

THE
SOVIET UNION, FINLAND
AND THE
BALTIC STATES

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INTRODUCTION

For hundreds of years the territory on which the Baltic States were subsequently formed was part of the Russian Empire. The "shortest" State connection between Russia and Finland lasted from 1809 to 1917, i.e., for 108 years.

From the moment of the birth of the Soviet State one of the fundamental principles of its foreign policy was the recognition of the right of every nation to self-determination even to the extent of secession and the formation of an independent State. It was precisely this principle upon which was based the relations between the Soviet Union and her Baltic neighbours. It is necessary to stress that Soviet Russia was the first to recognise the independence and self-determination of Finland long before this was done by other States. Having broken completely with the policy of oppression pursued by the Tsarist and Provisional Governments, the Soviet Government recognised the State independence of Finland by the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of December 31st, 1917, which was ratified by the Central Executive Committee of the R.S.F.S.R.*, January 4th, 1918.

In the same way the Soviet Government were the first to recognise the independence and self-determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania during 1920.

The Soviet Government have never deviated from these fundamental decisions of its foreign policy in regard to the Baltic countries. In spite of the fact that Soviet Russia was deprived of such ports as Tallin, Riga, Libava and others, and the frontier with Finland ran along a line threateningly near to Leningrad—a town only second in importance to Moscow—the Soviet Union never wavered in her recognition and respect for the right to self-determination of the former Border States of the Russian Empire. For 20 years Soviet foreign policy in relation to these countries was guided by her desire for peaceful co-existence, the endeavour to establish good neighbourly relations and develop economic, political and cultural connections.

* R.S.F.S.R. is the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. It includes what is usually termed Russia proper, and is the largest of the Republics which constitute the Soviet Union.

Pursuing her policy of recognition of and respect for the State independence of the Baltic countries, the Soviet Government made serious political and territorial sacrifices; they granted to these States economic concessions, exemptions and preferences (the use of the ports of the Baltic States for transit trade, orders, preferential importation from the Baltic, the establishment of the so-called "Baltic clauses," i.e., the granting to the Baltic countries of special trading privileges which were not applied to other countries and so on).

The Soviet Government considered that the Baltic States were in duty bound to fulfil only one condition necessary for peaceful co-existence. This condition was loyalty and readiness (and this not only in words but in deeds; on the part of the Baltic States not to violate the security of the Soviet Union, not to transform their territory into places d'armes for possible attacks on the Soviet Union, not to permit any one to try to establish a Protectorate over themselves, not to give their territory "on lease" for its possible use by any aggressor or would-be aggressor against the Soviet Union.

This, we repeat, was the only condition, in return for the loyal execution of which the Soviet Union was ready on its side loyally and sincerely to respect the independence and State self-determination of the Baltic countries. This condition did not, of course, violate the basis of their State independence in the slightest degree and was completely in conformity with the fundamental interests of the Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Finnish peoples, who sincerely desired to live in friendly and good-neighbourly relations with the peoples of the Soviet Union.

During more than 20 years the foreign policy of the Soviet Government insistently, systematically and in any and every international situation endeavoured to obtain from the Governments of the Baltic countries the fulfilment of this elementary condition for peaceful and good-neighbourly co-existence.

During these same more than 20 years, the Governments of the Baltic countries systematically and insistently in various international situations violated precisely this condition for peaceful co-existence. On the western and north-western frontiers of Soviet territory places d'armes were formed for anti-Soviet attacks, expeditions, political combinations, alliances and coalitions all directed against the Soviet Union.

Whilst the Soviet press during the whole of this time never raised any doubts as to the desirability of the peaceful co-existence of the Soviet Union and the Baltic States, the press of the latter was a systematic source of the most disgusting, malicious and lying insinuations directed against the Soviet Union; it also published appeals for crusades against the Soviet Union. It is well known, for instance, that for many years Riga was the centre for the spreading of the most lying and slanderous "information" about the Soviet Union. These Riga "reports" in the end became a byword and standing joke. And the other capitals of the Baltic States, for instance, Helsinki and Tallin, were not far behind Riga in this respect.

Whilst the Soviet Union recognised and respected the State independence of the Baltic countries and made serious political, economic and financial sacrifices, she herself had not received any real, elemental guarantees for her own security on the western and north-western frontiers. On the contrary, as a result of the hostile policy of the Governments of the Baltic States, their territory had been transformed into the most convenient places d'armes for a possible attack on the Soviet Union.

Such was the objective reality of the mutual relations between the Soviet Union and the Baltic States during more than 20 years.

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN RELATION TO THE
BALTIC STATES, 1917-1920.

THE working-class of the Baltic countries had the closest of ties with the Russian working-class, ties which had developed and become strengthened during the long years of common struggle against the Tsarist regime. It is, therefore, natural that the October (November) Revolution spread not only over the territory of Russia, but also over the territory of the Baltic States, and as a logical outcome Soviet Governments were also formed in these States. The Provisional Governments, which were in existence there at the time of the November Revolution having entered into agreements with the German Government, called upon German troops to suppress the revolutionary movement. But the help of the German troops was by no means limited to the suppression of the revolutionary movement in the Baltic countries. In spite of the fact that the German Government themselves had signed a Peace Treaty with the Soviet Government at Brest-Litovsk, they transformed the Baltic States into a jumping-off ground for hostile attacks against Soviet Russia. Complete German hegemony was established over the Baltic States.

For instance, on April 12, 1918 (i.e., after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty) a so-called " United Landtag " of Livland, Estonia, the towns of Riga and the Island of Oesel was called. This " Landtag " resolved :—

" (1) To request the German Emperor to grant military aid for the final separation of the Baltic States from Russia.

" (2) To express the desire for the creation out of Livland, Kurland, the neighbouring Islands and the town of Riga, a single constitutional monarchy united with the German Empire under a common ruler—the Prussian King.

" (3) To request that military, monetary, customs, and other agreements should be concluded between the Prussian Kingdom and the State which will be formed by the union of the Baltic territories."

That the Resolution of the " Landtag " was only a pitiful caricature of any expression of the people's will is shown by the fact that out of a total of 21 Volost (district) chiefs in the " Landtag," 18 made an official declaration that they had no right to speak in the name of the Estonian nation.

As regards Finland, the Svinhuvud-Mannerheim Government, having suppressed the revolution with the help of the German corps of General von der Goltz, started a veritable military campaign

against Soviet Russia. Amongst other repeated attacks on the Soviet frontiers by Finland it is necessary to mention that on March 21, 1918, Finnish detachments crossed the Soviet frontier, seized Ukhtu and moved towards Kem.

During the summer of 1918 the German Command, as is known, worked out several plans of attack on Soviet Russia, and in all these plans the Baltic countries with the full agreement of their Governments were to play the role, of jumping-off grounds for the anti-Soviet attacks, as well as to furnish the necessary number of auxiliary troops. This, as well as finally the seizure of Petrograd, was the aim to which all the plans of General Ludendorff, Hoffman, and also the Staff of the 8th German Army were directed ; Von der Goltz relates all this in his Memoirs. The last plan was ratified by the Supreme German Command in August, 1918, but it was not executed because of the defeat already threatening the German Army on the Western Front.

After the signature of the Armistice between the Allies and Germany, the formation of military detachments was started on the territory of Kurland and Lithuania with the direct participation of the German Authorities, both military and governmental. The recruiting of volunteers and the creation of anti-Soviet armies proceeded under the direction of the German Command in the East, the Headquarters of which were in Berlin. The General Command was headed by the German General von der Goltz who had returned from Finland to Latvia on February 1, 1919, and had established himself in Libava. The majority of the Commanding Staff of the Army consisted of German officers who were being paid by the German Government. In April, 1919, with the direct help of General von der Goltz, a State coup was engineered in Latvia and the Nedry Government was established ; Nedry was the creature of the German Staff and the German nobility. This State coup revealed the real aims of the German General Staff and the German Government in the Baltic States—aims which consisted of the simultaneous consolidation of German hegemony in the Baltic States and the organisation of a campaign against Soviet Russia.

During the whole of 1919 the Governments of the Baltic countries conducted an armed struggle against Soviet Russia. Repeatedly and systematically the Soviet Government proposed the conclusion of peace treaties with the Baltic countries on the following basis: the *de jure* recognition of their State independence; the fixing of frontiers on an ethnographical principle; and the granting of certain economic and financial privileges.

Systematically and stubbornly the Governments of the Baltic States rejected these peace proposals of Soviet Russia.

On July 21, 1919, a radio message had been sent from Moscow to Tallin in which it was indicated that Soviet troops would not cross the frontier of the former Estland province. On August 31, of the same year, a proposal was sent to Estonia to enter into peace negotiations with the object of fixing the frontiers of the Estonian State on the basis of the recognition of the independence of Estonia. On September 4, 1919, a reply was received from the Estonian Government agreeing to negotiations for the cessation of hostilities. On September 11, the Soviet Government made peace proposals to Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania, and on September 17, 1919, in Pskov, a Soviet-Estonian Conference was held. At this Conference the Soviet delegation at once raised the question of an armistice. The Estonian delegation agreed to an armistice, but only on condition that Soviet Russia would be ready simultaneously to conclude an armistice with the other Baltic States. However, Finland flatly rejected, the Soviet peace proposals whilst Latvia and Lithuania put off their discussion. Consequently, in spite of the sincere desire of the Soviet Government to conclude peace treaties with all the Baltic States, the first peace conference in Pskov was thus disrupted.

In the autumn of 1919 the former Tsarist General Yudenitch formed on the territory of Estonia the so-called " North-Western Government," and subsequently, with the help of the Estonian and Finnish Governments, started his march on Petrograd. In November, 1919, this attack was repulsed and the beaten Yudenitch troops poured into Estonia. Although the Soviet troops were in a position and undoubtedly had the right to cross the Estonian frontier in order to complete the destruction of Yudenitch, they abstained from doing so. The ethnographical frontier of Estonia was not violated. Under such conditions the Estonian Government was finally compelled to accept the repeated offer of the Soviet Government for peace negotiations.

On December 31, 1919, an armistice was concluded at Yurev, and an agreement regarding the independence of Estonia and her frontiers was initialled. On February 2, 1920, a Peace Treaty was concluded between Soviet Russia and Estonia. This was the first Peace Treaty of Soviet Russia with the Baltic countries. On July 12, 1920, a Peace Treaty was concluded with Lithuania, and on August 11, 1920, with Latvia.

Finland was the last of the Baltic countries to establish peaceful relations with the Soviet Government. A Peace Treaty between Finland and the R.S.F.S.R. was not signed till October 14, 1920.

The exceptional hostility of the Government of Finland towards Soviet Russia was manifested not only by the fact that Finland refused longer than the other Baltic States to enter into peace

negotiations with the Soviet Government, but in that after peace negotiations had started she did everything possible to prolong them and to hinder the conclusion of peace. It is very interesting to note that already in the summer of 1918, negotiations had taken place in Berlin for the conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Finland and Soviet Russia but these negotiations proved futile owing to the openly provocative behaviour of the Finnish Government. The latter, in particular, insisted on the union with Finland of the whole Kola Peninsula and a part of the Olonetz region.

The Peace Treaties of Soviet Russia with the Baltic States gave the latter great political and economic advantages. At the moment of the signature of these Treaties, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had not been recognised *de jure* by a single European State ; it was Soviet Russia who gave them their first *de jure* recognition. In the sphere of economic and financial matters the Baltic States received part of the gold reserve of Russia (Estonia, 15 million gold roubles ; Latvia, 7 million and Lithuania, 3 million gold roubles). They also received the right to retransfer property and valuables which had been sent from these States to Russia during the World War and also the right to the repatriation of citizens (with the right to opt citizenship) who after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty desired to return to their native country.

In evaluating the economic and political advantages received by the Baltic States as the result of the conclusion of the Peace Treaties with Soviet Russia, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the whole economy of these regions during a long period had been organically connected with the national economy of Russia. The rupture of these connections during 1917 to 1920 had had a very painful effect on the economy and well-being of the populations of the Baltic countries. The Russian market had been closed to them, whilst the Western European markets, not only had no need for the manufactures of the Baltic countries, but on the contrary flooded the markets of the latter with their own manufactures. The industrial products of the Baltic States could find no markets; on the other hand, as a result of the closing of the frontiers with Russia, the factories and workshops of the Baltic States (for instance the leather industry and others) which had always obtained their raw materials from Russia, had been deprived of such materials for three years.

Peace with Soviet Russia opened for them the wide markets of the latter. It made possible the industrial development of the Baltic States and at the same time provided exceptionally favourable conditions for trade in general and transit trade in particular by the use of the Baltic ports as was mentioned above. Unfortunately, the Governments of the Baltic States seemed to have no wish to make use of these possibilities.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE U.S.S.R.
and
POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THE BALTIC STATES,
1920-1927

In spite of the political and economic advantages accruing to them from their Peace Treaties with the U.S.S.R., the Baltic States, so far from pursuing a real peace policy towards the U.S.S.R., continued their hostility and not only did they permit preparation on their territory for attacks on the U.S.S.R., but in some cases actual attacks were made.

Finland

The Peace Treaty with Finland signed October 14, 1920, came into force on January 1, 1921 ; only ten months later, in October, 1921, the Finnish Government organised an attack on Soviet Karelia. The Note of the Soviet Government of November 16, 1921, stated that: " Bandit detachments which had gathered and armed themselves on Finnish territory, under the command of Finnish officers and with the help of the Finnish authorities, invaded the most sparsely populated and roadless section of Karelia in October and entered the Tungud Volost " (district).

On the territory of Finland an organisation calling itself " The Karelian Government " was formed openly and with the goodwill of the Finnish authorities. Further, a society for " humanitarian " help for Karelians was formed, which took upon itself the task of sending supplies to the Finnish detachments which had broken into Karelia. In the Finnish papers summaries from the front were published daily. In a number of populated centres of Finland recruiting bureaus functioned openly for the formation of detachments of Karelian " rebels." Officers of the Finnish army received fictitious leave and went to Karelia.

Soviet armed forces repulsed the Finnish detachments which had invaded Karelia and forced, them to recross the Finnish-Soviet frontier.

In spite of the unprecedented character of this attack only ten months after the Peace Treaty had come into force, the Soviet Government immediately after having put an end to the Karelian adventure, offered the Finnish Government negotiations for the conclusion of a special agreement regarding the inviolability of the frontiers. Such an agreement, establishing a special neutral zone along the frontier and providing for other guarantees, was signed

June 1, 1922, but it did not put a stop to the hostile activity of the Finnish Government and the systematic violation of the Soviet-Finnish frontier. Attacks on Soviet territory by armed bands from Finland did not cease. On October 3, 1922, the Soviet Government addressed a demand to the Finnish Government for the immediate expulsion from the frontier zones of all semi-military organisations and for the suppression of the various " assistance " Committees for Karelia.

The Note in which the Finnish Government replied was hostile, even challenging in character. No change for the better took place in 1923 ; thus, on September 23, 1923, two members of the Soviet delegation to the Mixed Frontier Commission were killed on Soviet territory some 1 ½ kilometres from the Finnish frontier. Indignant at this murder the Soviet Government demanded the immediate investigation by a Mixed Commission and some additional guarantees, but the Finnish Government avoided giving a satisfactory reply. It was only in July, 1924, that an end was put to the conflict after the Finnish Government had made concessions on a number of points and had carried out changes in the personnel of the Schutz Corps.

On March 17, 1922, an agreement was signed between Latvia, Poland, Finland, and Estonia regarding " guarantees " (the so-called "accord" policy). This Treaty was actually a military-political alliance directed against Soviet Russia. Its anti-Soviet nature was, indeed, so clear that the majority of the Finnish Seim taking into account the failure of the Karelian adventure and being afraid that the agreement of March 17, 1922, would inevitably lead to a new military conflict with the Soviet Republic refused to ratify it and, as a result, one of the authors of this agreement, the Finnish Minister Holsti, was compelled to resign.

The great hostility of the Government of Finland towards the Soviet Union manifested itself in particular in the speech of the Finnish Representative, Enkel, in the autumn of 1924 at the Assembly of the League of Nations. Enkel called on the League of Nations to intervene in the internal affairs of the U.S.S.R. in the so-called " Georgian question." This time it was not a case of Karelia in which Finland was " interested," but Georgia, which it would have seemed was and could be of no particular interest to Finland.

At the end of 1926 a Government with Tanner at its head, came to power in Finland. This Government, so far from making any effort to put an end to the anti-Soviet bias of Finnish foreign policy, actually in various ways, encouraged the activities of the Russian White Guards who had transformed Finland into a nest of hostilities

against the U.S.S.R. For instance, the traces revealed by the investigation of the explosion organised by White Guards in the Leningrad business club in 1927, led direct to Helsinki. Precisely at this period the President of Finland, Relander, carried on prolonged negotiations with the " representative " of the Russian monarchists, Grevenitz, endeavouring to obtain a guarantee that he would recognise the independence of Finland after the overthrow of the Soviet Government. It should be noted that Grevenitz, on his part, avoided the formulation of any clear guarantee regarding the independence of Finland after the proposed overthrow of the Soviet Government.

In this connection, it is interesting to recall that at the time of the Yudenitch attack on Petrograd in 1919, the Finnish Government, through Mannerheim, demanded from General Koltchak the *de jure* recognition of the independence of Finland as a condition for the formal and direct participation of Finland in the war against the Soviet Government. Koltchak, who looked upon himself as the heir and perpetuator of Tsarism categorically refused such recognition.

Beginning with 1925, the Soviet Government began the policy of concluding with their neighbours pacts of non-aggression and neutrality) It is quite evident that these Pacts should have served as guarantees for the preservation of peace and the consolidation of good-neighbourly relations. (In May, 1926, the Soviet Government offered Finland the conclusion of a Pact of non-aggression and neutrality.) (Unable, in view of their own public opinion, to reject openly such a proposal, the Finnish Government accepted it in words, actually, however, they sabotaged the conclusion of this agreement in every possible way and the Pact was not signed until 1932.)

In the period with which we are dealing the Finnish Government not only themselves pursued a hostile policy towards the Soviet Union, but in a number of cases they took the initiative in organising international combinations of an anti-Soviet character, We have already noted the part played by Finnish foreign policy in the creation of the Warsaw " guarantee " agreement of March 17, 1922. Equally hostile towards the Soviets was the line taken by the Finnish Government at the Moscow Conference for the limitation of armaments, called on the initiative of the Soviet Government in December, 1922. At this Conference the Soviet Government proposed a proportional decrease of its own army as well as of the armies of all the neighbouring countries. The Finnish Delegation which took a most active part did its best to bring about the failure of the Conference.

Estonia.

The signature of a peace agreement with Soviet Russia did not lead to a cessation of hostile activities on the part of Estonia. Committees " for the assistance of Karelia " were organised on her territory, and monetary collections were made for the " White " Karelian insurgents.

Already, at the Moscow Conference on the limitation of armaments in 1922, Estonia had submitted completely to the leadership of Finland.

In 1924 the Minister for Home Affairs of Estonia, Einbund, in a public speech, made lying and unfounded accusations against the U.S.S.R. After a sharp note of protest from the Soviet Government the Estonia Government was compelled to admit that the information made public by Einbund, as well as his conclusions therefrom, were based on false reports and had been proved erroneous. Einbund himself was soon afterwards compelled to resign. In 1925 the Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pusta, manifested exceptional hostility towards the Soviets. He was one of the active initiators of the Helsingfors Conference of the Baltic States which was held in January, 1925. Although the official negotiations at this Conference of the four Baltic States (Finland, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia) only resulted in the signature of an arbitration Treaty, side by side with this Conference in Helsingfors consultations took place between representatives of the General Staffs of Poland, Rumania, and the Baltic countries (with the exception of Lithuania). These conversations were carried on in Riga ; the participants for a long time stubbornly denied that any such consultations of the General Staffs had taken place, and it was only after the Soviet Government had presented facts which could not be denied that the Latvian Minister for Home Affairs was compelled to admit that such consultations had indeed taken place in Riga.

The Protocols of these Conferences or consultations which were discovered after the union of the Baltic States with the U.S.S.R., leave no room for doubt whatever that at all of them plans for united military activity against the U.S.S.R. had been discussed.

Simultaneously, the Estonian Government openly sabotaged the negotiations for the conclusion of a Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality—negotiations which had been proposed to Estonia by the Soviet Government in 1926. This open sabotage was revealed in a speech of the Estonian Minister in Moscow, Birk, who gave incontestable facts showing how Estonian foreign policy was dependent on the Polish General Staff.

Latvia

Immediately after the coming into force of the Latvian-Soviet Peace Treaty a serious incident arose in regard to the open help given by Latvia to Wrangel. Intensive recruiting of soldiers and officers for the Wrangel army was being conducted on Latvian territory. In its Note of October 31, 1920, the Soviet Peoples' Commissariat for Foreign Affairs protested against this violation of the spirit and meaning of the peace treaty ; in particular it cited the fact that 200 officers had arrived in Memel from Riga on their way to the Crimea to Wrangel. In his note of reply the Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Meyerovitz, admitted that an organisation for the recruiting of soldiers and officers for the Wrangel army did indeed exist on Latvian territory. On November 4, 1920, the question was discussed at the Latvian Constituent Assembly and it became evident that well-known generals of the Latvian army, including the Inspector of the Army, Radzinsh, were mixed up in this recruiting activity.

In 1921, a new incident occurred in connection with the arrest and the beating up of three members of the Soviet Consulate in Libava. This incident ended with the dismissal of the chief of the political Guard of the Libava district.

In the autumn of 1923 the Soviet Government, true to its policy of strengthening peace relations with the Baltic countries, proposed to the Latvian Government to start negotiations for the conclusion of a Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality. Although the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Meyerovitz, expressed his agreement in principle to proceed with such negotiations, actually, as a result of the procrastinations of the Latvian Government, they only took place in 1926.

As we have already shown above, Latvia participated in the Conferences of the General Staffs of the Baltic countries, Poland and Rumania, which were held in Riga in February, 1925.

On February 5, 1926, an armed attack was made on the Soviet diplomatic couriers, Nette and Makhmastalya. on Latvian territory, and Nette was killed. Before the conclusion of the preliminary investigation, the Latvian Minister for Home Affairs, Laiminsh, in an interview with the representatives of the Riga press, characterised the attack on the Soviet diplomatic couriers as an ordinary crime for the purpose of robbery. This was a definite attempt to hide the real political aim of the crime and to cover up the traces. As a result of the protest of the Peoples Commissariat for Foreign Affairs the Latvian Government was compelled to dissociate itself from their Minister for Home Affairs. A promise was also given that the

Soviet Diplomatic Mission in Riga would be informed regarding the course of the preliminary investigation. However, the investigation was quite evidently carried out with the aim not of discovering but of concealing the real criminals and it led to no result.

In spite of this hostile line pursued by the Latvian Government, the Government of the U.S.S.R. in 1926 again proposed to renew the negotiations for the conclusion of a Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality. Again the Latvian Government, this time through their Minister for Foreign Affairs, the leader of the Peasants' Union and future President of Latvia, Ulmanis, agreed to the start of negotiations. However, this time, too, the Latvian Government manifested no real desire to conclude such a Peace Pact. The frequent journeys of Ulmanis, sometimes to Reval, sometimes to Kovno, his evasive replies to the Soviet proposals, and his constant side glances towards Warsaw—all this indicated that Latvia was a supporter of the Polish policy of the "Round Table," i.e., the conduct of negotiations and the conclusion of a pact between the U.S.S.R. on the one hand and on the other the whole of the Baltic States combined.

It was only after the change of the Cabinet and the coming to power of a Left Government in Latvia at the end of 1926, that conditions arose which finally led to a Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality being initialled between the U.S.S.R. and Latvia on March 9, 1927. Simultaneously therewith a Soviet-Latvian Trade Agreement, exceptionally advantageous to Latvia, was also signed.

It is characteristic of the anti-Soviet policy of the Latvian Government that an interval of nearly five years elapsed between the initialling of the Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality (March 9, 1927) and its final signature (February 5, 1932). In the course of these five years, Latvia systematically refused to sign the already initialled Pact, giving as an excuse that her Baltic neighbours—Estonia and Finland—had also not signed such Pacts and demanding the above-mentioned "Round-Table" Conference.

Lithuania

In contradistinction to the other Baltic States (Finland, Estonia and Latvia), the foreign policy of Lithuania was less hostile in relation to the U.S.S.R. This was to be explained by the Polish-Lithuanian conflict which had arisen as a result of the seizure by Poland of the Vilno Province of Lithuania in 1920. As a result of these circumstances, Lithuania refused to enter into any combination with Poland.

When at the time of the Polish-Soviet war of 1920, Vilno was occupied by Soviet troops, the Soviet Government transferred this

town to Lithuania. In the Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty of July 12, 1920, Vilno and the Vilno region were recognized as constituent parts of the Lithuanian State. When in 1926 the Soviet Government proposed to the Baltic countries negotiations for the conclusion of Pacts of Non-Aggression and Neutrality, then, unlike the other Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Finland) which in one way or another had sabotaged these negotiations and refused to conclude such pacts until 1932, Lithuania accepted the Soviet proposal and on September 28, 1926, a Soviet-Lithuanian Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality was signed. This Pact was accompanied by an exchange of Notes. The Soviet Note pointed out that " the factual violation of the Lithuanian frontiers which had taken place against the will of the Lithuanian people (the seizure by Poland of the Vilno region) had in no way altered their (the Government of the U.S.S.R.) attitude to the territorial sovereignty of Lithuania as defined in the Soviet-Lithuanian Treaty."

As we shall see below Lithuania, having joined the Baltic Entente (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania) in 1934, could not but also subsequently adopt an anti-Soviet foreign policy, for those who had initiated this Entente did not conceal their endeavour to rely, in the last resort, on Poland.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE U.S.S.R. AND HER
RELATIONS WITH THE BALTIC COUNTRIES IN THE
PERIOD, 1927-1933

During these years, as earlier, Soviet peace efforts met with little response, from the Governments of the Baltic countries. Indeed Soviet peace proposals were only accepted when (and then often only partially) it was impossible to reject them without the risk of compromising themselves in the eyes of public opinion which was invariably in favour of consolidating peace relations with the Soviet Union.

Let us cite some facts which illustrate and confirm these statements.

The Moscow Protocol.

On December 29, 1928, the Soviet Government proposed to the Polish Government the signature of a special Protocol for the immediate coming into force of the Kellogg Pact, which had been concluded, on August 27, 1928. This proposal was made because many States which had signed or adhered to the Kellogg Pact seemed to be in no hurry to ratify it, and consequently it could not come into force very rapidly.

In making this proposal to Poland regarding the immediate bringing into force of the Kellogg Pact, the Soviet Government endeavoured to create a new factor for pacification in Eastern Europe.

"The Note of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs pointed out that the proposal to bring the Kellogg Pact into force as soon as possible was made because " the assurance of peace in Eastern Europe was of first-class importance, and of the States having contiguous frontiers with the Soviet Union, the Paris Pact had been signed by Poland." The Soviet Government in this same Note stated that " A similar proposal was being made by them simultaneously to the Lithuanian Republic as the only Baltic country which had already accepted the Paris Treaty. They were not addressing themselves for the time being to Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, only because these States had not yet adhered formally to the Paris Treaty."

To the above-mentioned Note a draft Protocol was added, which the Soviet Government suggested for signature to Poland. Polish diplomacy resisted this peace initiative of the Soviet Government in every way possible, and tried to bring forward various conditions which would have annulled its effect. These attempts failed and Poland was finally forced to adopt the Soviet proposals. It was

only after Poland had decided to adhere to the Moscow Protocol that the Baltic States also agreed to sign it.

On February, 9, 1929, the Moscow Protocol was signed by the U.S.S.R., Poland, Rumania, Estonia, and Latvia. After the signature of this Protocol, Turkey, Iran, and Lithuania also adhered to it. It is interesting to note that Finland put off her signature to the Protocol until the Kellogg Pact had been put into force by nearly all those who had signed it, and consequently the signature of the Moscow Protocol had lost its significance. This behaviour of Finland was typical of her attitude towards the U.S.S.R. for over 20 years.

The Lapuan Movement in Finland.

The most active anti-Soviet role in Finland since she gained her independence has been and is being played by the well-known subsidiary military organisation—the Schutz Corps. A number of leaders of this organisation, for instance, General Wallenius and others, have repeatedly demonstrated their hostility to the U.S.S.R., both in words and in acts. However, the record for enmity towards and hatred of the U.S.S.R. and for the direct preparation of an attack on the Soviet Union, was won by another organisation known as the "Lapuan Movement." This Movement had put in the forefront of its official programme—war against the U.S.S.R. in order to "quite all Finnish races living in the territory of the Soviet Union."

By the phrase "Finnish races living in the territory of the Soviet Union," the Lapuans and their supporters meant the peoples of Ugro-Mongolian origin (the peoples of Komi and others) living in north-eastern European Russia, and naturally, having nothing whatever in common with the Finns except very far distant historic origins.

In 1930, the Lapuan movement reached considerable strength, when Svinhuvud came to power first as Prime Minister and later, in February, 1931, as President of Finland. Leaving on one side the violent Fascist activity of the Lapuans within the country, their connection with the German and Italian Fascists (it is known, for instance, that a number of Lapuan leaders went to Rome where they were received by Mussolini who presented them with "Fascist Dirks of Honour"), we consider it necessary to note the provocative activities of the Lapuans against the Soviet Union.

It must be emphasised that the anti-Soviet activities of the Lapuans were not only in no way hindered by the Finnish Government, but on the contrary received every encouragement from them. In particular, this refers to the period when Svinhuvud was President.

As far back as the autumn of 1930 the Lapuans made an attempt to kidnap the former President of Finland, the Progressive Stolberg, and to plant him on Soviet territory with the aim of assassinating him there ; this was then to be used as a cause for war against the U.S.S.R. The Lapuan plot, however, was discovered, and its exposure made such an impression on Finnish public opinion that the Government of Finland was compelled to prosecute the then Commander of the General Staff of the Schutz Corps, the above-mentioned Wallenius. It is hardly necessary to mention that the trial of the latter ended quite happily for the accused.

At the beginning of December, 1930, at the celebrations of " Independence Day," in the presence of Svinhuvud and the members of the Finnish Government, one of the leaders of the Lapuans, Kares, declared: " Our task is to unite into one whole both parts of Karelia, both on this and the other side of our frontier, also the Leningrad Province reaching right to the north to the vast spaces of the Urals, which are also inhabited by men of our own race."

In January, 1931, the Lapuan organ " Aktivist " in the course of a leading article addressed to their " Estonian brothers " wrote: " The day will come when the Eastern frontiers of Finland will be the Ural mountains, and the great Finnish Power will be an important factor in world policy."

The journal " Uusi Suomi " the chief organ of the Government Coalition Party, which secretly had been at the back of the Lapuan Movement, wrote in May, 1931, that Finland " is in duty bound before Europe to be a source of information and also an initiator of the struggle against the East."

The Lapuan Movement was connected most closely with organisations bearing various names, but with one common aim—the organisation of conflicts against the U.S.S.R. In addition to the " Academic Karelian Society " which was the General Staff of the Lapuans, it is necessary to mention also such organisations as " The Union for Independence," "The Union of Karelian Refugees," " The Ingermanland Union," " Union of Front Line Soldiers," and so on. In particular, the Ingermanland Union had as its aim " the liberation " of the territory lying to the south-west of Leningrad in the immediate proximity of the town itself. It goes without saying that what was actually meant was the hardly-concealed claim to Leningrad.

Thus, at only 30 kilometers from Leningrad a veritable poisonous nest of anti-Soviet conspirators had been formed under the protection and with the help of the Finnish Government, and preparations were being made for provocative attacks.

In addition to their anti-Soviet aims, the Finnish Chauvinists also had various plans for the seizure on behalf of Finland of territories belonging to Sweden and Norway. In January, 1940, the well-known Norwegian economist Johann Vogt, in his book on Finland wrote: " It is characteristic that the so-called ' Academic Karelian Society ' the bulwark of the Finnish militarists propagates not only the seizure of Soviet Karelia, but also the territory of Northern Norway and Northern Sweden."

The "Aisargs" in Latvia and the "Veterans" in Estonia.

The same anti-Soviet policy and preparation for an attack on the Soviet Union which the Lapuans had been preparing in Finland over many years was also being pursued in Latvia and Estonia by various organisations of a military Fascist type. In Latvia the most important organisation of its kind was the so-called " Aisargs " ; this organisation had over 50,000 active members and was led by the most reactionary political party in Latvia, " The Peasant Union," with Karl Ulmanis at its head.

In Estonia a similar rôle was played by a Fascist group with an orientation towards Germany—the so-called " Union of Veterans," with Sirk at its head. Its anti-Soviet activities were manifested in constant provocative speeches against the U.S.S.R. and in systematic preparation for a Fascist coup in Estonia. On December 8, 1935, the Estonian Government discovered a plot of the " Veteran's Union," all the threads of which, as was shown by the investigation, led to Finland and Germany. The head of the " Veteran's Union," Sirk, after his arrest in 1934, had succeeded, as a result of the quite evident negligence of the authorities, in fleeing to Finland wherefrom he directed the preparation for the rising.

The connections of the Fascist Organisation of Estonia were not confined to Finland and Germany alone. In the summer of 1931 one of the leaders of Estonian Fascism, General Lille, spent his "vacation" in Rumania precisely at the time when a Conference was taking place there of representatives of the General Staffs of the States on the borders of the U.S.S.R. Thus Estonia, just as Finland and Latvia, was an active link in the anti-Soviet chain which was being forged from Finland to Rumania.

The Treaties of Non-Aggression and Neutrality Between the U.S.S.R. and the Baltic States.

As already recorded above, in spite of her repeated proposals, before 1932, the U.S.S.R. succeeded in concluding a Pact of Neutrality and Non-Aggression only with Lithuania. This Treaty had been signed as far back as September 28, 1926. All the other

Baltic States under various pretexts refused to accept these Soviet peace proposals. But in 1932 their foreign policy underwent a certain change. This change may be explained to some extent by the improvement which had taken place in French-Soviet relations since the end of 1931. In 1932 (in November), when Heriot headed the French Government, a French-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality had been signed. Heriot, personally, played a very important rôle, both in the improvement of French-Soviet relations and in the conclusion of this Pact.

The change, for the better in the foreign policy of France and the acute sharpening of Polish-German relations also led Poland to sign a Polish-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression and Neutrality on July 25, 1932. The Baltic States followed the example of Poland, just as they had followed the latter earlier. Having refused to conclude Pacts of Non-Aggression when Poland refused to conclude such a Pact, they now first agreed to negotiations and finally to the conclusion of corresponding Pacts. In 1932 Pacts of Non-Aggression and Neutrality were signed with Latvia (February 5, 1932), Finland (January 21, 1932), and Estonia (May 4, 1932). Simultaneously with these Treaties, conciliation Conventions laying down the procedure for the solution of questions in dispute were also signed. The events leading up to the conclusion of these Treaties once again emphasised the fact that whilst the Soviet Government did everything possible to strengthen peace relations with her Baltic neighbours, the Governments of the latter not only refused to meet the Soviets halfway, but sabotaged every Soviet peace proposal.

The Foreign Policy of the U.S.S.R. and Her Relations With the Baltic States in the Period 1933-1939.

1933 saw some change in the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Baltic States. This was the year of the Hitler coup in Germany, and the Baltic countries found themselves between, on the one hand, Fascist Germany striving not only to annul the Articles of the Versailles Treaty, but also to establish her own supremacy in the whole of Europe, and on the other, the Soviet Union, which was pursuing her invariable policy for the consolidation of world peace in general, and in Eastern Europe in particular. It would have seemed that the choice between these two directly opposite tendencies should have been quite clear for the Baltic countries ; it would have appeared that their national interest, their solicitude for the preservation of their political independence and national culture should have indicated to them their only possible road, to look for support to the Soviet Union and to assist the latter in her struggle against the aggressive aims of German Fascism. However, the policy chosen by the Baltic States was, in effect, diametrically opposed to their own interests.

In spite of Hitler's aggressive plans, which were also directed against the Baltic States, in spite of the fact that in his book "Mein Kampf" he had definitely declared that his aim was to seize the Baltic countries, in spite of the fact that these aims were even more fully and clearly expressed in many of the writings of one of Hitler's assistants, Rosenberg (himself it may be well to recall, a native of Estonia), in spite of the fact that at the London Economic Conference in 1933 a member of Hitler's Government, Hugenberg presented a Memorandum in which he demanded for Germany the right of colonisation of the whole of Eastern Europe (the Baltic States and various territories of the Soviet Union)—in spite of all this, we repeat, the Baltic countries failed to draw the only possible conclusion which the international position and their instinct of self-preservation should have dictated to them.

Only in the summer of 1933, influenced no doubt by Hitler's direct threats, did the Baltic States accept the proposals of the Soviet Government and sign in London a Convention for the Definition of an Aggressor. This Convention was signed by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and also by Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania. It is interesting to note that the most hostile attitude towards the Soviet proposals was shown by Poland and Finland. Poland did not wish to sign this Convention at all, and it was only the pressure of the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rumania, Titulescu, which forced the Polish Government to agree to sign the Convention. Poland at that time valued very highly her good relations with Rumania. As for Finland, she took up a peculiar position; she did not sign the Convention together with the others, and for a long time refused to sign. The Finnish Government considered it necessary to conduct special negotiations with Hitler, and only when Finland had received "permission" from Hitler, did the Finnish Government also sign the Convention to Define an Aggressor.

Immediately following his coming to power, Hitler started an energetic campaign for the political subordination of the Baltic States to the plan of German Fascism. The most favourable and already well-prepared soil he found in Finland, where the Government Coalition Party and all the anti-Soviet organisations mentioned above, were entirely at his disposal.

The undermining campaign in Estonia was conducted along two channels—through the Fascist German minority in Estonia and through the Estonian Fascist organisation, the "Veterans Union." The results of this undermining activity were pretty substantial. It is characteristic, for instance, how the Estonian press interpreted the conspiracy of the "Veterans Union" which was unearthed on December 8, 1935. Whilst the whole of the world press was full of

information proving that the threads of this conspiracy led direct to Berlin, whilst in many foreign journals facts were given showing how the conspiracy had been subsidised by Hitler's Germany and also that the Estonian conspirators had received arms from Germany, the Estonian press suppressed these facts. Only once did the Estonian semi-official paper "Uusi Eesti" timidly mention that the German Government radio station had openly expressed dissatisfaction that this conspiracy had failed.

The Hitler policy in relation to Latvia was very similar.

The Eastern Pact.

Already in 1933, on the initiative of France and the U.S.S.R., negotiations had started for the conclusion of the so-called "Eastern Pact." It was proposed to include eight States in this Pact—Germany, U.S.S.R., Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Czechoslovakia. All these States were to render one another military help automatically if any one of them were attacked, France, though not participating in the Pact, was to guarantee it, whilst the U.S.S.R., not being a participant of the Locarno Pact, was to guarantee the latter.

During the negotiations with France, the Soviet Government also proposed to include in the system of the Eastern Pact, Belgium as a country bordering on Germany.

It is quite evident that such a system, if really carried out, could have formed an effective barrier against German aggression ; and as Laval, the man who did most to foil the conclusion of this Pact, said it might guarantee that—"not a single border-stone in Europe would be moved."

On September 12, 1934, the German Government after a seven months' "study" of the draft of the Eastern Pact replied refusing to participate in it. Hitler quite correctly understood the danger which threatened him from the Eastern Pact, which would have prevented the moving of "frontier stones" and which provided for sanctions against such "shiftings."

Following Germany, or rather by agreement with her, Poland also refused to participate in the Pact giving as an excuse the fact that she had recently concluded a Pact of Non-Aggression with Germany. The speech on this subject by the then Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Beck, was opposed in Poland itself only, by the organ of the National Democratic Party, which indicated the dire consequences for Poland which would result from her friendship with Hitler.

As for the Baltic States, their attitude towards the Eastern Pact was clearly hostile, although on the surface they made declarations of goodwill. Finland declined altogether to make any reply to the proposal for an Eastern Pact. Finnish diplomacy understood very well that the Eastern Pact was a strong weapon against Germany should the latter start on a course of aggression in one direction or another. It was quite evident that under the circumstances Finland did not desire to make a favourable reply.

As for the other Baltic States, their behaviour was more than suspicious. Thus, in July, 1934, the Latvian Minister in Moscow informed the Government of the U.S.S.R. that Latvia in principle agreed to sign this Pact. Similarly, during his visit to Moscow in the summer of 1934, the Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Selyamaa, also declared that Estonia in principle agreed to sign the Pact. But although in December of the same year, i.e. after the negative reply given by Germany and Poland, the Latvian Mission in Paris issued a special "denial" of the insistent rumours that Latvia and Estonia had changed their decision and had no intention of joining the Eastern Pact, nevertheless the position both of Latvia and Estonia did in fact change immediately after the refusal of Germany and Poland to subscribe to it.

Indeed, it is extremely interesting to note that Latvia and Estonia, when giving their consent in principle to participate in the Eastern Pact, invariably made their agreement dependent on a favourable reply from Poland to this question. Moreover, when insisting on this condition, the Latvian and Estonian Governments already knew that Poland would refuse to adhere to the Eastern Pact.

In this connection one cannot but also note that in 1934 the Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Selyamaa, visited Warsaw "on his way to Vienna," and whilst there he had an interview with the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Beck. This visit to Warsaw took place at the moment when Goering was conducting negotiations in Warsaw which were certainly not directed towards the maintenance of peace in Eastern Europe.

The Peace Initiative of the U.S.S.R. in 1934.

Neither the development of German aggression, nor the hostile position of the Baltic States could stop the Soviet Government from taking steps to ensure peace in the Baltic and to strengthen her own security. It was precisely because they took into account Hitler's aggression in the Baltic that the Soviet Government on March 1934, proposed to the German Government "for the purpose of consolidating the general peace and in particular peace in Eastern Europe—... to sign a Protocol in which the Governments of

the U.S.S.R. and the German Republic undertake that in their foreign policy they will invariably take into consideration the obligation to preserve the independence and integrity of the Baltic States, and would refrain from any acts whatever which might directly or indirectly injure this independence."

The proposed Protocol should, in accordance with the idea of the Soviet Government, have remained open for adherence by other countries, who might be interested parties in this problem.

The initiative taken by the Soviet Government in regard to this question was occasioned by the exceptionally uneasy position in Eastern Europe at that time. The U.S.S.R., naturally, was interested in preserving the real independence and integrity of the Baltic States, in so far as the latter stand at the threshold of the Soviet Union and in so far as the integrity of these States was also a guarantee for the security of the U.S.S.R. itself.

Hitler's Government, however, did not desire to bind their foreign policy in the East by any obligations whatever. On April 14, 1934, the German Minister in Moscow informed the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs that the German Government declined the Soviet proposal for the signature of the Protocol. We need hardly stop to consider Hitler's "arguments," and we may safely limit ourselves to giving a quotation from the declaration which the People's Commissar made to the German Ambassador: "Particularly important is the very fact of the refusal of our proposal, the more so as the explanation given by the German Government in no way weakens the significance of this fact."

Before making the proposal to Germany for a joint guarantee of the independence of the Baltic States, the Soviet Government had made a similar proposal to Poland. The then Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Beck, agreed to this proposal and negotiations were already in progress regarding the form in which this joint guarantee should be expressed. Suddenly, Beck signed with Hitler a Non-Aggression Treaty and simultaneously refused to continue the negotiations with the U.S.S.R. on the question of a joint guarantee for the independence of the Baltic States.

It is also important to note here that the Baltic States themselves not only failed to express any goodwill towards the Soviet proposals which undoubtedly were directed towards consolidating their own independence and security, but, on the contrary, through the medium of their press they started an anti-Soviet campaign accusing the U.S.S.R. of certain "arrière pensée" and so on.

Simultaneously with the proposal to the German Government to guarantee jointly the independence of the Baltic States, the Soviet

Government proposed to the latter the prolongation of the validity of their Non-Agression and Neutrality Pacts with the U.S.S.R. The period of validity of these Treaties would have ended in the case of Latvia, Estonia and Finland in 1935, and Lithuania in 1936. On April 4, 1934, on the initiative of the Soviet Government, a Protocol was signed in Moscow prolonging the Non-Agression Treaties to the end of 1945 (i.e. for ten years after the conclusion of the original period); the Conventions on conciliation procedure for the examination of questions under dispute between the U.S.S.R. and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were similarly prolonged. On April 7, 1934, a Protocol which prolonged the Finnish-Soviet Pact up to 1945 was also signed, and on May 5, 1934, a similar Protocol was signed to prolong the Soviet-Polish Pact.

At a time of the ever-growing aggression of Fascist Germany, when the German Government rejected the proposal of the U.S.S.R. for a joint guarantee of the independence of the Baltic States, this Soviet peace initiative could not but emphasise very vividly the endeavour of the U.S.S.R. to attain real peace in Eastern Europe and her desire to establish really good, friendly relations with her Baltic neighbours. But we are compelled to stress again that this initiative of the Soviet Government did not meet with that loyal support which might have been expected from the Baltic States.

We have already referred above to the attitude of these States towards the Eastern Pact. As a result of a curious coincidence, on the same day when the German Note declining to participate in the Eastern Pact was published, viz., on September 12, 1934, a special Agreement between Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, which was subsequently called "The Baltic Entente," was signed in Geneva. This Agreement in effect embodied the old hope of the anti-Soviet statesmen of the Baltic States for the formation of a "Baltic bloc" directed against the Soviet Union. In 1928, an attempt had even been made to attract Sweden to such a bloc. The visit of General Laidoner to the Swedish King in 1928 and the return visit of the Swedish King to Estonia in 1929, were accompanied by political talks regarding the participation of Sweden in a Baltic anti-Soviet bloc. In 1929 and 1930, similar visits were made by Estonian statesmen to Pilsudski and by the President of the Polish Republic to Estonia.

In 1934, the Baltic Entente inclined more and more towards a German orientation. It is characteristic that the Baltic Entente at the time of its formation was not a full-fledged military union in so far as neither Estonia nor Latvia were inclined to support Lithuania in her conflict with Poland (because of Vilno), and with Germany (because of Memel). The creation of the Baltic Entente was accompanied by serious pressure on Lithuania by her partners in the new

alliance. Latvia, just as Estonia (the latter in the person of General Laidoner), advised and recommended Lithuania to come to an " amicable arrangement " with Germany and Poland.

Thus, having taken up a hostile policy towards the Soviet proposals for a joint guarantee with Germany of their independence, having assumed, in spite of mere wordy declarations, a negative attitude towards the proposed Eastern Pact, the Baltic States concluded a military alliance, the aim of which was certainly not defence against German aggression. Later events demonstrated that it was the co-ordination of the hostile policy of the three countries towards the Soviet Union which constituted the real political significance of the formation of the Baltic Entente.

The Anglo-French-Soviet Negotiations of 1939 and the Position of the Baltic States.

During the whole period between 1934 and 1939, the undermining work of Hitler's Germany in the Baltic countries continued unceasingly, and became more assiduous with every year, indeed with every month.

The Government of Finland, as might have been expected, proved to be the most closely orientated towards Germany, and in 1939 they had placed their country completely at the disposal of Hitler. Up to 1939, Hitler had had least success in Lithuania, since the question of Memel continued to be a bone of contention between Lithuania and Germany. On March 22, 1939, a Treaty was signed in Berlin transferring Klaipėd (Memel) together with the whole of the surrounding district to Germany. This " Treaty " can hardly be considered a Treaty in the ordinary sense of that word, seeing that it had been brutally dictated to the Lithuanian Government under threat of an immediate movement of troops for the armed seizure of Memel.

It should be noted that after the seizure of Czechoslovakia and Memel, the Soviet Government made an official statement to the Governments of Latvia and Estonia, declaring that the Soviet Government could not permit the transformation of Latvia and Estonia into territories dependent on Germany, and should Hitler make any threats against Latvia and Estonia they could count on aid from the Soviet Union. Neither Government, however, made any response to this declaration of the Soviet Government. Moreover, on June 7, 1939, Latvia and Estonia signed non-aggression agreements with Germany.

History has already demonstrated the value of " Treaties of Non-Aggression " signed by Hitler. Latvia and Estonia obtained

their " Treaties of Non-Aggression " in order that, at a convenient moment, under cover of the Non-Aggression obligations, they would be subjected to an attack by Germany.

However, the signature of these Treaties was a convenient pretext for the statesmen of Latvia and Estonia, " justifying " their hostile attitude towards the U.S.S.R., during the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations ; this, of course, refers to the question of the guarantee of their security which was to have been formulated in the three-Power Pact (Britain, France, U.S.S.R.).

Going back somewhat, we should like to recall that during the French-Soviet negotiations of 1935 which led to the signature of a Pact of Mutual Assistance, the U.S.S.R. insisted on the inclusion in this Pact of a guarantee of the integrity of the Baltic States and, in return for this, the Soviet Union agreed to give her guarantee for the frontiers of Belgium, but this proposal was, of course, declined by Laval.

Being interested in her own security and considering that the violation of the independence (in any form whatever) of the Baltic States was a threat to herself, the U.S.S.R. demanded the inclusion of such a guarantee. On June 7, 1939, the then British Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, declared in Parliament: " There remain one or two difficulties (in the negotiations), in particular the position of certain States, which did not want to receive a guarantee on the ground that it would compromise the strict neutrality which they desire to preserve." These " certain States " were the Baltic States. The " strict neutrality " which the Baltic States intended to preserve reduced itself to the fulfilment of German demands. It was precisely Fascist Germany which was interested in preventing the Baltic countries from being guaranteed by Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R.

It is extremely important to note that the present British Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, in the course of an article in the " Daily Telegraph and Morning Post," June 8, 1939, referring to the demand of the Soviet Union for a guarantee of the Baltic States, said : " The Russian claim that these (States) should be included in the triple guarantee is well-founded. There is no sense in having a crack in the peace diving bell."

The well-known journalist and French Parliamentary Deputy, Henri de Kerillis, wrote in the " Epoch," of July 12 : " As regards the guarantee to the Baltic States, the demands of the Soviet Union are absolutely justified and logical . . . it is said that neither Finland nor Estonia, nor Latvia, desires a French-Anglo-Soviet guarantee. What devilry! If they do not desire this guarantee, then this is only another reason for uneasiness."

The U.S.S.R. and the Baltic Countries in 1939-1940.

Events have shown that there was indeed cause for uneasiness regarding the attitude of the Baltic countries on the question of the guarantee of their independence. This position was demonstrated particularly strikingly somewhat later—during the Soviet-Finnish negotiations in the autumn of 1939. What did the Soviet Union propose to Finland : As distinct from the methods adopted by the Hitlerian diplomacy, the Soviet Government did not infringe the sovereignty and independence of the Finnish State ; did not present to Finland demands incompatible with the honour and self-respect of an independent country.

In view of the fact that the old Soviet-Finnish frontier was within some 32 kilometres from Leningrad, and that all the islands in the Gulf of Finland situated in the direct vicinity of the only naval sea port of the U.S.S.R. in the Baltic—Kronstadt—were in Finnish hands, the Soviet Government proposed in a friendly way to exchange these islands and part of the territory on the Karelian Isthmus (to assure greater security for Leningrad), for a considerably larger piece of Soviet territory in Soviet Karelia. It goes without saying that such an exchange of territory is in no way a violation of the sovereignty of another State.

These proposals of the Soviet Union were opposed decisively by the Finnish Government. Preliminary negotiations on this question had already taken place in March, 1939, and were resumed in October of the same year. On both occasions the Finnish Government, by its attitude, brought the negotiations to nought. Moreover, in November, 1939, Finland, by provocative action on the frontier, brought about a Finnish-Soviet armed conflict.

The Peace Treaty, of March 12, 1940, once again reflected the fundamental line of Soviet foreign policy respecting the Baltic States. The whole world press, as well as the military experts of many countries, recognised that the Soviet troops having broken the fortifications of the " Mannerheim Line " could have occupied the whole of Finland, but the Soviet Union refrained. The Peace Treaty of March 12, 1940, demanded neither military contributions, nor any other humiliating terms for Finland. (Fundamentally, the terms did not differ so very much from the proposals which the Soviet Government had made to Finland before the Finnish-Soviet armed conflict. The terms of the Peace Treaty, as the original proposals, only sought to safeguard the security of the U.S.S.R.

During the last years of their existence the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia showed by all their behaviour that they were prepared to aid Hitler in every way, and to make it easy for him to seize the Baltic States.

Hitler was preparing to seize the Baltic States, the Governments of these States were preparing to put their territory at Hitler's disposal immediately he demanded it. Just as the President of Czechoslovakia, Hacha, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Khvalkovsky, summoned by Hitler to Berlin, in March, 1939, without any resistance, put their Fatherland " under the protection of Hitler," so the spokesmen of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (not to speak of Finland) were only awaiting a similar summons to Berlin or a simple order by wire.

This is exactly what happened in Finland when Hitler, after the signature of the, Soviet-Finnish Peace Treaty of March 12, 1940, demanded the right to bring German troops into Finland. In this case no pressure was exerted by Hitler, everything proceeded by mutual consent. The Finnish Government neither informed nor made any appeal to the U.S.S.R. regarding Hitler's demand, but, on the contrary, they denied officially that German troops were in Finland, or alternatively affirmed that such troops as were there, were only in transit through Finland to . . . Norway.

In the autumn of 1939 the Soviet Union, for the purpose of assuring her own security against a possible aggression by Hitler, proposed to the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) the conclusion of agreements for Mutual Assistance ; at the same time the Soviet Government requested that the U.S.S.R. be granted the right to create naval and air bases on the territories of the three States.

This was the only possible and essential measure which the Soviet Government could adopt, because the behaviour of the Governments of these States, as shown above, had furnished no convincing political guarantees whatever that these countries would not become places d'armes for attacks on the Soviet Union. It is characteristic that when Finland categorically refused to conclude a Pact of Mutual Assistance, the Soviet Government did not insist on it, but limited themselves to the proposal for a territorial exchange and for the lease of the Hango peninsula.

The Mutual Assistance Pacts concluded in the autumn of 1939 between the U.S.S.R. on the one hand and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the other, did not give any positive results in view of the anti-Soviet policy of the Governments of these States. Instead of pursuing a loyal policy and consolidating their friendship with the U.S.S.R.—a policy which would have safeguarded their own security, the Governments of the Baltic States continued their policy for the organisation and strengthening of their territories as anti-Soviet jumping-off grounds,

The military alliance between Latvia and Estonia which was directed against the U.S.S.R. was extended by the entry therein of

Lithuania. In addition, the Latvian Government endeavoured insistently to draw Finland also into this military alliance. In December, 1939 and in March, 1940, two secret Conferences between the three Baltic States were held. Simultaneously, the connections between the General Staffs of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were strengthened, this being done in secret without informing the U.S.S.R. of the fact.

Whilst the U.S.S.R. was carrying out loyally all the decisions of the Soviet-Lithuanian, Soviet-Estonian and Soviet-Latvian Pacts of Mutual Assistance, the Governments of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia violated the Statute contained in all three Pacts, forbidding the Contracting Parties "to conclude any alliances or to participate in coalitions directed against either of the Contracting Parties."

In these circumstances, and bearing in mind all the facts discussed above of the anti-Soviet policy of the Governments of the Baltic States, the U.S.S.R. was compelled to demand from all three States the formation of such Governments as would be capable and willing to ensure that the Pacts of Mutual Assistance would be loyally carried out.

Such Governments, as is known, were formed in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. They appealed to the peoples of these countries and held elections to their respective Parliaments, and for a whole month the peoples of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia discussed freely the merits of their candidates. The elections, which took place on July 14 and 15, 1940, were held on strictly democratic lines. In Estonia "The Alliance of Working People of Estonia," which stood for the establishment of the closest possible union and friendship of Estonia; with the U.S.S.R. received nearly 93 per cent, of all the votes cast.

In Latvia, the candidates of the bloc of the "Labouring People of Latvia" received 97.6 per cent, of the votes cast.

Finally, in Lithuania, the candidates of the "Labour Alliance of Lithuania" received 99.19 per cent, of all the votes cast.

The percentage of participants in the elections in all three Republics was very high, being about 95 per cent, of the whole of the electorates a thing which had never occurred before in these countries.

The elections demonstrated the real will of the peoples of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—the determination to establish friendship and a solid association with the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

The elections proved that the anti-Soviet policy of the former Governments of the Baltic States had no support whatever amongst the masses of the people.

The representative assemblies elected on July 14 and 15, 1940, in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, by universal suffrage, established Soviet Governments in the three Baltic States and decided on the entry of these States into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

On August 3rd, 5th and 6th, 1940, the 7th Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. adopted laws permitting the entry of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into the U.S.S.R.

Conclusion

All the above mentioned facts from the history of the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. towards the Baltic States, as also regarding the attitude of these States during the period 1917 to 1940, lead to the following indisputable conclusions :—

1. The Soviet Union invariably and systematically manifested a sincere desire and had striven for peaceful and good-neighbourly relations with the Baltic States.
2. Although the separation of the Baltic States from Russia had resulted in considerable political, economic and strategic inconveniences, the Soviet Government had loyally recognised and given juridicial sanction to this separation and with equal loyalty had respected the independence and the integrity of these States.
3. For many years every proposal made by the Soviet Government to the Governments of the Baltic States was directed both towards the strengthening of peaceful mutual relations between the U.S.S.R. and these countries, and the consolidation of the real independence of the Baltic States.
4. The only condition demanded by the Soviet Government was that the Baltic States should not allow their countries to be used as places d'armes for anti-Soviet conspiracies or as jumping-off grounds for anti-Soviet attacks. The Soviet Union demanded only one essential condition, viz., that no country should be permitted or given any opportunity to create a Protectorate in any form whatsoever over the Baltic countries. There is no reasonable and unbiased statesman in any part of the world who would not recognise that this condition laid down by the Soviet Union was a loyal and just condition, and in no way violated the sovereign rights of the Baltic States. On the contrary, this demand only strengthened the real independence and security of these States.
5. But both the foreign and home policy pursued by the Governments of the Baltic States during the whole of the period under review, not only demonstrated their hostility to the Soviet Republic, but systematically violated precisely the one essential condition for

peaceful, good-neighbourly co-existence—the condition which, had it been respected, would have formed a real basis for their independence and self-determination and the maintenance of peace.

6. The behaviour of the Baltic States in 1939–1940 showed that these States had become fully "ripe" for submitting without resistance to any demands made by Hitler for furthering the attack he was preparing on the Soviet Union. In particular the behaviour of Finland, the only Baltic State which had not entered the Soviet Union in 1940 confirms the correctness of this view. Finland not only gave her consent to the entry of German troops, but also to the transformation of her territory into a jumping-off ground for an attack on the Soviet Union. Moreover, she herself is participating in this attack.

7. The U.S.S.R. never, either in words or in deeds, threatened the independence of the Baltic countries. On the contrary, she was herself interested in their independence. There was therefore no reason whatever for the formation in the Baltic States of various blocs and coalitions directed ostensibly against "threats on the part of the U.S.S.R." In any case, none of these blocs and coalitions could have defended the Baltic States had the U.S.S.R. really desired to violate their independence.

Given the goodwill of their Governments, the Baltic States could have become effective buffer States which might have eased the international position in Eastern Europe instead of making it more acute. Real friendship with the U.S.S.R. would have been the best guarantee for the independence of the Baltic States.

We have demonstrated above that the behaviour of the Governments of the Baltic States was of quite a different nature—it was not friendship, but hostility towards the Soviet Union which they encouraged during 20 years.

8. The Soviet Union could not but draw the only possible deduction from all these facts, and in 1940 it was constrained to demand that there should be a change in the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—since their hostility towards the U.S.S.R. threatened the complete subordination of the Baltic States to German Fascism.

Only politically blind people or the hopelessly stupid did not understand that had Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia not entered the Soviet Union in 1940, they would have shared the fate of Czechoslovakia, Norway, Denmark and other countries which have been enslaved by Hitler.