, to obtain an entry into the Baltic Sea. To avert suspicion, a Pact was concluded in 1907, guaranteeing Norwegian integrity. But as that would be of little value in case of war, Russia and Germany entered into a secret agreement in October of the same year, which aimed at the maintenance of the actual territorial *status quo* on the basis of the complete exclusion from the Baltic of all foreign political influence. With that agreement, the Baltic Sea had become a MARE CLAUSUM, as it became in 1939 through the secret protocols between Hitler and Stalin. Thus we see the same political patterns recurring again and again.

However, the Tsar had no confidence in the Kaiser. They both knew that although they were cousins and wrote sentimental letters of friendship to one another signed Willi and Niki, they were each only watching for an opportunity to get the better of the other — as Stalin and Hitler were watching each other's movements like cat and mouse. Already in 1894 Russia had concluded a military alliance with France. This was extended in 1907 by turning it into a Triple Alliance, including Great Britain as the third partner. Financially assisted by France, Russia began the industrialisation of her country. The customs policy of Russia was very harmful to German foreign trade and Russian-German relations grew cooler until finally Germany provoked the First

World War. The Baltic nations once again had to experience what it meant to be the piece of iron between the anvil and the hammer.

After initial successes in East Prussia, the Russian army suffered a series of disasters, owing to their incompetent leadership, and, as 700 years before, the German *Drang nach Osten* went rolling oil. In the second year of the War, 1915, the Germans reached the Daugava and took the Latvian naval base of Liepaja and occupied the whole of Courland.

What the attitude of the Latvian people was is best illustrated by the fact that about three-fifths of the inhabitants of Courland (about 355,00 people) left their homes and undertook the life of refugees in Russia. All the peoples of the Western provinces of Russia — the Balts, the Poles and even the Finns—were completely loyal to Tsarist Russia, despite the many grievances they collectively and separately had against the Russians, their methods of government and their imperialistic policy. But the Germans were hated and feared and all these nations fought on the Russian side because that meant fighting together with France and Britain, and later also America, against the resurrected hereditary enemies, the Teutons. Right at the beginning of the War, at the Extraordinary Session of the Duma on August 7th, 1914, the Latvian Deputy for Courland, J. Goldmanis, declared: "At this historic moment I solemnly proclaim, in the name of the Latvian and Estonian people, that we shall fight with all our heroism in the ranks of the Russian army, so that Berlin shall drown in the sea of blood that it has released."

Those were not just empty words, because already in the early successful operations in East Prussia there were units 80 per cent Latvian and they fought with great valour. However, the glory was Russian, though the blood was Latvian. Only in the second year of the war, in April, 1915, was it that the Russian High Command announced in one of its communiqués that two Latvian battalions had saved the ancient Ducal capital, Jelgava.

LATVIAN NATIONAL ARMED FORCES ARE FORMED.

After this Latvian leaders made representations with the Imperial Commander-in-Chief that the formation of Latvian national units should be permitted. This step was taken with the fully conscious end in view of making the kernel of a Latvian army for a free Latvian State. The Latvians realised that the times were momentous, that "gods were sharing out land," and, as the great Latvian poet, J. Rainis, said, "If this time is slept away we shall sleep not hundreds but thousands of years." Despite the intrigues of the Baltic nobility at court, the Commander-in-Chief, Grand-Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch, gave his consent on August 1st, 1915, for the creation of Latvian Rifle Regiments of volunteers, with the above-mentioned two battalions as nucleus, consenting also to the battle flags and badges of these regiments bearing Latvian inscriptions side by side with those in the official State language. By that decree the Latvian language for the first time for 700 years had gained an official standing.

The response was enormous; men from all parts of the country volunteered, and many well-known Latvian authors, painters and singers joined the colours. In a very short time 8 field battalions and one reserve battalion were formed. These were later enlarged into regiments and organised in 2 brigades with 4 regiments each. Altogether the Latvian force was 130,000 men strong and it held the Riga front against German crack units for two years, right up to the Russian revolution in 1917. They fought many bloody battles in which some formations lost more than half of their effective strength. Altogether the losses were 35,000—40,000 officers and men. One of

the most dreadful was the Christmas Battle of 1916, in terrible winter weather, which has been described by one of our foremost novelists, A. Grins, under the significant title, "The Blizzard of Souls." Some of the battlefields gained names like, "Machine-gun Hill" and "Island of Death," which will live in Latvian history for ever, reminding of the suffering and heroism they represent, as Verdun and Passchendaele will live in the history of France and Britain. The Island of Death, a 4–5 km. wide stretch of land washed on the one side by the waters of the river of Latvian destinies, the Daugava, and on the other side by the stream of Latvian blood, was held for months, preventing the Germans from moving on to Riga and St. Petersburg. Not without reason did Field-Marshal Hindenburg write in his memoirs : "I should have been in Riga already at Easter, 1916, if eight bright Latvian Stars had not shone over its sky."

THE GERMANS HAVE THEIR OWN IDEAS.

The Latvians knew full well for what they were shedding their blood; they knew what a German victory would mean. As early as July 28th, 1915, Baltischer Vertrauensrat, a body of the Baltic nobles, sent a memorandum to the German Chancellor, asking that at the future peace settlement the Baltic should be made a province of Germany. The German Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, replied in April, 1916, in a statement to the Reichstag, saying that the Baltic 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 settle in the Baltic a million and a half of German colonists from the small scattered German colonies near the Volga, in the Caucasus and in Southern Russia. This action had already been begun by the squires of Courland in 1908 and about 13,000 Russian Germans had been settled in Courland.

The March Revolution in Russia (1917) created a completely new situation. On March 15th the Tsar abdicated and a new democratic government took over, which wanted to carry out democratic reforms and to continue the war to keep faith with the Western Allies. The German Secret Service saw its chance and speedily despatched Lenin and other Russian Communist leaders in sealed carriages from Switzerland to Russia "to return to their democratic fatherland" and take part in the "reconstruction of the land." In practice this reconstruction meant the deliberate spreading of chaos and undermining of discipline in the army. The new Russian Government was weak-hearted and lacking in foresight. Instead of rendering these treacherous German agents harmless at the start, they were given freedom to carry on their disruptive work, and the result was that the whole Russia was thrown into untold miseries and bloodshed. Lenin's "work" was successful; the Russian army disintegrated, "fraternisation" with the enemy began everywhere and no resistance was shown to the Kaiser's armies. The Latvian Riflemen could not alone hold them and on September 3rd, 1917, the Germans entered Riga, from where they spread and occupied most of Livonia.

THE BALTIC PEOPLES SEIZE THEIR CHANCE OF FREEDOM.

The Baltic nations took advantage of the democratic freedoms, and a movement of self-determination began in the unoccupied Baltic districts under the slogan, "A free Baltic in a free Russia." By special decrees the Provisional Government of Russia proclaimed Estonia and Latvia as autonomous provinces, fixing their borders according to the ethnographic principle. Special

Regional Commissars were appointed and regulations regarding Temporary Regional Councils were passed. The Councils for Livonia, Latgale and Courland were elected. On July 30th 1917 a political conference was held in Riga, where representatives of these regional councils, including the deputies of Riflemen, workers, and landless peasants took part. This conference declared Latvia to be an autonomous political unit within a democratic Russian Republic, and that all state power passed on to the Latvian Constituent Assembly to be elected. Unfortunately, about 30 per cent of the whole population of Latvia were living as refugees in Russia: they were scattered over a 10,000-miles-wide territory and some of them had wandered as far as the Pacific coast. The unoccupied Estonia managed to hold general elections on May 23rd, 1917, for an Estonian National Council. In order to create a similar representative body for Latvia the Central Committee of Latvian Refugees in St. Petersburg decided, on October 29th, 1917, to call a constituent congress for a Provisional Latvian National Council.

However, Russia experienced new disorders; there was a *coup d'état*, and the Bolsheviks, with Lenin at their head, came to power. Therefore the Latvian congress was postponed and took place on November 18th, 1917, in Valka, on the Latvian-Estonian border. This town was, in a way, symbolic because in the Middle Ages it had often been the seat of Livonian parliaments. The Congress resolved that, "Latvia is an autonomous and indivisible political unit, whose internal form of government and foreign relations will be decided by its Constituent Assembly." It was also decided to send representatives abroad in order to inform the Western Allies. As such were chosen, Janis Cakste (1859–1927), later first President of Latvia, and Zigfrids Meierovics (1887–1925), later first Foreign Minister of Latvia. The latter was received on October 23rd, 1918, by the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Balfour, who stated that His Majesty's Government had decided to recognise the Latvian National Council as Latvian Government. On November 11th this was followed by a letter from Mr. Balfour. Already earlier, on May 3rd, Mr. Balfour had given a similar declaration to the Estonian diplomatic representative in London, Ants Piip.

In occupied Riga, too, the political leaders remaining there started organising themselves and the so-called Democratic Bloc was formed. They started propaganda for a free and independent Latvia and organised a resistance movement in Courland, where the Germans were engaged in suppressing national thought. 669 persons were arrested and put in concentration camps. In secret security reports it was stated that Courland had been infected by nationalism from Riga and Russia.

RUSSIA RENOUNCES SOVEREIGNTY OVER LATVIA AND ESTONIA.

The Bolsheviks were in charge of Petersburg and some other centres, but they had a very stiff opposition. Although they called themselves the Majority Group (Bolsheviks means Maximalists) they were actually only a minority and the bulk of the Russian people were against them. Therefore, Lenin declared that Russia needed breathing-space in which to deal with international foes, and separate peace talks with Germany were entered upon at Brest-Litovsk. On January 5th, 1918, the Russian Constituent Assembly met, but the Communists had no majority there (only 175 Bolsheviks out of 707 members) and Lenin dispersed it by force. The talks at Brest-Litovsk were of no avail and Germany started a big advance on the whole front. As there was no resistance she occupied Latgale, the whole of Livonia and Estonia, and threatened Petersburg. Owing to this threat a peace treaty was finally signed at Brest-Litovsk on March 3rd. According to this treaty

Russia renounced all sovereign rights over Courland, but the inhabitants of Estonia and Livonia were to choose for themselves what they wanted to be.

The German-organised Landtag of Courland sent a petition to Wilhelm II, asking him to accept the crown of Duke of Courland. He replied that he recognises Courland as an independent Duchy with whom Germany was prepared to enter into a Customs Union and Military Alliance. On April 12th, 1918, the Landrats of Estonia, Livonia, and Saaremaa (Oesel) gathered in Riga and decided to ask the Kaiser to recognise the Baltic as a constitutional monarchy which would be in Personal Union with Germany. The Latvian Provisional National Council presented several protests to Germany and the Allies, pointing out that the German Landrats were usurping the power to speak in the name of the people, who had a right to self-determination and did not desire a personal union with Germany, which was only a camouflaged annexation.

The Russian Council of Peoples' Commissars had no effective power. Everywhere there were risings, and they were completely dependent on the German envoy in Moscow and the German Secret Service, who organised "protection for German war prisoners." Therefore, a supplementary agreement to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in Berlin, on August 27th, according to which Russia relinquished also her rights of sovereignty over Estonia and Livonia, keeping only Latgale. Thus the ancient adversaries, Germany and Russia, who periodically changed their roles as friends or foes, were freely slicing the living body of the Latvian nation.

SCHISM IN THE SOUL OF THE LATVIAN RIFLEMEN.

After the separate Russo-German peace the Allies started their ill-fated armed interventions in Russia, supporting several "White Governments". As these people were Russian monarchists who stood for the "great and indivisible" Russia, and were opposed to the freedom of the small nations, the Latvians had nothing in common with them. In the body and the souls of the Latvian Riflemen who had gone into Russia a schism occurred. One part, about 5,000 of them, supported the Reds and actively engaged themselves in a fight against Denikin. These Latvian men chose to serve the evil genius of communism, but in a sense they did a service to the Latvian good genius in that they helped to prevent the rise of a Russian monarchy which certainly would have prejudiced Latvian independence. The Latvians were always intrepid soldiers and they did great service to the Soviets. For a few years after the establishment of the Soviet Union they were honoured; pictures of these battles hung in Red Army clubs. Then Stalin decided that it was not right that Latvians should be remembered and all trace of them disappeared. The last leading Latvian soldiers in the Soviet hierarchy, the Generals Alksnis and Eidemanis, were "liquidated" in the great purge of 1937.

The other part of the Riflemen (about 2,000 men) followed the call of their national officers and remained neutral in the internal Russian strife. They chose the same route as did the Czech Legion and went across Siberia to return home. In Vladivostok they put themselves at the disposal of the Far Eastern Latvian National Council. From these men a Latvian regiment, the Imanta (named after one of our ancient kings) was formed under the command of General Janin, the Allied Commander in the Far East, "to fight with the Allies against the Germans." A second regiment was formed in Troitzk. These units still had to fight several battles in Siberia, to prevent anarchy and gangsterdom in the confused Siberian Civil War. General Janin, in a special order of the day,

recognised the valour of Latvian fighting men. These officers, experienced in many battle fronts, later formed about half of the officer cadre of the Latvian national army.

WOODROW WILSON'S 14 POINTS — A RAY OF HOPE.

As we have seen, the main enemies of the independence of the Baltic States were Russia and Germany who, irrespective of the internal regime ruling in those countries, tried to suppress it. Thus the political vision of Woodrow Wilson about the self-determination of peoples (though originally conceived only in relation to Poland and the Czechs) could be realised in the Baltic only after the fall of both these mighty imperialisms. However, the 14 points of Wilson were an incentive and ray of hope that set the whole region of the small oppressed peoples from the White Sea to the Black Sea ablaze in political and national aspirations. Thousands of men who valued freedom and human dignity above their life, sacrificed themselves for these ideals.

NOVEMBER 18TH, 1918, INDEPENDENT LATVIA PROCLAIMED.

In the autumn of 1918 when, owing to the revolution in Germany, the occupation regime in the Baltic slackened, most of the members of the Provisional Latvian National Council were able to assemble in Riga. There they joined with the Democratic Bloc, thus forming the first Latvian Provisional Parliament—The People's Council—which met at its first solemn inaugural meeting on November 18th, 1918, in the hall of the Russian theatre in Riga, which later became the State Theatre, and proclaimed Latvia as a sovereign, independent, democratic republic, whose constitution and relations with foreign countries would be defined by the Constituent Assembly. The President of the Council was Janis Cakste, but owing to his absence on diplomatic missions abroad the Act of Proclamation of Latvian Independence was read by the first Vice-President, Gustavs Zemgals (later the second President of Latvia). This Assembly also created the first Latvian Provisional Government with Karlis Ulmanis as the first Prime Minister.

On November 26th, the Plenipotentiary of the new Germany, A. Winnigs, declared that after the conclusion of a special agreement, Germany would cede all civil power to the Latvian Government. It was clear that in spite of the change of regime, Germany still hoped to be able to keep the Baltic for herself.

YET MORE BLOOD TO BE SHED.

Now the most tremendous period in the life of the Latvian nation began. The age-long dream of freedom and mastery of its own land seemed to have been achieved. Latvian independence was there, proclaimed and recognised. For the rest of the world the war, the most terrible war hitherto known, had ended, and Europe began to heal her wounds, but for Latvia another war was just beginning. Exhausted, economically depleted, its population scattered, the Latvian nation had to start a War of Liberation on two fronts. Both the Russian and the German aggressions were still alive.

According to the Armistice of November 11th, 1918, the German forces had to stay in Latvia until the Latvian Government had been able to organise its own national army. However, the Germans withdrew immediately, and the provisional government had been able to form only a unit of 300 men, mainly officers, N.C.O.'s and students. The German Balts, too, started organising

their army, the so-called Landeswehr, which was being equipped by the H.Q. of the retreating German army. Of that a unit of Reich-German Volunteers split off under the name of the "Iron Division." The Baltic Germans established also a political Executive of the Landeswehr, the Baltischer Nationalausschuss in Liepaja. This body opened 10 recruiting offices all over Germany. It was obvious that the Germans were still planning something against the National Government of Latvia.

The Russians, too, could not rest at peace. They could not see that their policy of Russian domination of the Baltic Sea would now be smashed. They could not recognise the Baltic Sea becoming a Free Sea, enveloped and guarded by free people in the interests of the free world. They wanted to use the period of the weakness of the new governments and turn the Baltic Sea into the Sea of Social Revolution.

On December 2nd, 1918, following in the heels of the retreating German 8th Army, the Russians crossed the Latvian frontier and on January 3rd, 1919, they entered Riga, where they established a puppet government called the Soviet Latvian Government, with a Latvian Communist, Peteris Stucka, at its head. The British Navy left Riga, and so did the Latvian Government, proceeding first to Jelgava and then to Liepaja. With it went the first Latvian Commander-in-Chief, Colonel Oskars Kalpaks, at whose disposal there were only 132 men, while the Red Army comprised about 6,000 soldiers. Finally, it was possible to hold the Russians on the Venta river. Thus only a very small corner of Courland was still free and from that the Latvians had to defend their liberty.

The Estonians were in a much more favourable position. With British help they were able to free their country from the Bolsheviks already in February 1919.

GENERAL GOLTZ STILL TRIES TO SAVE THE BALTIC FOR GERMANY.

In spite of the prohibition of the Allies, the German Government sent their General Rudiger von der Goltz to assume command of all German forces in the Baltic. This was done under the pretext of defending the safety of East Prussia. He understood that the German cause in the Baltic would be lost if it were to be based only on the 5 per cent German minority. The pro-British Government of K. Ulmanis was unacceptable to him. Therefore he wanted to put into power a government of quislings. For this task he chose a Latvian clergyman and novelist, Andrievs Niedra. To prevent the Latvians from organising themselves into an effective force, General Goltz, did not allow Ulmanis' government to carry out a mobilisation.

However, the force of volunteers grew, and in March the Latvian and German forces went over into attack and soon the whole of Courland was free of the Bolsheviks, and the way to Riga was open. There was constant friction between the Latvians and the Germans and in one such skirmish the Commander-in-Chief of the Latvian forces, Colonel Kalpaks, fell to German bullets (on March 6, 1919.) Colonel Janis Balodis became the new Commander-in-Chief. Goltz, who was the Supreme Commander of the operation, stopped short of Riga. It would have been easy to take the capital, but the General did not want the Ulmanis Government to enter the metropolis, and his plans with his puppet, Niedra, were not yet quite ready. He wanted to have Niedra drive into Riga in triumph, to increase the prestige of the puppet. On April 16th the *coup d'etat* at last took place in Liepaja, but it was only partially successful, as Ulmanis, his War Minister, and some other members of the Government, found refuge on a ship and were protected by a British cruiser. The

Latvian Commander-in-Chief, Balodis, also declared that the Latvian forces would remain faithful to Ulmanis.

On May 22nd, Goltz ordered an attack on Riga, and the capital fell on the same day. Niedra had no forces loyal to him, no support at all among the Latvians. He hung there sadly on the strings of von der Goltz, a complete puppet. So the triumph that was planned for him did not come off. Moreover, Goltz could not allow the Latvian national forces to get the laurels of the capture of Riga, though all the important fighting had been theirs. So the astute General ordered the Landeswehr to drive into Riga and on into Livonia, in spite of the protests of the Chief of the Allied Mission, Sir Hubert Gough. General Goltz wanted the Landeswehr to overthrow also the Estonian Government. However, he miscalculated.

JUNE 22ND – CESIS – THE ESTONIANS AND LATVIANS DEAL A MORTAL BLOW TO THE BALTIC GERMANS.

As early as January, 1919, Ulmanis had sent Colonel Zemitans to Estonia and Northern Latvia, some districts of which were already liberated by combined Estonian and Finnish forces. Zemitans had organised the Latvian Northern Army which, together with the Estonians, freed a considerable part of Livonia. On June 1st this force reached Cesis (Wenden). Next day, however, this ancient seat of the Master of the Teutonic Order began to be infiltrated by the Landeswehr. The Estonian High Command (under whom Zemitans was operating) ordered the Landeswehr to withdraw to a specified line. The Landeswehr relied on their numerical superiority and better equipment and disregarded the order. A battle was unavoidable, and it was joined on June 22nd, ending with a complete victory of the Estonians and Latvians (8000 men) over the Germans (9000 men). This was a turning point in the Estonian and Latvian War of Liberation, and the last battle that a general of the Kaiser fought on Latvian soil.

The Landeswehr retreated to the River Jugla, near Riga, and there, on July 3rd, an armistice was concluded. On July 4th, units of the Zemitans' army and those of the Balodis' Southern group entered Riga in triumph. Estonian naval units came into the mouth of the Daugava. The armistice stipulated that the Germans should be withdrawn from Latvia, while the Landeswehr, consisting of local Germans, was to become part of the Latvian army under the supreme Latvian Command.

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ALEXANDER AT THE LATGALE FRONT.

On July 8th the Ulmanis Government returned to Riga. As the Landeswehr could not be completely relied on, on 25th July, an Ulsterman, a 28-years-old Lt.-Col., the Hon. H. R. L. G. Alexander, third son of the Earl of Caledon, was appointed its commander. Twenty-five years later this colonel of the Latvian army, who fought for Latvian freedom on the Latgale front against the Bolsheviks, became a figure of world repute. He is Field-Marshal Lord Alexander, the victor of North Africa and the liberator of Italy from Hitler's yoke.

The Liberation of Latgale could really start only on January 3rd, 1920, when 3 Polish divisions came to our aid, and with the united forces Latgale was cleared of the Bolsheviks in a month. On February 1st, 1920, an Armistice was signed between Russia and Latvia and on August 11th, 1920, the final peace treaty.

YET ANOTHER GERMAN TREACHERY.

The clearance of Latgale was so delayed because the young Latvian Government, which had almost established its feet firmly on native Latvian soil, had to go through one more challenge, perhaps the most serious of all. General Goltz could not yet admit his defeat. He wanted to try once more. He had no intention of keeping his word to the Allies and withdrawing the remnants of the German forces. On September 26th, 1919, he entered into a secret agreement with a Russian adventurer, Paul Bermond, who titled himself Prince Avaloff. This shady character, together with some Russian monarchists and German Baltic barons, was recruiting an army of volunteers, ostensibly to fight against the Bolsheviks on the Narva front. According to the secret agreement Goltz put the remnant of his forces formally at the disposal of Bermond and they became "volunteers" in the "Russian" Corps. This Corps arrived in Jelgava and attacked the Latvian army from the rear.

The protests and ultimata of the Allies, and the orders of General Judenich (for whose benefit Bermond said he had been recruiting) to transfer his troops to the Narva front, were of no avail. On October 8th Bermond ordered his forces to attack in the direction of Riga. The situation was very critical. The young Latvian army lacked munitions, arms and clothing. Despite the autumn weather it was a common sight to see Latvian soldiers marching in an assortment of clothes and with their feet wrapped in rags fastened by strings. The next day already Bermond had reached the suburbs of Riga.

BRITISH NAVY HELPS TO FREE RIGA.

The commander of the British naval squadron stationed in the mouth of the Daugava, Sir Walter Cowan, opened fire and with his long-range guns stopped a further advance, while under the cover of this artillery the Latvian units were able to cross the Daugava and organise a front in the middle of the town, keeping Bermond on the west side of the river. At last consignments of munitions and arms arrived in Riga, and this enabled the Latvians to prepare their decisive blow. The attack started on November 10th, this time, too, supported by the guns of Sir Walter Cowan's Baltic fleet. Already the next day, November 11th, after severe and bloody battles, saw Riga liberated. That day is celebrated as the day of Latvian war heroes — the day of Lachpleshi — so named after the legendary Latvian hero, the Bear-Slayer. Riga was free and the German-Russian bands retreated in confusion. There were still minor clashes with them; they retreated into Lithuania, where the Lithuanians dealt them the final blows and only very sad remnants of general Goltz's last hope reached Germany.

The War of Liberation of the Latvian people lasted 628 days, from November 18th, 1918, until August 11th, 1920, when the Russians signed a peace treaty in Riga, recognising Latvian independence and *for ever* relinquishing Russian claims of sovereignty over Latvian territory and people.

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM.

The Latvian national army created from scratch, from a handful of enthusiasts in 1918, had fought 75 battles and liberated 65,000 sq. kilometres of territory, with 1.6 million inhabitants. During the war, Latvia had lost a whole million people. It is true that during the years 1919–1927

236,000 refugees returned; all the same, the total loss was about 700,000 or almost 27 per cent of the inhabitants. With so much blood was the freedom of the new republic bought. With the sign of the rising sun on his forehead (the army badge) the Latvian soldier had beaten the two heraldic animals of the period of interregnum — the lion and the griffin. This was later symbolised in the Latvian coat-of-arms, where the rising sun spreads his rays over the lion and the griffin.

Having achieved this, the Latvian soldier could return to his plough and elect the Constituent Assembly in April, 1920. On May 1st, this Assembly gathered, setting itself two tasks: (1) The adoption of the Constitution, and (2) The passing of the Agrarian Reform Bill. The latter was the most urgent task, in order to break the backbone of the economic power of the disloyal German minority, to create social justice and to build sound and stable economic foundations for the new State.

These tasks were accomplished. An extremely liberal and almost too democratic Constitution was agreed upon. It provided for a parliament of 100 members — in which at one time there were 27 political parties. This, of course, did not create stable governments. However, this was our first experience of self-government in modern times. We gained valuable knowledge and wisdom. Given time we would have smoothed out all our clumsy beginner's faults. The Latvian people have a sound political instinct and avoid extremes. Since 1934 the country had been ruled by our fourth President (and first Prime Minister) K. Ulmanis and his Government, without parliament. Hostile propaganda brands this period as fascist dictatorship. Perhaps it was a form of dictatorship, but it certainly did not bear the all-too-familiar gruesome hall-marks of fascism: concentration camps, secret political police rule, arbitrary courts. It entirely lacked these — the only criterion by which a fascist regime can be recognised, whether it be the black fascism of Mussolini, the brown one of Hitler, or Stalin's Red Fascism.

The Agrarian Reform was a wise and far-sighted measure. The land was pooled in a state pool. 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 redistributed among war veterans and landless peasants, in small farms calculated to be of a 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 in butter, bacon, eggs, grain, etc.

Latvia started her independent life with empty bank vaults, ruined industry, devastated fields and destroyed houses, with a scattered population. But in a timespan of 20 years the prosperity of the nation had risen greatly and a standard of life approaching that of Western Europe had been achieved, with a level of social justice exceeding that of many old western States. All this was the fruits of the sacrifice of the blood shed by the Latvian soldiers. The Latvian soldiers knew not only how to fight, but also how to use peace. We shall finish this chapter with words of a member of the British Military Mission, General Alfred Burt, who said: "Every Latvian soldier can be proud of being a member of a gallant army which has defended its country against the Germans and the Bolsheviks With such heroism."

VI

INDEPENDENT LATVIA

Although during the First World War, in the actual fighting against Germany, in the widespread turning of populations into refugees, during the German occupation (1915–1919) and in the subsequent Wars of Liberation Latvia lost 27 per cent of her population, nevertheless the three Baltic States amply proved their right to an independent existence. They achieved great heights in cultural as well as economic development and in the level of social justice. The foreign trade turnover of the four Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland in 1938 was 583 million dollars. These nations comprise only 9.5 million inhabitants. The foreign trade turnover of the U.S.S.R. with 180 million inhabitants was only 512 million dollars.

In the Second World War, Latvia experienced two Red Army occupations (1940–1941 and 1944–) and one Nazi occupation (1941–1945). Both these regimes meant the dictatorship of one party, Gestapo methods, concentration camps, deportation to forced labour, forcible mobilisation, general nationalisation of property, pauperisation and colonisation with the purpose of annihilating the Latvian nation, whom both occupants blamed for having Anglo-Saxon sympathies and preferring the principles as well as the economic and political systems of the West.

Although Latvia, with her territory of 65,791 square kilometres (25,402 sq. miles), is larger than Denmark, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, etc., many people prophesied that the country would prove too small and would be economically too weak to exist and maintain itself and its State apparatus and to honour its international obligations. These prophets forgot that the State of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, of exactly the same size and a much worse administrative structure, existed for 350 years; and the Duchy of Courland of only one-third of the size of Latvia existed for 230 years and achieved international greatness, being one of the rising colonial powers. Latvia soon showed that she was able to live and she solved her post-war economic and social problems earlier than many other European States. The economic and cultural achievements of Latvia during a development of 20 years are generally acknowledged.

POPULATION TRENDS SHOWED VITALITY.

The vitality of the nation is shown by the increase of its population. In 1920 there were 1.6 million inhabitants of Latvia; in 1939 there were again over 2 millions. Even if we allow for the 200,000 odd who returned from the exile of the war years after 1920, the increase is still over 200,000 whereas that branch of the Latvian tree which was transplanted into foreign soil did not take root and prosper; on the contrary, it was slowly withering. When war was over, 250,000 Latvians still stayed in the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the Second World War, of that number there remained only 126,000.

In the past there had been several attempts to colonise Latvia by Germans and thus to secure a grip on the land, with an eye to future affiliation with Germany. This was possible because the Baltic barons disposed of large *latifundia*, varying in size from 100 to 70,000 hectares, where there was plenty of empty space for various projects. Though in numbers they constituted only 1.6 per cent of the total number of farming enterprises, they took up 57 per cent of the whole privately owned land. The Baltic nobility realised that they were a very small minority, and one, moreover, that had not by wisdom and clever guidance of the country's affairs endeared itself to the

majority, but on the contrary had used every opportunity that history presented to oppress the majority. Feeling, therefore, that such a position was difficult to maintain as time marched on, the Baltic German squirearchy several times tried to supplement its power by another element on which it could lean — a German small-holder class. Hence the repeated attempts at colonisation. This was another reason for the new Latvian State to settle its agrarian conditions and to distribute the land among loyal Latvian farmers and do away with the empty spaces that again at a future opportunity might be used to introduce a foreign body into the living organism of the Latvian nation. The Germans scoffed and cursed. They said the new farms should be built on wheels, to be rolled away when they returned to power. True, the curse has partly come to pass, and many of the farmers are now displaced persons or deportees in Siberia. However, the German Balts rolled away first when Hitler called them "home". And when in 1941 they returned as Hitler's gauleiters, their glory was short-lived. The chief among them, Alfred Rosenberg, was disposed of at Nuremberg.

AGRICULTURE REORGANISED.

Latvia has only 35 per cent of town dwellers and, therefore, agriculture is obviously her main industry. It was, therefore, essential that this principal source of income and livelihood should be properly and economically organised. It was essential to do away with the remnants of feudalism. The State Land Pool was 3.3 million hectares large. Each estate was left with 50 hectares of land; the former owners could work on there, not as large-scale industrial farmers, but simply as every other farmer, and many of them did. After the reform, 65 per cent of all the farms were of the size between 10 and 50 hectares. Over 100,000 new farms were created and an equal number strengthened by additions.

Not only did this Agrarian Reform give the Latvian people satisfaction for an injustice done to them centuries earlier, but it also created a solid foundation for the country's economic life, and created social peace within the State — a condition unknown in Latvia for generations. That social contentment was growing, can be seen from the results of parliamentary elections. In the elections of 1920, the Left Wing parties, which usually attract the vote of the discontented, were given 39 per cent of the total votes; whereas in 1931 they gained only 27 per cent. Particularly great was this swing towards moderate political views in the country districts; radicalism remained only in the towns. Communists were of no account. When they did go to the polls as a separate party they reaped only very small returns — in 1928, 8 per cent. ; in 1931, 7.4 per cent.

Critics of the agrarian Reform gave warning that the consequences would be a falling off in production and an economic crisis. The contrary was the case. The 275,698 small-holders became more and more prosperous. In 1913 there were 320,000 horses; in 1920, 261,000 (most of them discarded army horses); in 1938 there were more than 400,000 horses. The same picture can be seen regarding cattle; in 1913 there were 912,000 cows and in 1939, 1,278,000. Harvests show a similar rise. The average harvest of winter rye during the years 1921—1939 increased by 0.33 quintals per hectare annually, and winter wheat by 0.26 quintals per hectare. The same picture shows itself in dairy farming. In 1929 the average yearly yield of butter was 108 kg. per milking cow; in 1939 it was 130 kg. The Soviet authorities maintain that these results were achieved by exploitation of agricultural workers and their sweated labour. Not to enter into comparisons of labour conditions in Latvia and the U.S.S.R., suffice it to say that in no other branch of Latvian

economy was the percentage of hired labour so small as in agriculture; only 18 per cent of all people who derived their livelihood from the land were wage-earners.

THE BALTIC STATES WAS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FOOD FOR THE INDUSTRIAL AREAS OF WESTERN EUROPE.

Latvian foreign trade is characterised by the 224,711,000 Lats worth of imports and 227,053,000 Lats worth of exports, in 1939. In other years the preponderance of exports has been even more striking. Among the exports, butter takes the first place — 21,929 tons, 51 million lats in value. Next in order of importance come timber, flax, bacon, live pigs, paper and grain. The importance of the Baltic States as producers of food for industrial Europe must not be under-estimated. Though small, these countries played a considerable part in the feeding of European workers. Now Europe is robbed of these supplies. If the Baltic food-productive capacity were available, many European food problems would be easier. The productive capacity just now is, of course, through ravages of war and senseless deportations of people, much lower than formerly; yet Russia is exporting Baltic food into the Russian interior, depleting the Baltic forests and driving off Baltic cattle. And all the while Russia herself is potentially one of the greatest food and timber producers of the world, though her resources are not available to the world.

FOREIGN TRADE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE WEST.

According to countries, Latvian foreign trade shows the following picture in 1938 (the last complete normal pre-war year) : in percentage of the total, Great Britain — imports 20.8, exports 41.9; Germany — imports 38.9, exports 29.5; U.S.A. — imports 6.3, exports 1.4; U.S.S.R. — imports 3.5 per cent, exports 3.0 per cent.

It is clearly seen that Russia played a part of no importance in the Latvian foreign trade balance; even the distant U.S.A. was of greater importance. And Germany, though she was geographically the nearest, and by her trade methods was always attempting to penetrate and dominate the Baltic, was by no means the most important. Latvian trade was definitely oriented to Western Europe.

According to the Census of 1935, 58.5 per cent of all the inhabitants of Latvia derived their livelihood from agriculture, while of the working population this represented 62.3 per cent.

LATVIANS A PEOPLE OF WORK.

On the whole, the Latvian people are a people of work. The percentage of working people in relation to the total population is one of the highest: two-thirds of the population earn their own living by work and only one-third are maintained by someone else. That was the main reason why social legislation received so much attention, and Latvia was one of the most progressive States in Europe in this respect.

16.6 per cent of the population in 1935 derived their livelihood from industry. The main industrial centres were Riga and Liepaja. There 39 per cent of the inhabitants lived by industry; 6.5 per cent were employed in trade and 3.1 per cent in transport.

ECONOMIC BALANCE.

Latvian foreign debts, on 1st April, 1940, were: to the U.S.A., 7 million dollars (2.5 million dollars was the war debt for food and war materials during the War of Liberation, payable in 62 years) ; to Great Britain, about 2 million pounds (£1,300,000 war debt, payable in 30 years) ; France, 4,5 million francs; Sweden 9.3 million kronor (mainly for the building of the Kegums Hydro-Electric Power Station). In lats, the foreign debt represented 100 millions, or 50 lats per head of the population. The Internal Debt was 52 million lats. These debts were secured by gold and foreign currency. The Latvian currency was, in 1939, covered by foreign currency to the value of 37.6 million lats ; short term Bills of Exchange 20.5 million lats ; and gold, 87.6 million lats. Latvian national wealth is calculated to be 6 milliards of lats, i.e., about 3,000 lats per head of the population. Directly or indirectly, the State owned about 40 per cent of all the National Wealth.

CULTURE AND EDUCATION.

Cultural life and education were on a high level. In the year 1939—40 there were 4 higher educational establishments: the University, the Academy of Agriculture, the Academy of Arts and the Academy of Music. The teaching staff (academic) in these establishments numbered 522 and the students, 7,713. There were 111 secondary educational establishments, comprising 2,371 teachers and 24,928 pupils; and 1,800 elementary schools with 9,000 teachers and 224,700 pupils. There were, besides, various trade and technical schools and Higher Institutes, such as the Institute of Commerce, Institute of English, etc. Altogether Latvia had over 8,000 persons with academic education, among them 1,800 engineers, 1,600 doctors of medicine, 1,400 lawyers, etc. In numbers of books published in proportion to population, Latvia occupied the second place among European nations, the first being Denmark. The arts, painting, literature, music, the theatre, were all highly developed and keenly appreciated by the people.

This account of Latvian achievements and development is purposely short, factual and dry. It is by no means comprehensive, but is intended, by giving a few random facts, to give a general idea. There is no denying that Latvia had used her freedom well.

VII

THE TRAGEDY OF 1940

The bad example of the governing methods of the U.S.S.R. created similar totalitarian regimes in Italy, Germany and Japan. That in turn unleashed the Second World War.

By skilful manoeuvring the U.S.S.R. made use of this unique opportunity to take up, at the end of this war, advantageous strategic positions for a third World War and World Revolution.

In this programme, the occupation of the Baltic States and the Partition of Poland was axiomatic and Hitler gave his sanction to it by the secret agreements of the so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August 23rd, 1939. That is why already in September, 1939, the operational maps of the Russian General Staff showed the Baltic States as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Republics.

This programme was carried out gradually, so as to act for the Anglo-Saxon Allies the part of the noble "liberator" of the Baltic States. With the so-called Mutual Assistance Pacts dictated by Moscow and forced on the Baltic States already in September and October, 1939. Russia obtained military and naval bases in all the important ports of the Baltic States, in the islands and straits. Thereby the Baltic States had already lost their freedom of action and sovereignty so frequently guaranteed to them by Russia in words.

Latvia had no disputes with her powerful eastern neighbour, the U.S.S.R. Their boundaries were mapped out at the very beginning of Latvia's independence in a way acceptable to both sides.

FAR-REACHING TRADE CONCESSIONS TO RUSSIA.

Trade agreements had been concluded between Latvia and the U.S.S.R., according to which Russia received very far-reaching concessions on Latvian railways and in Latvian ports. All Latvian trade agreements contained a Russian clause which recognised Russia special rights and privileges which did not apply to other countries. In fact, Latvian terms were so generous that, purely commercially speaking, it was more advantageous to Russia to send goods to Latvian ports than to use her own. It was no fault of Latvia that Soviet Russia's transit traffic through the Baltic States had fallen from 720,000 tons (Estonia 345,788, Latvia 374,885) in 1922 to 80,000 tons in 1938. Methods of economic boycott were used by Soviet Russia quite continually, in order to create internal difficulties in the Baltic States and to prepare the ground for the activities of the Russian fifth column.

FOREIGN POLICY NEUTRAL.

In her foreign policy, Latvia followed the principles of strict neutrality and close cultural and economic collaboration with her sister republics of Estonia and Lithuania. Her relations with Soviet Russia were regulated by at least 32 treaties and agreements. Besides the trade agreements, and the Peace Treaty of 1920, signed in Riga, which formed the basis of Latvian-Russian relations and according to which Russia solemnly relinquished all her former rights over Latvian territory and people *for ever*, the following may be mentioned:

SOLEMN RUSSIAN PROMISES.

1. The so-called Litvinoff Protocol, signed at Moscow on February 9th, 1929, under which the anti-war Pact of Paris, known under the name of the Briand-Kellog Pact, came into force for Eastern Europe. According to this protocol the U.S.S.R. was obliged *vis-a-vis* Latvia to settle any dispute by peaceful means.
2. The Non-Agression Treaty of February 5th, 1932, under which the U.S.S.R. was bound to avoid any act of force and to submit all disputes which could not be settled in a normal diplomatic way to a mixed Conciliation Commission. This treaty was entered into for three years, but was extended on April 4th, 1934, until December 31st, 1945.
3. The Convention for the Definition of Aggression, entered into at London on July 3rd, 1933, which lays down that the State which first invades the territory of any other State without declaration of war is acknowledged as Aggressor in international disputes, and no political, military, or economic arguments can be used in exculpation of such an Aggression.
4. The Mutual Assistance Pact signed in Moscow on October 5th, 1939, which authorised the U.S.S.R. to establish in Latvia military bases, but stipulated at the same time the principle of non-interference in the affairs of Latvian sovereignty, the political constitution of the State, its economic or social structure, or military measures.

MOLOTOV AND RIBBENTROP DECIDE THE FATE OF THE BALTIC STATES.

Nevertheless, the occupation of all three Baltic States had been decided upon already on August 23rd, 1939, between Ribbentrop and Molotov, when a Non-Agression Pact was signed between Germany and the U.S.S.R. in Moscow, to which was added a secret protocol, sanctioning the occupation of the Baltic States by the Red Army, leaving the moment therefor to free option.

In June, 1939, the Russians, for the purpose of obtaining better conditions from Germany, had begun negotiations with Britain and France and proposed "Formulæ covering indirect aggression in the Baltic States." These negotiations came to nothing, as the Western Democracies did not give their agreement to an occupation of the Baltic States. As a result of these bickering s with England and France, the Russians obtained definite promises from the Germans concerning the Baltic States. Of these, Lord Halifax could not but state: "Herr Hitler bartered what was not his property — the liberties of the Baltic people."

It had been known for some time that, apart from the official Non-Agression Pact, Ribbentrop and Molotov had made one or two secret agreements concerning the Baltic States and Poland. The full details became known on May 22nd, 1946, when the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* published an article by its correspondent at Nuremberg, quoting the complete text of two secret Soviet-Nazi agreements.

The first of these agreements is dated Moscow, August 23rd, 1939, and consists of 4 paragraphs. It reads: "On the occasion of the signing of the Non-Agression Treaty between the German Reich and the U.S.S.R. the undersigned representatives of the two parties discussed in a highly confidential conversation the problem of the demarcation of the spheres of influence of either party in Eastern Europe. This conversation has the following result: (1) In the case of a politico-territorial change in the territories belonging to the Baltic States — Finland, Estonia,

Latvia and Lithuania — the northern frontier of Lithuania shall form also the demarcation of the spheres of interest between Germany and the U.S.S.R."

The second Soviet-Nazi agreement is dated Moscow, September 28th, 1939, and the text runs : "Par. 1 of the secret protocol of August 23rd, 1939, is modified in that the territory of the Lithuanian State also shall fall within the sphere of interest of the U.S.S.R.... As soon as the Government of the U.S.S.R. shall take special measures on Lithuanian territory for the protection of her interests, the present German-Lithuanian frontier will be rectified in order to accomplish a natural and simple frontier ... marked on the attached map."

Immediately after the secret agreements or, indeed, even before they were actually concluded, the Soviet High Command ordered military maps (scale 1: 500,000) on which the Baltic States were marked as Soviet Socialist Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These maps are dated September, 1939.

The conclusion of these two secret agreements was confirmed by Stalin on October 2nd, 1939, in the Kremlin during his conversations with the Latvian Foreign Minister, V. Munters, when Stalin said: "I tell you frankly, a division of spheres of interest has already taken place. As far as Germany is concerned we could occupy you."

Knowing that he had given consent to the occupation of the Baltic States by Russia, which he knew would soon take place, Hitler began the repatriation of the Baltic Germans (Volksdeutsche) from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. After protracted negotiations, an agreement was signed between Germany and Latvia in Riga on October 30th, 1939. As a result of this agreement, at the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940, 49,885 German-speaking inhabitants of Latvia left the country. The total number of Germans in Latvia had been 2.96 per cent of the population. German propagandists were very active in persuading the German Balts, many of whom were unwilling to "return" to the Fatherland, and openly spoke of Russians who would come and occupy Latvia very soon. With great glee they described the atrocities the Russians would perpetrate when they came.

With bitter irony we can now reflect upon the prophetic foresight of these diligent servants of Goebbels. They let their youthful fancy roam in the realm of horrors and themselves had no idea how near the truth they had come and how near their forecasts were to the things that were to happen. Thus two totalitarian despotisms dug the grave of the liberty of the Baltic States.

VIII

BALTIC SEA TO BECOME SEA OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

After Hitler's great victories on the western Front in 1940, the U.S.S.R. decided to annex the Baltic States completely and, contrary to the solemn pacts instigated by herself and condemning aggression as an instrument of national policy, she invaded these States without a declaration of war, arrested and deported the former Governments, and under the pressure of the Red Army and N.K.V.D. (the Russian Gestapo), established pro-Soviet Governments.

Having obtained Hitler's permission, Stalin began to act in his sphere of influence (Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Despite the fact that on September 1st, 1939, the Baltic States had proclaimed their strict neutrality, and paying no attention to the Pact of "non-aggression and friendship" existing between Russia and Germany since August 23rd, 1939, Russia with her 180 million population suddenly felt threatened by the 6 million inhabitants of the Baltic States.

On the same day, September 28th, 1939, when the second secret agreement, which included Lithuania within the Soviet sphere of influence, was signed, the Estonian Government was compelled to accept the so-called "Pact of Mutual Assistance." As a means of pressure, Soviet Russia used the fact that an interned Polish submarine had escaped from Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. Under this agreement the Estonian Government undertook to lease all Estonian islands in the Baltic Sea to the Soviet Government for military, naval and air bases for 10 years. In addition, Soviet troops (25,000 men) were placed in Estonia.

No sooner had the ink dried on this treaty than the Latvian Foreign Minister, V. Munters, was invited to Moscow to discuss some political problems. At that time many divisions of the Red Army were concentrated on the Latvian frontier. By October 2nd, 1939, Mr. Munters was in Moscow, and on October 5th the Pact of Mutual Assistance, practically dictated by Stalin, was signed. Like Estonia, Latvia had to lease bases to Soviet Russia for 10 years, and to consent to garrisons (30,000 men) of Soviet troops being stationed for the duration of the war in naval, air and military bases at Liepaja, Ventspils and in the Pitragi district, so that the entrance and exit of the Gulf of Riga were under Russian control. Promises, never kept, of non-interference in Latvia's internal affairs were given. According to Article 5, "the carrying into effect of the present pact must in no way affect the sovereign rights of the contracting parties, in particular, their political structure, their economic and social system, and their military measures." These words were meant to allay the fears of the Western Democracies.

STALIN'S OWN REASONS FOR ACTION IN THE BALTIC.

Much more interesting are the arguments, put forward by Stalin, in justification of Russian action in the Baltic States, in conversations with the Latvian Foreign Minister, V. Munters, in the Kremlin on October 2nd and 3rd, 1939. In these conversations, besides Stalin and Munters, the envoys of both countries took part, as well as Molotov and Potemkin, the Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The conversation was opened by Stalin, who said: "We are thinking of the future.

Poland has already paid the price. That was the fault of the English, French and Poles. With Germany we have established relations on a lasting basis, and also in regard to the Baltic States our views do not differ from those of Germany."

Thus there is yet more, and this time direct evidence, that long before the Russians had taken the Baltic States the idea of destroying their national independence was formed, and in this respect there was no difference of opinion between the two dictatorships, between Communistic Russia and Nazi Germany. Further, Stalin said: "That which was determined in 1920 (meaning the Latvian-Russian Peace Treaty signed in Riga on August 11th, 1920) cannot remain for eternity. Peter the Great saw to it that an outlet to the sea was gained. We also wish to ensure ourselves the use of ports, roads to these ports, and their defence."

This makes it clear that the Moscow dictate concerning the Mutual Assistance Pacts was never meant as an aid to maintaining Baltic neutrality, but a continuation of the same age-old Russian imperialism, begun by the father of Russian imperialism, Peter "the Great." It was evident that the Baltic had to expect another invasion of the Red Army.

PLAIN TRUTH PLAINLY STATED.

Another 1918 was on the way. Why Russia wanted the Baltic Sea and its ports was not kept secret at that time by the official Soviet Gazette *Izvestia*, which wrote then (December 25th, 1918) : "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 the revolutionary Germany. This separating wall has to be destroyed. 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."

When at the above-mentioned Kremlin talks, V. Munters pointed out that while the Russian-German pact of friendship existed the Baltic Sea was ruled by two friends and said "We do not understand what additional security there could be," Stalin interrupted: "England has already demanded from Sweden certain airfields and the admission of some submarines. Sweden may easily be drawn into the war."

These pacts of mutual assistance were, therefore, enforced on the Baltic States as if to defend them against imaginary British aggression, although in reality the true aim of Russia was to destroy them ; to get Scandinavia within her sphere of interests and to turn the Baltic Sea into the Sea of Social Revolution.

On the same day that Munters and Molotov signed the Pact of Mutual Assistance, the Finns were urged to send a delegation to Moscow to talk about "mutual problems." Five days after, on October 10th, Lithuania was compelled to sign a pact, with even more exacting stipulations.

The Finns went, and learned that Russia desired a 30-years' lease of Hangoe and the cession of a number of islands and areas. "Finland," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "studied these demands carefully and made counter-proposals which were marked by a very conciliatory spirit." These proposals gave Russia all she asked except Hangoe.

In order, evidently, to dispel the suspicions of the Finns and to force them to follow the example of the Baltic States, Molotov solemnly declared in Moscow, at the 5th Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R., on 31st October, 1939, as follows : "These pacts are

based on mutual respect for the political, social and economic structure of the contracting parties.... We declare that all nonsense about sovietising the Baltic countries is only in the interest of our common enemies and of all anti-Soviet provocateurs."

SURRENDER OR DIE.

The following events show what would have happened to the Baltic States if they had refused Russian demands. Finland did so; she refused to surrender Hango. The Russian press and radio immediately began a merciless propaganda against Finland, and on November 25th Russia denounced the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934. Two days later Soviet troops marched across the Finnish frontier. The world replied to that by a counter-action: on December 14th, 1939, Soviet Russia was expelled from the League of Nations.

During the Soviet-Finnish war parallel roads were built by the Soviets in the direction of the Latvian frontier. The Russian garrisons simulated a correctness, which ended immediately after the signing of peace between Finland and Soviet Russia (in March, 1940). On 25th March, 1940, Molotov said, in the Supreme Council: "In spite of attempts to create an atmosphere of fear which have been undertaken by hostile imperialistic circles, the independence and independent politics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have not suffered in the least ... the execution of the Pacts progresses satisfactorily and creates conditions favourable for further improvement of relations between Soviet Russia and these States." Now we understand what "improvement" he really meant.

At that time the officers of the Russian garrisons in the Baltic States more and more often revealed the real Russian aims, especially when drunk, saying that soon the Baltic would be completely annexed, often adding boastfully: "And then we shall go to Berlin and from there to London."

In April and May of 1940, attacks against the Baltic States appeared in the Soviet controlled press. Foreseeing what was to come, the Latvian Government made a secret decision on May 17th, 1940, to issue an Emergency Power to the Latvian Minister in London, K. Zarins, at the same time designating as his substitute, A. Bilmanis, Latvian Minister in Washington. Thus, the Latvian President, K. Ulmanis, and the Latvian Government, put all their hopes in the great democracies.

A month later Stalin showed his cards.

IX

LIES AND VIOLENCE AS INSTRUMENTS OF RUSSIAN POLICY.

According to instructions drawn up by the Moscow Politbureau, the task was to stage a *coup d'etat* in several acts in all the three Baltic States at the same time. Unconstitutional "elections" for puppet parliaments were organised with only one party, that of the Communists, permitted. An emissary with special powers from the Kremlin drew up the list of candidates. Participation in these "elections" was compulsory for all citizens, but the voting results were fictitious. The percentage of voters was almost identical in all three countries. Owing to bad stage management the election results were published in the foreign press 24 hours before the count was complete.

During the elections the new pro-Soviet Governments declared that they were all in favour of democracy and the independence of the Baltic States and that all they wanted was to guide their foreign policy in friendship to the U.S.S.R. The emissaries from Moscow and the Communist Party head offices referred to conjectures that the Baltic States might eventually become absorbed into the Soviet Union as malicious rumours and provocative propaganda.

However, at the very first meeting of the new "parliaments" simultaneously in all three republics, two fundamental laws were passed without debate or discussion, without proper voting even: they were passed by acclamation in the all-Communist chambers. According to the Constitutions which the Communists professed to respect, such laws could be passed only by referendum. These laws were: (1) the making of the democratic constitution null and void and the introduction of a Soviet regime, and, (2) a plea to the Supreme Soviet of U.S.S.R. for incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. The emissaries from Moscow were evidently afraid of the results of a referendum and for that reason avoided it. They preferred their illegal method as safer. Being, however, unconstitutional, it is not binding on the Baltic nations. It is not recognised, either, by Great Britain and the U.S.A. Therefore these unilateral acts of force as a purely bare fact of military occupation can in no way annihilate the sovereignty of the Baltic States, which continues to exist *de iure*.

It has been stressed already that the official relations between Russia and Latvia were of the best. The treaties that professed friendship and peaceful collaboration have been enumerated, but it cannot be emphasised enough that Russia had over and over again pledged to refrain "from any act of aggression and violence against Latvia." (See Treaty of Non-Aggression of February 5th, 1932.) Further, Russia had undertaken to submit all disputes, whatever their kind or origin, which could not be settled by ordinary diplomatic methods, to a procedure of arbitration in a joint Conciliation Commission. The functions of this commission were regulated by a special Convention, signed at Riga, June 18th, 1932.

Yet Russia finally resolved on an act of aggression, and disregarded any means of peaceful settlement of the "dispute."

LATVIA AN HONEST AND LOYAL MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

In the short period of her independence, Latvia proved to be an honest and loyal member of the family of democratic nations. Foreign experts, newspapermen and travellers have praised the progress of the Baltic States. The English publicist, O. Keun (*Continental Stakes*, 1944), writes that "these small countries... set an example of peace, common sense, decency and progress to the whole world." Or let us quote from the statement of the Government of the United States, published on July 23rd, 1940: "From the day when the peoples of the republics of Estonia, Latvia

and Lithuania first gained their independence and democratic government, the people of the United States have watched their admirable progress in self-government with deep and sympathetic interest." We must agree with the British author, B. Newman (*The New Europe*, 1943), that "the greatest need of Latvia was the one thing denied — another twenty years of peace."

RIGHT FROM THE START THE SOVIETS TRY TO SUBJUGATE THE BALTIC STATES.

Despite democratic phraseology, international treaties, solemn promises of Soviet statesmen and the word of honour of Stalin himself, Soviet Russia never dropped its imperialistic policy of expansion to the shores of the "Sea of Social Revolution." In December, 1922, after the collapse of the Baltic disarmament conference in Moscow, and in 1926, after the unsuccessful communist coup d'etat in Tallinn of December 1st, 1924, Soviet Russia again offered proposals of a Treaty of Non-Aggression and neutrality with the U.S.S.R. which would have isolated Latvia completely from the League of Nations and put her at the mercy of the Soviets.

Then Soviet Russia tried to achieve the same purpose by approaching Poland on January 5th, 1934, proposing to the latter a scheme for joint Polish-Soviet overlordship over the Baltic States. Poland rejected this offer. In March of 1934 Russia tried to establish her suzerainty, proposing to the Baltic States a joint Russian-German guarantee. This was rejected by Latvia and Germany. Because of Germany's refusal, the pact of "Eastern Locarno," initiated by France and Soviet Russia, also failed.

After Germany retook Memel on March 22nd, 1939, from Lithuania, Moscow announced unilaterally that Latvia and Estonia were in the sphere of Soviet Russian interest and from then on would be under her special protection. This offer was firmly rejected by Latvia and Estonia on April 8th, 1939. In August 1939, British and French diplomats were in Moscow negotiating with Soviet Russia for a treaty against Germany. But these negotiations also failed. In this connection we may quote the words that Lord Halifax said in the House of Lords on December 5th, 1939: "Events have shown that the judgment and the instinct of His Majesty's Government in refusing agreement with the Soviet Government on the terms of formulae covering cases of indirect aggression on the Baltic States were right."

THE FOURTH PARTITION OF POLAND GIVES RUSSIA FREE HAND IN THE BALTIC.

Finally, by the Secret Agreements of August 23rd and September 28th, 1939, concluded between Ribbentrop and Molotov, Soviet Russia obtained her long-desired free hand to occupy the Baltic countries when it chose. Latvia and her sister republics were sold. On September 1st, 1939, Germany attacked Poland, and on September 28th, before Warsaw fell, Ribbentrop and Molotov signed a new Treaty of Friendship, partitioning Poland — the fourth time in her history. The next victim after Poland was Estonia: on September 28th, 1939, she was forced to accept the so-called "Pact of Mutual Assistance." On October 5th came the turn of Latvia. On October 10th that of Lithuania. The Finno-Russian War was not foreseen in the Moscow programme and made the Soviets slow down the tempo of their "foreign policy."

Conditions in Europe had gone from bad to worse. In the middle of June, 1940, Germany was at the peak of her military might. Hitler could freely determine the direction of his next blow.

Therefore Stalin decided to hurry up in order to get the share allotted to him in the Secret Agreement, while the going was still good.

On May 28th, 1940, Molotov sent a note the Lithuanian Minister in Moscow. It dealt with the alleged kidnapping of two Russian soldiers in Lithuania. Lithuania proposed at once that a joint Russian-Lithuanian commission should be appointed for the investigation of the case. Moscow refused, and the day after the fall of Paris, on June 14th, 1940, presented an ultimatum to Lithuania in which it accused the Baltic States of military conspiracy against the U.S.S.R. Lithuania accepted the Soviet ultimatum on June 15th, and immediately large numbers of Red Army troops marched into Lithuania, taking up positions against Latvia and encircling her. On the same day Latvian frontier guards were killed in order to create an incident.

On June 16th, 1940, ultimatums were issued to Latvia and Estonia, containing the following claims: (1) The establishment of pro-Soviet Governments which, under the protection of the Red Army, would be better capable of carrying out the Pacts of Mutual Assistance; (2) The free passage of Soviet troops into Estonia and Latvia in order to place them in the most important centres and to avoid possible provocative acts against Soviet garrisons.

LATVIAN ARMY READY TO FIGHT.

At first the small Latvian army was ready to fight and ammunition was distributed. But, copying the Nazi method in Czechoslovakia, Soviet Russia threatened to bomb Latvian cities if the ultimatum was not accepted. To avoid a useless slaughter the Latvian Government could do nothing but accept it. On June 17th the Red Army, being already concentrated in huge masses on the Russian-Latvian border, entered Latvia, and at noon of the same day appeared in the streets of Riga. On June 18th the Russian cruiser Marat came into the port of Riga, bringing to Latvia the first communist agitators, who, as early as the next day, organised a demonstration of gratitude to extol "Liberator Stalin." The demonstration was preceded by Russian tanks with red banners.

FLIMSAY EXCUSES.

In spite of all the treaties, aggression by the Soviets against the small, peaceful Baltic States became an accomplished fact. As pretext for such an act of violation, we read in the Soviet ultimatum of June 16th, 1940, as follows:

1. Not withdrawing from Military Alliance with Estonia, signed on November 1st, 1923. (This was a purely defensive alliance aimed against any aggressor, which was duly registered with the League of Nations, and never previously had Soviet Russia objected to it.)
2. Extending this Alliance by enticing into it Lithuania and attempting to include in it also Finland. (This assertion was not true. Such a triple alliance was never concluded, and even after the occupation of all three Baltic States, nobody has been able to produce the authentic document of such a treaty, although all the Baltic Archives have been at the disposal of the Soviets.)
3. Holding two secret conferences of the three Baltic States in December, 1939, and March, 1940. (As a matter of fact, at the mentioned times there had taken place the regular conferences of the Baltic Foreign Ministers, but these were neither secret nor dealing with

the alleged Triple Alliance. Such conferences, twice a year, were foreseen in the Treaty of Collaboration of the Baltic States, signed in 1934, and duly lodged with the League of Nations.)

4. Enhancement of relations between the general staffs of the three Baltic States secretly from the Soviet Union. (This pretext is without any ground, and it would be ridiculous to imagine that the three small countries whose ports, airfields, gulfs, islands and barracks were occupied by Russian forces were planning aggression against the U.S.S.R., with her population of 180 millions.)
5. The creation in February, 1940, of a special press organ of the military Baltic Entente — *The Revue Baltique*. (Surely no one can believe that this trilingual press organ, published by the Societies of Friendship of the Baltic peoples, and dedicated to information about cultural and economic life, had been established to discuss the plans of a secret military alliance. There have been in Latvia many similar Societies of Friendship, with Latvian, French, English, Swedish and Italian membership, intended to develop the study of the respective languages, literatures and arts.)

ACCORDING TO PLAN.

The succeeding developments went according to programme: the same for all three Baltic States. Extraordinary envoys from the Kremlin were given charge of the precise fulfilment of the programme. Mr. Vishinsky was stage-manager for Latvia. The next events are briefly the following:

On June 21st Mr. Vishinsky nominated a provisional Government for Latvia, with the instruction to arrange new elections for the Parliament. Although the Electoral Law of June 9th, 1922, foresees that each 100 electors may hand in a list of candidates, these elections took place on July 14th—15th, with only one list of candidates, which was composed by the communist party and affirmed by Mr. Vishinsky. The attempt of Social-Democrats and the Democratic bloc to share in these elections with their own second list failed, because of Mr. Vishinsky's prohibition to print these lists, because of the closing of their election bureau and because of imprisonments made by the N.K.V.D. In the meantime the President of Latvia, K. Ulmanis, and his ministers, were arrested and deported to the U.S.S.R.

On July 21st the newly elected Parliament was convoked and published in a hurry a host of bills on nationalisation and sovietisation of land, rural and urban property, buildings, ships and banking offices, elaborated by the Kremlin, and sent a telegram of gratitude to Stalin for "the deliverance of Latvia from plutocratic yoke.

DEVIIOUS PROCESSES.

Although, before the election, the official organ of the Latvian communist party, *Cina*, and the new Prime Minister, Mr. Kirchensteins, declared as "provocatory" all rumours about the intention of the U.S.S.R. to incorporate Latvia, this question was on the Order of the Day at the first sitting of the "parliament." It was a stunning blow to the electorate. On August 5th, 1940, this enormous constitutional change was already accepted and sealed by the Kremlin, and so at the "free request" of Latvia she lost her sovereignty and was proclaimed the sixteenth republic of the U.S.S.R.

The Soviets may assert as loudly as they please that all this puppetshow managed by Mr. Vyshinsky was enacted according to the stipulations of the Latvian Constitution of February 15th, 1922. All the same, the decision of the Latvian pseudo-parliament remains an act of violation of Latvian laws and constitution. Its sanctioning by the world would be preposterous. Under article 77 of the Latvian Constitution no Acts concerning the independence of the state, its frontiers, the sovereign powers being vested in the people, or concerning the change of the parliamentary electoral law (which prescribes direct, equal, general, secret and proportional ballot) can be adopted by parliament without a following referendum.

These stipulations of the Latvian Constitution can therefore be changed only by popular referendum in which at least two-thirds of the electorate have taken part, and not less than half of the voters have expressed themselves in favour of such changes. The decision of the Latvian pseudo-parliament, therefore, remains null and void and the incorporation into the U.S.S.R. valueless, from the point of view of International Law as well as from the standpoint of Latvian Constitutional Law. The sovereignty of a State cannot be abolished by the bare fact of military occupation, and therefore all three Baltic States remain Sovereign States, in spite of all acts of violence against law, treaties and humanity. This principle has been more than once declared by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the U.S.A.

The Acting Secretary of State of the U.S.A., Mr. Sumner Wells, described the activities of the Soviet in the Baltic in States in 1940 as: "the devious process whereunder the political independence and territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — were to be deliberately annihilated by one of their more powerful neighbours."

Latvia and the other Baltic States have been the victims of brute force and naked might. It is the fundamental principle of the Western civilised world that might does not constitute right. Justice must rule human relations, and for justice we appeal to the Western Christianity.

X

THE LAST ACT OF THE BALTIC TRAGEDY «IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH».

Germany declared war on Soviet Russia on June 22, 1941, and a few weeks later the Red Army was ousted from the Baltic countries. Baltic guerilla units fought against the Russians because they hoped that the Germans would restore independent Baltic States or at least do away with the Bolshevik measures in economic and other fields and because during the one year of Soviet occupation the Russians had deported or murdered 131,500 Balts. They were bitterly disappointed. The Baltic countries and white Ruthenia were turned into a new German province, the so-called Ostland, ruled by German commissars. The Nazis changed but little the Soviet administrative and economic system.

In 1943 and 1944, 150,000 Latvians and Estonians were drafted for service in the so-called Volunteer Legions, These units had nothing in common with the German SS regiments and fought only on the Eastern Front. Underground resistance movements sprung up, and Himmler's police deported, interned into concentration camps and murdered 40.000 Balts and 88.000 Latvian Jews.

The Red Army reoccupied most of the Baltic territory in 1944, while a part of Courland was held by Latvian and German units up to the day of Germany's capitulation on May, 8, 1945. Retreating Germans applied the "scorched-earth policy" in the Baltic countries. About 30,000 Balts escaped to Sweden, while 199,000, fearing Bolshevik terrorism, went, or were deported to Germany. In re-occupied Baltic countries, the Russian interned all civilians in the so-called filtration (screening) camps from where tens of thousands were deported to Russia, while others were temporarily released.

The postwar policy of the Bolsheviks in the Baltic countries is that of Russianization, pauperization and annihilation through deportations of the local inhabitants and sovietization of all walks of life.

Despite everything, the Baltic nations have not lost faith in a free future of their countries. Their hopes are enhanced because their present fate is shared by 8 more European countries and constitutes an unavertable challenge to the western civilization: "To be or not to be".

Stalin's and Hitler's friendship, sealed on August 23, 1939, ended by June 22, 1941. Two days after the declaration of war, the German Army marched into Faunas and Wilno. By July 1st the Red Army had been driven out of Riga. Within a Week, the Baltic area was liberated from the 2nd Russian occupation. As early as the first day of the Russo-German war, uprisings of Baltic patriots took place in all three Baltic republics, and the German troops, knowing that the area behind the fighting lines was safe, could march rapidly eastwards along the main traffic highways. The Baltic attitude can well be understood considering that within a year the Bolsheviks had murdered or deported 131,500 Balts.

The statement which, on instructions of v. Ribbentropp, the German Ambassador to Moscow, von Schulenburg, handed to Molotov on June 21st, read inter alia as follows: § 3. In the diplomatic and military fields it became obvious that the U.S.S.R. — contrary to the declaration made at the conclusion of the treaties that she did not wish to Bolshevize and annex the countries falling within her sphere of influence — was intent on pushing her military might westward wherever it seemed possible and on carrying Bolshevism further into Europe. The action of the U.S.S.R. against the Baltic States, Finland, and Rumania showed this clearly".

Many Balts therefore naively hoped that Germany would restore the independence of their countries or at least rescind the Bolshevik nationalization decrees. As early as June 23rd, Lithuanian patriots had seized the Kaunas radio station and the governmental buildings in which

the provisional Lithuanian Government, headed by J. Ambrazevicius, commenced its activities. Similar uprisings took place in Wilno, Siauliai and elsewhere. The revolt cost the lives of some 4,000 Lithuanian partisans. Guerilla battles against the retreating Red Army also took place in Latvia and Estonia, and for a few days the Riga radio could announce to the world that Latvia was again free from occupants. Arrangements were made for setting up Latvian army and home-guard units, and the formation of a provisional government was negotiated.

However, as early as July 17, the Gauleiter of Schleswig-Holstein, H. Lohse, was appointed Reich Commissar of a new German province, the so-called Ostland, with headquarters in Riga. Subordinate to him were the commissars general in Tallinn, Riga, Kaunas, and also Minsk, as not only the Baltic countries, but also White Ruthenia was included in the Ostland. The policy pursued by Lohse was determined by the Baltic German Alfred Rosenberg and his Ministry for Eastern Affairs in Berlin. The Nuremberg trial revealed Rosenberg's plans to move the Balts to Russia and to settle Germans in the vacated areas.

The German occupation began. Russian commissars were replaced by German, the NKVD was superseded by the Gestapo and the SD, the *Arbeitsamt* succeeded the Labour Commissariat, etc. The German civilian administration consisted in Latvia alone of 17,800 German and their families. These Germans received two or three times as large food rations as the "indigenous people", and had at their disposal the abandoned Russian stocks of clothing and footwear. The names of streets, institutions and commercial and industrial establishments were changed, but the Bolshevik-introduced agencies and methods, and the economic system were retained. Ideologically, the two totalitarian systems were twins. Among other things this was reflected in the fact that the Nazis permitted the reopening of the Bolshevik-closed Faculties of Theology in Riga and Tartu as late as 1943.

The Bolshevik-nationalized land, houses, banks and business enterprises were declared property of the Reich, ostensibly because they were German war booty. The Russian Gosbank (State Bank) was replaced by the German Notenbank Ostland which issued the so-called East-Marks. Industrial and commercial enterprises were managed by specially created German corporations. Textile mills, for example, were managed by the Ostland Faser company. Farmers were formally only managers of their farms and were required to pay high taxes and surrender to the occupation authorities most of their farm produce at ridiculously low prices. Only when the end of the German occupation drew near, was a small portion (6 percent in Lithuania, 12 percent in Estonia and 24 percent in Latvia) of the Bolshevik-confiscated farms restored — with much ceremony — to their rightful owners. The remaining land was held by a German company, *Landwirtschafts Gesellschaft Ostland*, for future distribution among German soldiers.

Workers were not allowed to change employment, and several thousands were sent to Germany for compulsory labour. In 1943 and 1944, by Hitler's order and in violation of the Hague Convention of 1907, 28 annual classes, totalling 150,000 men, were drafted in Latvia and Estonia for service in the so-called Volunteer Legions. Officers had been drafted by individual summons as early as 1942. The aforesaid legions had nothing in common with the German SS-units, the Army of the Party, and they fought only on the Eastern Front. In 1944, also pupils of secondary schools, boys and girls, were mobilized for service in the German Labour Service or the auxiliary air-defense units. The press, radio, theatres, and concerts were controlled by the German SD. As a result of these conditions, a vast resistance movement, led partly by the Latvian political parties,

flared up. It had a press of its own and, in the final phase of the German occupation of Courland, special military units which repeatedly fought against the German forces. Himmler's police grimly persecuted these patriots. About 40,000 Balts were interned in concentration camps at Stutthof near Danzig (6,500 Latvians), Dachau near Munich, Flossenburg and others. Several thousands of the internees were murdered. The Nazis also murdered or deported some 88,000 Latvian Jews. As an outcome of the Russian and German mismanagement, the area of arable land in Latvia had decreased by 30,000 hectares by the beginning of 1943; the decline in livestock was as follows: cattle — 188,000 heads, horses — 14,000, hogs — 342,000, and sheep — 515,000.

During the initial phase of the Russo-German war, large units of the Russian Army surrendered en bloc to the Germans without putting up a real fight. They hoped that the Nazis would do away with the kolkhozes, restore private farms and give freedom to the Bolshevik-oppressed non-Russian peoples — the White Ruthenians, the Ukrainians, the Tartars and the Caucasians. As the Balts, they were bitterly disappointed. The Nazi political leadership was as criminal-minded and dunder-headed as the German soldier was brave. The Russian P.O.Ws were treated as slaves and died by the millions. Guerilla movement flared up in the occupied areas of Russia, as the Germans not only engaged in looting and arson, but also sadistically exterminated peaceful inhabitants. Soon simple Russian soldiers would say: "The Germans are smart indeed, but their smartness is stupidity all the same." An unparalleled surge of patriotic feeling among the Russians was the result which the Bolshevik Party skilfully utilized for its ends.

When the 6th Germany Army met defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, it was clear that the German *Drang nach Osten* was a thing of the past and that now was to commence the *Drang nach Westen* predicted years ago by philosopher Oswald Spengler, and led by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Bolsheviks. Early in 1944 the Red Army reached the Estonian border, on April 2nd it invaded Rumania and on September 4th — Bulgaria; Finland capitulated on September 19th, and on September 29th the Russians marched into Yugoslavia. After the Allied landing in France on June 6th and the Polish rising in Warsaw on August 1st it was not difficult to foresee the final outcome of the war.

On July 13th the Russians took Wilno, on July 27th — Siauliai, and in a surprise thrust reached Jelgava, the capital of Courland, penetrating via Tukums as far as the Gulf of Riga, thus temporarily cutting land communications between German units in eastern Latvia, and Germany. In August, the fighting lines had reached central Vidzeme. On October 13th, Riga fell. On January 17th, 1945 the Red Army took Warsaw, on February 13th — Budapest, on March 30th — Danzig, on April 13th Vienna and on April 30th also Berlin. Only the 19th Division of the Latvian Legion, together with German crack units, continued a desperate fight in the "Courland bridgehead fortress". Germany's capitulation on May 9th forced even these last anti-Bolshevik fighters to lay down arms and surrender to the Russians. A number of the legionaries took to the forests. Together with Estonian and Lithuanian partisans they go on fighting against the occupants even today. Latvian prisoners of war were deported for slave labour to Caucasus, Turkestan and Siberia. In the re-occupied Baltic areas, civilians were interned into the so-called filtration camps. They were kept there for months in conditions unworthy of human beings, until they were either deported, drafted for service in the Red Army or temporarily released. The Russian screening units were particularly ruthless in Courland; all inhabitants over the age of 12 were subject to long hearings and thereupon sent wholesale to Siberia. Of the 60,000 inhabitants of Liepaja alone, 70

freight cars (with 80 Latvians in each) were sent to Russia. About 50 percent of Latvian citizens residing in the small paper-industry town of Sloka whose inhabitants practically consisted of workers were deported.

When the German Army retreated from the Baltic area in 1944, it followed there the "scorched-earth" policy. Everything was subject to wrecking, dynamiting and looting. Even churches, schools and private buildings were not spared. Under the Russian and German fire, Jelgava, the old Ducal metropolis, Daugavpils, the capital of Latgale, and many small towns were turned into a heap of ashes and ruins. In regions where fighting had taken place, entire rural communes were devastated. The last act of the Baltic tragedy "In the Shadow of Death" commenced. Chased from their homes, separated from their mobilized breadwinners, fearing the Red Terror, pushed and persecuted by the German occupation authorities, people of all social groups and occupations, irrespective of their religious and political beliefs, left for a forced or voluntary exile in Germany. About 199,000 Balts, of whom a half were Latvians, including about 15,000 ex-soldiers of the 15th Latvian Division and other units who had surrendered to the British or Americans, reached the western zones of Germany. Persecuted by German and Russian naval and air forces, several thousands found a wet grave in the Baltic Sea, while some 30,000 Balts escaped to Sweden.

On September 24, 1941, at an inter-Allied conference in London, Russia, represented by M. Maiski, endorsed the Atlantic Charter. He stated: "The Soviet Union defends the right of every nation to the independence and territorial integrity of its country, and its right to establish such a social order and to choose such a form of government as it deems opportune and necessary for the better promotion of its economic and cultural prosperity." The same was asserted by M. Litvinov on January 1, 1942 in Washington, when he signed the United Nations Statement in the name of the Soviet Union. The third time we find the same noble principles of the Atlantic Charter in another binding instrument, the twenty-year Mutual Assistance Pact between the Soviet Union and Great Britain, signed on May 26, 1942 by V. Molotov and A. Eden. "Both Powers will", it said, "resist aggression in the postwar period, they will act in accordance with the two principles of not seeking territorial aggrandizement for themselves and of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States."

For the Soviet Union, all these nice words were just a means to fool the public opinion in the United States in order that Russia may receive from America war materials, including 14,000 planes, 7,500 tanks, 333,000 lorries, for a total value of 10 billion dollars under the Lend-Lease Agreement signed on July 11, 1942. With a bitter feeling of irony, the Baltic patriots watched how Russian motorized units, equipped with American tanks and trucks, occupied the Baltic countries in the summer of 1944, although Washington condemned the annexation of Baltic States in 1940 and refuses to recognise even today. Churchill's government, on the other hand, when it signed the Mutual Assistance Pact with the Bolsheviks, recognised de facto the annexation of the Baltic countries. In other words, Great Britain recognised that Russia had the right to expand its territory in 1940 by incorporating Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to sovietize these countries and to force upon them the Bolshevik system of parliament and government. Stalin had made no secret of it, announcing 25 days before the conclusion of the Russo-British pact that the Red Army "intends to liberate the Soviet fatherland and our brothers in the Ukraine, Moldavia, White Ruthenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Carelia". By this declaration he reaffirmed his claim to the legality of the annexation of 1940. These hypocritical statements served the Soviet statesmen to lull the

vigilance of the Western Democracies when Russia occupied Rumania, Bulgaria, Poland and other countries. At the end of the war, the Soviet Union had annexed more than 260,000 squ. miles of foreign territory with a total of 23 million inhabitants. Gradually it lowered the Iron Curtain on eleven former capitals in Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea, achieving an effective control over 300 million people. At the same time, the 6 million members of the Russian Bolshevik Party, although only 3 percent of the population of Soviet Russia, imposed Moscow's orders on 12.5 million communists in other countries.

To enhance patriotic feeling and increase the political weight of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Supreme Council, amending the Constitution of 1936, on February 1, 1944, granted, formally to all 16 federated republics, but in practise only to the Baltic Soviet republics, the Ukraine and White Ruthenia, the right to maintain diplomatic relations with foreign countries. On the basis of this decision the Ukraine and White Ruthenia were admitted to the membership of the United Nations, while the Foreign Ministers of the three Soviet Baltic Republics were sent in July 1946 to the Paris Peace Conference where of the 21 countries represented, none outside the Slav block recognised them as members of Baltic governments. There also are nominally Baltic, Russian-headed military units; however, they are stationed on the coasts of the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific, while the Baltic area has Siberian and Mongolian garrisons.

A. Vishinsky has described the Soviet regime as "dictatorial democracy". It certainly is not the dictatorship of the proletariat as preached by Marxism, but a dictatorship of the 14 members of the Political Bureau (including 11 Russians and 3 Caucasians) and the autocracy of political police. The Party is a centralized hierarchy of bureaucrats which consumes 65 percent of the national income. In "plutocratic" Latvia, the relation between the lowest and highest salaries of civil servants was 1:10—12, in "democratic" Russia the same relation is 1:80—100. A director of a plant or trust has a salary which exceeds 50—60 times that of an unskilled worker who earns 200—300 rubles a month, while qualified workers receive 450 rubles monthly. After the deduction of taxes and "voluntary contributions" of various types, the monthly earnings of a worker suffice to buy 1 kilogram of butter or a pair of shoes which in 1947 cost 288 rubles while the price of men's suits is 450 rubles. In order to buy a kilogram of rye bread, a Soviet worker must work 1 hour and 8 minutes, and a Swedish worker only 19 minutes, to earn a litre of milk one needs 2 hours and 19 minutes in Russia and only 10 minutes in Sweden, to buy a men's suit a Soviet worker must work 117 hours, a British only 24 hours, etc. As a result, no other country in Europe has so many beggars as the Soviet Union. After the re-occupation of the Baltic countries, crowds of them moved west in order to plunder and loot the homes of the Baltic "bourgeois" whom the Soviet authorities did not bother to protect. What a contrast between the Russian "bag-men", clad in tatters and rags, and a Party Secretary, a Police Chief or an Army General with golden epaulettes reminiscent of the Tsarist times, and a monthly salary of 30,000 rubles !

The indigence of the Soviet citizen is not a result of World War II. It is a permanent peace-time phenomenon. A comparison. of a few statistical data on economic conditions in Russia and Latvia suffices to make this clear to every one. In 1938 Latvia had for every 100 inhabitants 20 horses, 61 heads of cattle, 41 hogs and 68 sheep, while in Soviet Russia the corresponding figures were 10, 37, 18 and 60 respectively. In the same year Latvia produced per head of population 85 kilograms of meat, 835 kg milk, 15 kg butter, 1.3 kg wool, and 12,7 flax fibre. In the Soviet Union the figures were 21,170,0.8, 1.2 and 3.4 respectively. Although Latvia's population was 85 times smaller than

Russia's, the former exported 19,221 metric tons of butter, the latter only 14,662 tons. In 1937, there were in Latvia 1 bicycle for every 40 inhabitants and 1 domestically-made radio receiver per 100 inhabitants, in Russia there was 1 bicycle per 440 and one receiving set per 850 inhabitants. Floor space per inhabitant was in Riga (in 1939) 9 squ. metres, but in the Soviet Union, despite the publicized 5-Year building plans less than 4 squ. metres. Per inhabitant, 78 kg of cement were made in Latvia and 34 kg in Russia, 63 kg of bricks in Latvia and 51 kg in Russia. Although the circulation of Soviet propaganda publications reaches millions of copies and such publications were practically non-existent in Latvia, the paper consumption in kilograms per inhabitant was in 1937–38 as follows: in Latvia — newsprint — 4.2, books 1.9, commerce and industry — 7.3, while in Russia the corresponding figures were 1.2, 0.6, and 2.6 respectively. Hence, the Latvians used for newspapers 3.5 times more and for books 3 times more paper than the Russians. Despite mendacious allegations to the contrary, the Baltic countries have justified their secession from Russia in 1918 by their economic and cultural development in the following 20 years. The three Baltic countries with a total of 6 million inhabitants, had 0.5 percent of the world trade, while vast Russia with 170 million inhabitants only 1.1 percent. Now, when the Baltic countries are occupied by Russia, their exports are lost for the world trade.

All the achievements in the Baltic countries were the result of strenuous work, private enterprise and a free economic system, unaided by foreign loans and rich natural resources. It is not a mere coincidence that the Baltic countries had the highest percentage of gainfully employed population in Europe (Lithuania 67 percent, Latvia 64 and Estonia 63), also ranking above the "fatherland of all working people", the Soviet Union (57 percent). Under the Russian Tsars (in 1897), only 39 percent of rural inhabitants were landowners, but after the Agrarian Reform, as devised by the Constituent Assembly, 77 percent of all rural inhabitants in Latvia were smallholders and only 23 percent landless (in 1930).

The Bolsheviks knew well that a social pattern with an overwhelming majority of owners of private property will always be hostile to the Soviet regime and the dictatorship of the Communist Party. When the Bolsheviks occupied the Baltic countries in 1940, their first task was therefore to expropriate property, whatever its type, with a view to pauperizing and proletarianizing the population. A new land reform was carried out. All farms whose area exceeded 30 hectares were to be divided among the landless. The number of such farms was 39,800 and their aggregate area 1,885,300 hectares or 42 percent of all former farmers' land. In their stead were set up, on paper, 70,000 dead-born new farms (10 hectares each) which received no aid in the form of credits, equipment or building material. It was clear to anyone that this reform was just a propaganda move and that the Bolsheviks would not tolerate individual farms, since in Russia 94 percent of all farms were collectivized by 1938. The German invasion put a stop to the realization of further Russian plans. They were however taken up in 1944–45 when the Baltic area was occupied for the third time by Soviet Russia.

The first 4 kolkhozes (i.e. collective farms) were established in Latvia in the winter of 1946–47 with a total area of 1,000 hectares. The Soviet authorities gave these kolkhozes whatever aid they could. By September 1, 1947, the number of Latvian kolkhozes had grown to 16, by January 1, 1948 to 49 and by May 1, 1949 to 3800, including 80 percent of all Latvian farmers. The average area of a kolkhoze is 300 hectares. The yield per man is so low that 4.6 workers are needed for every 10 hectares of land, while in independent Latvia 10 hectares were handled by 1.7 workers. In return

for his work, the kolkhoze farmer receives 2 to 10 rubles a day plus a few kilograms of grain or potatoes. His average earning is 3.5 lower than that of an American farmer. These starvation earnings in the kolkhozes are due not only to the low work yield, but also to high management cost, excessive operation expenses (about 25 percent of the harvest) of the Machine and Tractor Stations and taxes in kind collected for Russia's benefit. A kolkhoze farmer may retain as his own a kitchen-garden of 0.25—0.6 hectares, 1—2 cows, 2 calves, 1 hog and 10 goats or sheep, but not one horse. 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 1860's. The only difference is that now the land of this manor is tilled with tractors and harvesters. According to a decree of the Soviet Government, dated July 7, 1948, no kolkhoze member may leave the kolkhoze or change his residence without a special permit. This means that serfdom is re-established even formally in the Soviet Union.

Although no one is compelled under the law to join a kolkhoze, the Party and the police bring a increasingly growing pressure to bear upon the individual farmers ("kulaks" in the Soviet terminology), threatening to denounce them as saboteurs and traitors. Driven to despair, many farmers burn their farms, take to the woods and join the partisans. People of more passive character, intimidated by the incessant deportations, clench their teeth and "voluntarily" join the kolkhoze. Another means of compulsion used to bring about this result is the Soviet taxation system. For instance : the annual income from a farm with 7 hectares of arable land, 3 cows and 2 horses is fixed by the Soviet authorities to 20,000—25,000 rubles, 75 percent of which is confiscated as taxes. Certain amounts of grain, milk, meat, wool, flax, etc. must be surrendered to the Government at ridiculously low prices. These amounts are fixed in utter disregard of the production capacity of individual farms. In order to compel farmers to sell their horses to the kolkhozes, the former are imposed exorbitant taxes on their horses. Having lost his horse, the farmer is dependent on the good will of the near-by horse-and-tractor lending station which for a high cost plows the land of the "kulak" and harvests his crop, if all kolkhoze work is completed. Moreover, each winter every woman in a farm must cut 16 cubic metres and every man 30 cubic metres of wood; in addition, 60 cubic metres of wood materials for each horse must be carted to a prescribed place from where the wood is shipped to Russia. There is a variety of other statute work for road maintenance and fortifications. Police and Party officials see to it that the farmers actually comply with the aforementioned tax, delivery and statute work requirements. Non-compliance is prosecuted as sabotage. If the sentence is heavier than 1 year of hard labour, the convict is deported to the slave camps in Russia where, according to the report of the British Assistant Foreign Secretary Mayhew to the Social Commission of the United Nations Organisation in October 1948, about 15 millions of Soviet citizens are kept in conditions which would be too bad even for cattle.

Although disrupting the erstwhile first-rate agriculture of the Baltic states, collectivization is being speeded up for purely political reasons — in order to annihilate a class which is opposed to the Bolshevik dictatorship, by making of economically independent smallholders rural proletarians and rightless statute workers. The Soviet regime with its iconas of Party leaders and sanctified and hallowed "Brief Course of the Party" which every Soviet citizen is obliged to know by heart is organically repugnant to the critical mind of the Balts after the 20 years of independence under the sun of western civilization.

The Kremlin potentates know this well enough and regard with undisguised suspicion not only Baltic farmers but also the seemingly loyal local communists. It will be remembered that in the 1937 purge, in Moscow alone of 16,000 Latvian communists 13,000 were liquidated or given hard-labour sentences. Although some of the posts of People's Commissars, now styled Ministers, are occupied by Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian Bolsheviks, the latter have no real power, and for lack of other work write novels or earn their 30,000 rubles a month by lauding and thanking in addresses and writings their masters in the Kremlin. The people who really rule the Baltic countries now are the Russian Assistant Ministers, party secretaries, directors of plants and trusts, and chiefs of public and secret police. In the 10th Congress of the Latvian Bolshevik Party in Riga in January 1949 participated 489 delegates representing 31,000 Party members (at the time of the 9th congress there were only 2,800 Party members) or 1.5 percent of the Latvian population. The classification of the 489 delegates according to their racial origin and social status is illuminating: civil servants — 55 percent, factory workers — 38 percent and only 7 percent farmers. Of all the delegates, only 53 percent were Latvians. This shows that Soviet Latvia is a typical country of government officials, all leading functionaries of which, moreover, are Russians.

A significant ideological change took place in the Bolshevik Party during the war: the merger of the totalitarian communism with the Russian imperialism of the Tsarist era. The result is now the ruthless russification of the racial minorities and their physical extermination. In the schools, press, radio, theatres, literature, art and science, everything Russian is being extolled ad nauseam and western civilization is being belittled. In the non-Russian republics the teaching of Russian in the elementary schools has been intensified, and Russian works, in the original language or translations are commencing to predominate in the programmes of publishing houses and entertainment. What can and what cannot be sung, played, read, written or painted in Tallinn, Riga and Kaunas is decided by the Kremlin. Without speaking of the mental sciences which, as a matter of fact, do not exist in the Soviet Union as understood in the western countries, even representatives of the natural and technical sciences must periodically appear before the Heresy Court of the Party and are publicly accused of non-compliance with Lenin's and Stalin's doctrines. If their penitence, and promises to do better are not considered sufficient, the accused are expelled from the universities or institutes.

In 1941 the Russians deported 131,500 Balts, but the filtration commissions of 1944–45 exiled from the Baltic countries 400,000 to 500,000 inhabitants. Open wholesale deportations have been reported now, and every night hundreds of peoples disappear, taken away by the Political Police. According to unofficial reports. 3,000 to 5,000 Balts are being deported every month from each of the Baltic countries. These countries are freed of their inhabitants formally in a legal way: by notices of draft for labour service, as every ministry in Moscow (their number lies between 30 and 40) has the right to demand manpower from the "sister republics" for road building, work in mines, and plants, and may draft men up to the age of 64 and women — up to 55 years.

For the same purpose, the children of "kulaks", in the age of 14–17, are recruited for training in special factory and labour reserve schools and, upon graduation, sent to Russia. Every 100 rural inhabitants (between the ages of 14 to 55) must provide for this labour service two boys. According to the 1948 plan, a total of 1.1 million youths were to be drafted for this service in all of the Soviet Union. Entire sea-coast regions where fortifications are being built have been cleaned of Baltic fishermen and farmers by deporting them to the islands on the Pacific coast. Wives of

husbands who live in exile or have been deported to Russia are compelled to sue for divorce, and thereupon they are forced to marry Russians and Mongolians who are being systematically imported for colonization purposes. These foreigners are given Latvian names and Latvian documents (citizenship) in order that, in the case of a possible plebiscite under international control, they provide the necessary majority for a final decision of the fate of the Baltic States.

Thus, for eight years, especially after 1944, everything is done in order to scatter three civilized nations of Western Europe — the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians — all over the numerous slave camps beyond the Polar Circle, in Turkestan, Kazakstan and the Far East.

And still, despite everything, at the 30th annual turn of our national independence and in the most tragic phase of our national history we have not lost faith in the victory of the divine justice over might. God's mill mills slow but good. Never before in its history has Russian imperialism subjugated under its uncontrolled domination so many free nations as today. We are no longer just 6 million Balts, now our number has grown by more than 100 millions, as 8 more countries, situated between the Arctic Ocean and the Adriatic Sea, have become our allies. In 1939 they all were free, now they are Kremlin's satellites. Therefore we can say that the number of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians is small, but their cause is great, since it is a question of world conscience and an unavertable challenge to the entire western civilization:

"To be or not to be".

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