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TOWARD THE BALTIC UNION: The Initial Phase

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This article is the first part of a three-part study in the diplomatic history of the Baltic States by prof. Anderson. The chronologically later parts already have been published in LITUANUS: "[Toward the Baltic Union, 1920-1927](#)", 1966, No. 2, pp. 30-56; and "[Toward the Baltic Union, 1927-1934](#)", 1967, No. 1, pp. 5-28.

Because of its geographical position, excellent harbors and considerable lack of land barriers, the Baltic area has always had an important role in the history of Europe. Oriented toward the sea, the Baltic area, measuring roughly 400 by 250 miles, comprises a territory larger in size than that of England and Wales or approximately half of that of Japan or California. The area, however, is thinly populated and the bulk of the population is formed by three different nations — the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians who have lived in the Baltic since very long ago. The Lithuanians in the south and Latvians in the center are united racially and linguistically. The Latvians are also related to a certain degree to the Estonians in the north by having a considerable admixture of the Livian blood. The Livians, closely related to the Estonians, were the original inhabitants of Northern Vidzeme (Livland) and Kurzeme (Courland). The Estonians and Latvians are further united by a common Lutheran faith, similar history and cultural trends. The eastern Latvians — Latgians — served as a link with the Lithuanians. They shared their fate with the Lithuanians, had similar cultural development and have a common Catholic religion.

During the late Middle Ages and even centuries thereafter, while Lithuania still remained independent, the Latvian and Estonian lands were divided up by their neighbors — Germans, Swedes, Danes, Poles and Russians. Thus a cultural estrangement took place between the three Baltic nations. Even after 1795, when they were all "united" within the borders of the Russian Empire, estrangement was maintained by stringent local regulations and the institution of serfdom which was abolished in Estonia and most of Latvia in a period from 1816 to 1819, but in Lithuania and Latgale only in 1861.

The movements of emancipation and socialism brought together the educated leaders of the Baltic nations in the Estonian and Latvian educational centers — Tartu (Dorpat), Riga and Jelgava (Mitau) as well as in the Russian and Western European major cities. In all three Baltic nations there started to develop interest in the history and culture of their neighbors. They found much in common — especially a common struggle against injustices and oppression. Life-long friendships and cooperation developed among some of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian leaders.¹

During the First World War more than one million Latvians and Lithuanians were forced to leave their homes and find refuge in Russia and also in Estonia. Common experiences and sufferings, common hatred of the German invaders and of the corrupt Russian government as well as similar interests, further united the Baltic peoples. The Baltic soldiers fought together in the ill-fated armies of Rennenkampf and Samsonov. Many Estonian and Lithuanian soldiers also fought in the ranks of the Latvian Rifle Brigades. Some of them later became distinguished leaders in their own national armies.²

In their disgust of the corrupt Czarist government the Baltic nations started to formulate demands for self-government. Some Baltic leaders went even further. The congress of the American Lithuanians held at Chicago, USA from September 21 to 24, 1914, already demanded Lithuanian-Latvian federation. The idea of the federation took root and was elaborated upon in the publications of Jonas Šliupas and Count O. V. de Milosz-Milasius. On October 4, 1915, a joint Lithuanian-Latvian congress took place in Berne, Switzerland, where the idea of a federation was further expounded but found little enthusiasm among the Latvians, many of whom suspected their southern neighbors of pro-German sympathies. On

December 2, 1917, when the proposed federation was formally discussed in the conference of the Latvian Provisional National Council at Volga (Valka), the idea was dismissed for the same reason.³ The first contacts between the Estonian and Latvian representatives on an official mission can be traced back to the Russian State Conference at Moscow from August 25 to 28, 1917, when the Latvian Duma representative, Janis Zalitis and the Estonian professor Ants Piip demanded that the Russian government should pay more attention to the interests of the small, painfully suffering Baltic nations.⁴ Cooperation was continued in the Congress of the Russian minorities, organized by the Ukrainian Rada in Kiev from September 21 to 28, 1917, and in the Democratic Conference at Petrograd on September 27 of the same year.⁵

During the revolutionary turmoil in Russia, one of the Estonian nationalist leaders, Jaan Tonisson, proposed a joint Scandinavian-Baltic federation as the best solution to the Baltic problems. Without questioning the soundness of the idea, on September 7, 1917, the Estonian Council of the Land (Maanoukogu) dismissed the proposal as Utopian for the time being.⁶

Cooperation between the Baltic nations became more intense after they had proclaimed their independence in 1918. Their independence was immediately threatened by three common adversaries — the Germans, the Bolshevik internationalist movement, and the reactionary Russian Whites. All of them had many sympathizers while the Baltic nations had emerged as almost unknown entities. The financial and material resources of the Baltic leaders in their devastated and depopulated countries were almost nil. Still they even tried to help each other in distress.

Already in November and December, 1918, the Estonian and Latvian statesmen had made their first contacts. On January 20, 1919, the Estonian government allowed the Latvians to form their military units on Estonian soil for the liberation of Latvia. This act proved to be of the greatest importance both to Latvia and Estonia. Organization of the Latvian troops was facilitated by a provisional treaty signed between the Estonian and Latvian government representatives on February 18, 1919. The treaty was later replaced by another on July 21, 1919. Fighting side by side, the Estonian and Latvian soldiers not only defended the Estonian territories but also freed most of Northern Latvia from the Red armies. United they also faced another common adversary — the German Baltic Landeswehr. Behind its cover the German imperial and reactionary circles wanted to secure a foothold for the execution of their more far-reaching plans, which involved restoration of reactionary regimes in both Germany and Russia. It was mainly due to the far-sightedness of the Estonian statesmen, the efforts of the Estonian soldiers and heavy sacrifices of the patriotic Latvian population that the German troops were routed at Cesis (Vonnu) on June 22, 1919. The Estonian land and naval forces also helped the Latvians to liberate their capital city. Later the Estonians held a considerable sector of the Latvian eastern front north of the Lake Lubas as long as the Latvians were organizing their own defence forces and holding the western front. Certain difficulties were experienced by the impoverished Latvian population in Northern Latvia in the form of heavy requisitions, etc., but these difficulties don't overshadow the remarkable deeds of the Estonian armed forces on behalf of their neighbors.⁷ One may wonder if the Latvians ever realized how decisive and important was the assistance of their northern neighbor in Latvia's struggle for independence.

The Lithuanian Government, too, demonstrated its far-sightedness when it loaned five million marks to the Latvian government, hard-pressed by the German authorities, on March 1, 1919, from the loan of 100 million marks the Lithuanians had just received from Germany which for political reasons treated Lithuania more lightly. The Latvians, on the other hand, opened the harbor of Liepaja (Libau) to their Lithuanian neighbors for their use.⁸

Of great importance was the cooperation between the representatives of the three Baltic nations in the Paris Peace Conference. One has to mention particularly such broad-minded statesmen as the leaders of the Estonian and Latvian delegations — Jaan Poska and Jams Cakste. Similarly important in fostering the idea of cooperation between the Baltic States were the activities of Kaarel Robert Pusta, Ants Piip, Zigfrids Anna Meierovics, Janis Seskis, Karlis Ozols, etc. It was somewhat more difficult to cooperate with some of the Lithuanian leaders. They still cherished the idea of creating a Greater Lithuania which would involve territories where the Lithuanians were only a minority and which would invite intrigues and insecurity.

In spite of these difficulties, the cooperation between most of the Baltic diplomats, Lithuanians included, was very close and cordial. There was something of a brotherhood in their relations. In case of need they always helped each other with advice and information, and sometimes even with badly needed cash from their own meager resources. On several occasions, e. g., on April 19 and June 17, 1919, they organized a united front in their struggle against numerous and influential enemies of independent Baltic republics. During the Peace Conference the Estonians expounded the idea of a Baltic federation which was greeted by the Latvians and Finns but dismissed by the leaders of the Lithuanian delegation at that time."

On August 26, 1919, the British representative, General Marsh, tried to organize the armed forces of the Baltic States, Poland, the Russian troops of General Yudenich, sponsored by the Allies, and the Russian-German troops of Colonel Bermond-Avalov, sponsored by the Germans, for a joint action against the Bolsheviks. His attempts failed due to the distrust of the Baltic nations of the Russian Whites and due to the machinations of the Germans and Bermond.¹⁰

New skills in the cooperation of the Baltic diplomats were required when the Soviet government invited the Baltic States, on August 31, 1919, to end the hostilities. Previously the Baltic governments had relied heavily on the Entente powers. These powers, however, had considered them mainly as a factor in their anti-Bolshevik campaigns to be written off as soon as the anti-Bolshevik powers became victorious in Russia. The principle of self-determination of nations was not meant for the peoples under Russian, British or French domination. Still there were circles in the British government which favored independent Baltic countries and there were Americans such as Herbert C. Hoover, future President of the United States, and Professor Samuel E. Morison, who were sympathetic to the aspirations of the Baltic nations.

If the Baltic States would sign peace treaties with the Soviet government, which was not yet recognized by anybody, they would run the risk of displeasure and boycott by the Entente powers. On the other hand, if the Soviet government were to be victorious against its other adversaries, the Baltic States would run the risk of losing their independence irrespective of their treaties with the Soviets. There were still the members of the ill-fated Baltic Soviet governments busy in Moscow. There were also sizeable White Russian formations on the territories of the Baltic States and a considerable portion of Latvia was held by the Soviet troops. The Baltic governments were not yet able to stand on their own feet without assistance from foreign quarters.

In such circumstances the Baltic leaders decided that it was in their best interests to confer and form a common policy. The first conference of the Baltic States took place in Riga from September 10 to 12, 1919. Only the Latvians and Estonians could participate in it. The Finns and Lithuanians could not attend because of poor transportation conditions. The participants decided not to sacrifice at their peace talks with the Russians those Latvian territories which were still held by the Soviets.

In the second conference in Tallinn from September 14 to 15, 1919, the Finnish, Latvian and Estonian delegations were headed by the Prime Ministers and the Lithuanian delegation contained high ranking government officials. The participants realized that the continuation of hostilities with the Soviets would only help Kolchak, who did not recognize the Baltic governments. On the other hand, the Baltic States did not want to create difficulties with the Allies, who alone rendered some assistance to them. The military representatives proposed the withdrawal of the Soviet troops to the line — Petrograd-Dno-Welikije Luki-Witebsk-Orsha and the internment of the Soviet navy in neutral harbors. The British diplomatic representatives warned the Baltic countries as early as September 16, 1919, that Great Britain would not favor their signing peace treaties with the Soviet government. The United States and France presented similar warnings within the next few days. Probably for this reason the Latvian and Lithuanian representatives did not appear at the preliminary Estonian-Soviet conference at Pskow from September 17 to 19, 1919.

The third conference took place at Tartu from September 29 to October 1, 1919. The delegations were headed by the Prime Ministers of Finland, Estonia and Latvia and the Deputy Prime Minister of Lithuania. Influenced by the Estonians, the Baltic leaders had decided to end the hostilities with the Soviets, but Finland hesitated to take such a step. It was agreed that the peace talks should be postponed until October that the Soviet government should be asked to compensate the Baltic countries for their losses during World War I and the War of Liberation, and that a neutral zone should be created along the ethnographic borders of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to be supervised by the League of Nations. Ingrians and Karelians who, notwithstanding the fact that they were related to the Estonians and Finns, would be left, because of their small numbers, within the Russian realm, provided that their interests would be protected by the Russians. The Allied and Associated powers would be asked to recognize the Baltic States de jure. The four countries also agreed to maintain a common policy, at least until the conclusion of the peace talks. If the peace conference were to end in failure, the countries would have a free hand in dealing with the Russians. During this conference the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Mykolas Sleževičius, had proposed the creation of a Baltic alliance or federation. By now the Lithuanians were already having difficulties with Poland, which had coveted and occupied the ancient Lithuanian capital city, Vilnius, as well as the surrounding area. The Baltic States already had two enemies. They could not afford a third one.¹¹

The attack of the German-Russian forces under Bermond-Avalov on October 8, 1919, interrupted further discussions in regard to the peace talks with the Soviets. There was a conspicuous calm on the Soviet-Baltic front except for the push of Yudenich toward Petrograd, which posed considerable danger to the Soviet state. Estonia and Lithuania were much concerned with the fate of Latvia. The Latvian and Lithuanian general staff had already foreseen such an invasion and had sent the armored trains Kapten Irv and Nr. 2 to Riga to support the Latvian ground forces. The French and the British naval squadrons rushed to the Gulf of Riga. The situation was deadly serious. If the Latvian forces were routed, nothing could save Lithuania and Estonia. Yudenich's forces would definitely merge with Bermond's forces and the Baltic States would either become an armed camp of the reactionary forces or turn Communist.¹²

As a result of the declaration by the Polish Commander-in-Chief, General Jozef Pilsudski, that the Lithuanians might rest assured that the Poles were not going to exploit the situation in case of transfer of the Lithuanian troops from the eastern front against Bermond in the west, the Lithuanians started to harass the German-Russian forces in the rear, while the Latvian troops, initially supported by the Allied naval forces, routed Bermond's mercenary army in the north.¹³

While the military actions in the west still continued, the Baltic representatives met again at Tartu on November 9 and 10, 1919, to continue discussions on the Soviet proposals for peace. The Ukrainians, Finns, Poles and White Ruthenians sent their observers. While Estonia and Lithuania were ready to start peace talks immediately, the Latvians wanted to liberate

the rest of their country from the Bolsheviks first. On November 17 the Soviet representative Maxim Litvinov, on his way for the talks with the British in Copenhagen, agreed with the Baltic representatives to exchange prisoners, both military and political. On November 18 the Estonians decided to go ahead alone with their plans for a conference on peace with the Soviets. Their conference started on December 6, 1919. The Latvian and Lithuanian observers arrived at Tartu on December 8 and 12, respectively. Unable to make an agreement with the Russians the Estonian leader Poska broke off conversations until January 3, 1920.¹⁴

In the meantime, following the Latvian proposal in October, 1919, the Latvian and Lithuanian representatives met in Kaunas from December 10 to 12, for the discussions on the Latvian-Lithuanian military alliance. Latvian foreign minister Meierovics expressed his hope that Estonia and Finland would conclude a similar alliance but Zamuels hoped that the Poles would be able to join the Latvian-Lithuanian military alliance at a later date.¹⁵

On December 19, the British military representative Sir Alfred Burt suggested to the Lithuanian Commander-in-Chief that the Baltic military chiefs should meet periodically for discussions of a military-political nature, defence of their borders, armaments and supplies and the basis for closer cooperation and consolidation of their forces.

The Baltic military leaders met indeed on January 6, 1920, in a highly secret conference at Valga. They made agreements on exchange of war materials, periodic meetings and proposals for a military alliance which should be elaborated upon by political leaders.¹⁶

The political leaders missed their unique opportunity to conclude a military alliance. The Lithuanian leaders did not like the Latvian and Polish cooperation in the liberation of Southern Latgale in January 1920. Estonia had already concluded an armistice treaty with the Soviet government — a fact that caused some concern among the other Baltic countries. The Lithuanians could not be persuaded to cooperate with the Poles, who were soon forced by the Red armies to leave Vilnius (Wilno). The conference of five powers — Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — met at Helsinki from January 15 to 23, 1920. The conference demonstrated a sudden disunity and local interests on the part of most of the delegates who sensed the lessening of dangers in common to all of them.

The countries agreed not to sign peace treaties with Soviet Russia before a military convention could be worked out. After an agreement on the military convention the countries might not sign separate treaties with Russians anyway. The representatives of a totally exhausted Estonia announced, however, that they were going to sign a treaty with Soviet Russia. Poland was willing to recognize all of the Baltic states de jure except Lithuania. The Lithuanians preferred a military alliance between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania only, while the Estonians preferred a five-power alliance, including Finland and Poland. Such an alliance could be more realistic but also more dangerous because of territorial ambitions on the part of some Polish leaders. The Finns wanted to recover Eastern Karelia, while the other countries had already recovered their national territories and were in no mood to renew a full scale war with Russia.

In spite of these disagreements the Latvian foreign minister, Meierovics, was still very optimistic about the future cooperation and hoped that Riga would become the geographical center of the embryonic Baltic Entente.¹⁷

Three months later the representatives met again in Warsaw except for the Lithuanians who were not invited by Poland. The Latvian foreign minister was quite shocked when he saw the Rumanian representatives instead of Lithuanian representatives at the conference on March 6, 1920. He suggested to the Estonians and Finns to hold a secret conference with the Lithuanians at Riga on their way home from Warsaw. The Finns were not interested in cooperating with Lithuania because she no longer had a common boundary with Russia. To the Poles and Finns this was not a regional conference but a conference of the cordon sanitaire which should separate "sick" Russia, contaminated with the "bacillus bolshevicus", from the rest of Europe. More aggressive people had come to power in Poland. They asked Latvia to join a military alliance against Russia, Germany and Lithuania. They asked the Latvians to cede the Daugavpils (Dvinsk) — Vilnius (Wilno) railway along with the surrounding Latvian territories to Poland for "guaranteeing" more rapid Polish military aid to Latvia, free access to the Latvian harbors and use of the Latvian railways leading to them. These proposals, made on March 9, 12 and 13, 1920, were flatly rejected by the Latvian representatives, and on March 22 the Latvian Commander-in-Chief, General Janis Balodis informed his former Polish comrades-in-arms that the Latvian army was now strong enough to relieve the Polish troops from their task of defending Latvian territory on the right bank of Daugava (Dvina).¹⁸

The next conference was scheduled to take place at Riga on March 15, 1920, but it was not held because of Lithuanian-Polish controversies. Meierovics did not want to give up his pet project of seeing all the Baltic countries, Poland and possibly also the Scandinavian countries united in a huge bloc between Germany and Russia. This was the same project Tonisson had proposed in 1917. At the end of June he started preparations for a conference to take place at Riga and Bulduri on July 20. Like the previous one at Warsaw it would be a conference of the cordon sanitaire rather than a Baltic conference. It was not an easy job. The Latvians had some of their problems, too, in regard to the frontiers with Estonia and Lithuania. They had to be settled first. The conference was postponed until August 6, 1920.¹⁹

Unlike the border problems of the Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Rumanians and many others, the Baltic border problems were not of such a serious nature, because the ethnographic boundaries of the Baltic nations were fairly distinct.

With good will and understanding on the part of all concerned they could have been solved without any disagreements and exchanges of sharp words. It is easy to say so now. It was not easy in a post-war Europe when national feelings were strongly intensified and the newly liberated nations suddenly realized how small their territories in the ruins of the former empires were. Many Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, without adequate preparations, suddenly elevated to the level of statesmen, were not yet grown up to their duties and responsibilities. An aggravated sense of importance, exalted national pride and complete absence of broader concepts of cooperation between the Baltic nations, so precariously placed between greater powers, was demonstrated by many an Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian in those days when they were competing for political leadership in their respective countries. A demagogic phrase could win more votes than scholarly investigation of the Baltic problems or academic discourse on the future Entente of the Baltic States. The masses had been fighting for the liberation of their countries and not for the Baltic Entente. They were immensely proud of their newly gained freedom and did not want to surrender any fraction of it for the sake of a nebulous togetherness with their neighbors.

The urge to fight for freedom was now replaced by the urge to lead, organize and administer. While their countries were still lying in ruins, some Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian politicians and publicists already dreamed happily about Greater Estonia, Greater Latvia or Greater Lithuania. These dreams could not be materialized and reconciled. Therefore every square mile of additional territory carved out along the border line seemed to be of utter importance.

Fortunately there was only a great deal of noise to the delight of Germans and Russians. Common sense prevailed and the border problems were solved by a joint commission with neutral British chairmen — Colonel Sir Stephen George Tallents in the case of the Latvian-Estonian dispute and Professor J. W. Simpson in the case of the Latvian-Lithuanian dispute. There were still unnecessary, dramatic, formal resignations of the Latvian and Estonian cabinets when the decisions were announced, in order to pacify the excited populations, and Colonel Tallents was simultaneously labeled by both the Estonians and the Latvians as a friend of the others. All he actually cared for was a durable settlement of borders and the Baltic Entente. There were unnecessary incursions of some Lithuanian units into Latvian territory and a sudden expulsion of several hundred Lithuanians and Latvians from the countries of their blood brothers, but the situation was quickly brought back under control. Estonia and Latvia solved their border problems on July 3, 1920, with subsequent additional settlements. Latvia and Lithuania solved their problems on March 20, 1921. Later the Baltic States had no border problems whatever. Valga became a model of international cooperation of border communities. While all countries have gone through the difficult stage of tracing their borders, many of them have had to realize that their border problems were permanently built-in. Luckily the Baltic States did not face such problems. The borders were there to stay and the laws of minorities protected the cultural autonomy of the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians in all Baltic countries.²⁰

There remained a problem of future cooperation and strengthening of security of the new Baltic States. There were several possibilities. The boldest idea was the one of a large federation or union of the Scandinavian countries, Finland, the Baltic States and Poland, or just the federation of the Scandinavian and Baltic States and Finland. There was also another scheme which visualized an alliance between all the countries bordering Russia in the West — Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and plus or minus Rumania, or plus or minus the Ukraine. There were some other proposals on a smaller scale — the federation of Finland and Estonia, and Latvia and Lithuania, both of them based on blood relations. Next in line was the federation or alliance of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and failing that — an Estonian-Latvian Entente. A few narrow-minded politicians believed that the small Baltic countries could live by themselves in complete isolation.

The next test was to be the Conference of Riga or Bulduri from August 6 to September 6, 1920. The Latvians organized it very enthusiastically. They invited not only Finland, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland but also the Scandinavian countries. The Scandinavian kingdoms did not answer and did not even send observers. This was an indication that the Scandinavian countries should be omitted from the plans for the time being. The Ukrainians and White Ruthenians arrived uninvited. The Ukrainian representatives were finally admitted on August 20, but not the White Ruthenians — on the grounds that Soviet Russia might be offended. Rumanians declared on August 18 that all the countries from the Baltic down to the Aegean Sea should form a barrier against Bolshevism but they were not invited for this bridge, not a barrier, between the East and West. The former attitude of the Polish representatives had disappeared because their country was in a grave situation. The Soviet troops had routed two of their armies and were on the way to Warsaw. More far-sighted Polish leaders were listened to now. The Lithuanians arrived greatly strengthened. For a while they had regained their ancient capital city. The Poles were in no mood, however, to be reconciled to this loss. Estonia and Lithuania had signed their peace treaties with Soviet Russia but Latvia signed hers during the conference, on August 11. Finland still had difficulties with the Russians over Karelia.

There was still great enthusiasm among the participants who were influenced by the optimism of their hosts — Karlis Ulmanis, Zigfrids A. Meierovics and Hermans Albats. The program was loaded with extremely valuable proposals for international cooperation — postal, telegraph, telephone and railroad conventions; the fight against smuggling; a convention on civil rights; co-operation in banking, insurance, financing, etc.; liquidation of customs duties for goods in transit; protection of works by writers, artists and scientists, exchange of information on customs and systems of transportation, etc.

On August 31, 1920, the following secret political treaty was agreed upon —

Art. 1 — The states participating in the Conference declare that they are ready to recognize each other reciprocally de jure, in so far as this recognition had not already taken place;

Art. 2 — The participating states bind themselves to adjust entirely by peaceful means frontier disputes and other territorial questions which may arise between these states. In case a solution of these disputes should not be arrived at by mutual concessions between the interested states, the states participating in the conference agree to decide such disputes by the mediation of a third authority (arbitration of the League of Nations, etc.)

Art. 3 — The participating states bind themselves not to protect in any way, nor to permit on their territories, activities or undertakings which may be directed against one of the participating states, in particular; none of the participating states should tolerate on their territory the passage of the organization of military forces hostile to one or the other participating states.

Art. 4 — No state participating in the conference has concluded or will conclude with another state any agreement directed against a state represented at the Conference.

Art. 5 — The participating states agree to draw up without delay a defensive military convention.

Art. 6 — The states participating in the conference guarantee to their minorities belonging to the nationals of the contracting states, all rights and liberties assuring them of the conservation and free development of their languages and of their national organizations.

Art. 7 — Until the conclusion of commercial treaties, the participating states agree not to impose restrictions or special charges on merchandise which is coming from one of these states or another country and passing in transit destined for one of the contracting states (With reservations by the delegates from Poland and the Ukraine).

Art. 8 — In case one of the participating states should decide to denounce this treaty, such denunciation would go into effect one year after the communication in writing to this effect to all the governments of the other participating states.

Art. 9 — The present treaty must be submitted for ratification and will not enter into force until the exchange of ratification, the dates of which should not, however, be later than December 15, 1920.

Art. 10 — If up to December 15, 1920, one of the states participating in the Conference does not ratify the present treaty, the latter will nevertheless enter into force between the other contracting states. However, the possibility will be reserved to the states which shall not have ratified the treaty, to adhere later thereto, with the consent of the other contracting states.

The treaty was signed by the Lithuanian representatives — Dr. Jurgis Šaulys, Dr. Dovas Zaunius, Capt. V. Natkevičius and Dr. Vytautas Gylys; the Finnish representatives— L. Astrom, Colonel B. Helsingius and Eikki Reijonen; Polish representatives — Leon Wasilewski, W. Kamienicki and Adam Tarnowski; Estonian representatives — Kaarel R. Pusta, R. Eliaser and Colonel P. Lill; Latvian representatives — Zigfrids A. Meierovics, Voldemars Zamuels and Colonel Radziņš; and the Ukrainian representatives — A. Salikowsky and Wladimir Kedrowsky.

Unfortunately the military convention could not be agreed upon even as late as September 6 because the Lithuanians refused to enter into a military convention with a state, namely Poland, which was still at war with another country, namely Soviet Russia, with which Lithuania had signed a peace treaty. The participating countries tried in vain to induce the Poles and Lithuanians to solve their long-lasting problem of Vilnius (Wilno). Lithuania also did not recognize the Ukraine, whose government actually resided on Polish soil. All the participating countries considered the territories claimed by Poland in the East as a security risk which could involve them in a senseless war any time. All of these countries, except for Finland and Estonia, also did not have easily defensible borders. Finally, on October 9, 1920, the Polish General Lucjan Zeligowski marched into the Lithuanian capital city two days after the Poles and Lithuanians had signed a special armistice treaty. Thus nothing came out of this conference with such expectations and enthusiasm. During the conference the participating states had even forgotten that they had not recognized each other de jure yet, pending the recognition by the Entente and neutral powers.

The Baltic States started to realize that the road to an alliance was a rocky one. An American observer, Evan E. Young, remarked that the participating countries had the noblest intentions which were marred by jealousies, petty bickering and almost deliberate placing of obstacles in the paths of their neighbors.²¹ These were characteristic symptoms of a childhood disease of all emerging young countries. And do the old ones lack them? It takes luck and foresight to climb above the barriers of the narrow national self-interests and overcome prejudices and jealousies. Fortunately, the Baltic States did not lack broadminded statesmen, men undisturbed by local tumult who were able to overcome almost insurmountable difficulties on their road to the Baltic Entente.

The Baltic statesmen again presented a united front in their successful campaign for de jure recognition and their bid for the membership in the League of Nations. It is heart-warming to read how the Latvian and Estonian statesmen fought for

the recognition of their less lucky southern neighbor, Lithuania, who was deeply involved in Polish, German and Allied controversies in her struggle for the recovery of the ancient Lithuanian lands partly Germanized or Polonized during the last few centuries.²²

On March 21, 1921, the Baltic States already participated in the first international conferences on communications and transit at Barcelona and their representatives unanimously selected their Estonian colleague, Kaarel R. Pusta, as their spokesmen and candidate in the international committee to deal with the delicate technical problems, but this story already belongs to a different chapter.²³

It is interesting to note that the Baltic States were always able to make agreements whenever they were left alone by other interested parties or when they were able to disentangle themselves from these influences. Precisely due to such circumstances the Baltic statesmen finally managed to bring the Baltic Entente to life on September 12, 1934, not without considerable legal and moral sacrifices on the part of the Lithuanians who had to agree that their "specific problems" — those of Klaipėda (Memel) and Vilnius would not become an obstacle in the work of the new Entente.²⁴

Notes:

- 1 A good example of the cooperation between the Estonians and Latvians — Hans Kruus, *Eesti ajaloost XIX sajandi teisel poolel* (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1957), 221—4.
- 2 Arnold Hinnom, *Suur heitlus; maalestusi rahvusvaeosade ajast ja vabadussojast* (Stockholm: Eesti kirjanike kooperatiiv, 1955), 9—14; Letters of Captain Elmar Lipping, June and July 1963.
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- 4 Antonius Piip, "Baltic States as a Regional Unit", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, No. 168 (July 1933), 173; Arveds Bergs, "Nacionala politika kara laikā", *Burtnieks*, No. 1 (1932), 6.
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