

How the Baltic was won

Alexander Shtromas

Most Western historians agree that the Baltic issue played an important role in shaping the alliances of World War II. In their view, it was Britain's reluctance to grant the Soviets a free hand in their dealings with the Baltic states which precipitated the breakdown of British-Soviet talks in the summer of 1939 and led Stalin to conclude the notorious Non-Aggression Treaty with Germany, which in this respect was much more compliant with Soviet demands than Britain or France. "For all practical purposes," writes D. M. Crowe, Jr., "the Baltic question ended any hope for a strong British-Soviet front against Hitler".¹ D. Kirby also implies that the Non-Aggression Treaty with Germany was concluded by the Soviet Union, in preference to a pact with Britain and France, because "the British and French negotiators showed little enthusiasm for the Soviet plan ... but the Germans emphasized their readiness to adopt a benevolent attitude towards the vital Soviet interests in the Baltic area".²

No one can deny that the Baltic issue played a certain role in Stalin's choice of sides in the growing conflict between Nazi Germany and the Allied Powers. However, one should not exaggerate it. There is very little doubt that in the aftermath of Munich and the fall of Czechoslovakia Stalin had already dismissed the possibility of an alliance with the Allied Powers against Hitler and took a firm course toward forging an alliance with the latter, which for him was now the surest way not only to stay out of war but, even more importantly, to precipitate the outbreak of war between the major anti-Soviet powers of the world. The negotiations with the British and French were therefore conducted by Stalin mainly in order to induce Hitler to raise the stakes (for example, concede to the USSR the Baltic states) for Stalin's agreement to conclude the pact with Germany, in preference to the one with Britain and France, but not in

any serious way which could have really brought about an anti-Hitler coalition treaty between the Soviet Union and Britain and France.

In this respect, it is worthwhile to remember that Hitler was not entirely forthcoming in meeting all Stalin's demands concerning, if one uses D. Kirby's expression, "vital Soviet interests in the Baltic area". According to the Secret Additional Protocol to the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR of August 23, 1939,³ the "northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR";⁴ which meant that Finland, Estonia and Latvia were thus assigned to the Soviet Union, whereas Lithuania had to fall to the German "sphere of influence". Only after many deliberations was this agreement changed by the Secret Additional Protocol to the German Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty signed on September 28, 1939.⁵ According to the Protocol, the Soviet Union got hold also of Lithuania⁶ in exchange for conceding to Germany the province of Lublin and some parts of the province of Warsaw and Poland, which had been assigned to the USSR by the earlier Soviet-German Secret Additional Protocol to the Non-Aggression Treaty of August 23, 1939.

Dogmatic blindness

Some historians, especially the Lithuanian émigré ones, believe that since the Polish territories given by Stalin to Hitler for Lithuania were by no means of an equivalent value, Hitler agreed to that trade-off only because of Lithuania's blunt refusal of his demand to attack Poland simultaneously with Germany and to regain by so doing Lithuania's Polish-occupied (in 1920) capital Vilnius, together with substantial territory of the Vilnius region.⁷ In their view, President Smetona's non-compliance with Germany's demand made Lithuania of not much use to Hitler, and he was happy to give it to Stalin for anything, thus punishing Lithuania for her anti-German attitude.

This, I believe, is another historical misconception of the events which took place during the preparation and outbreak of World War II. In fact, Hitler rejected every approach by Stalin about conceding Lithuania to the USSR after, as much as before, Lithuania's refusal to be a party to Germany's aggression against Poland. Hence, Lithuania's position made no difference in Hitler's attitude to its fate.

Only when on September 15, 1939, Stalin finally agreed to undersign the

liquidation of the "independent Polish rumpstate",⁸ did Hitler, in exchange, waive his claim to Lithuania, conceding to Stalin for the Polish territories which now, together with the rest of ethnic Poland, had been permanently assigned to the German Reich. Thus, the exchange of Lithuania for the Polish territories, under these new circumstances, was for Hitler a tremendous gain which he certainly would not have allowed to pass by him even in the event of Lithuania's total compliance with every German demand. This means that Lithuania's fate was sealed by events and deals beyond its control, and there was nothing it could have done to change this fate.

These and other "partial" historical misconceptions are rooted in the Western overall misconception of the nature of ideological powers and their international behaviour. By instinctively ascribing to those powers traditional imperialist motivations and dismissing the ideological ones as practically irrelevant façades, most Western historians usually end up missing the wood for the trees and thus getting most of their interpretations of the otherwise extremely well-researched and thoroughly collated facts entirely wrong. It is in a sense a dogmatic blindness. For most of these historians are virtual prisoners of their own pragmatic political philosophy which requires them to assess all historical facts and circumstances under their scrutiny according to one narrow analytical framework of expedient power interests and strictly prohibits any trespasses into different frames of reference. Hence, their interpretative horizon is by definition extremely limited. It does not stretch beyond territorial gains, security deals, economic advantages, strategic positions, and their likes. All facts have to be assessed exclusively against these criteria whether they fit them or not. There are simply no other relevant criteria and there should not be any.

Within that particular frame of reference the interpretation of the Nazi-Soviet Alliance is doomed to be limited to either that of Crowe's and Kirby's emphasising the Soviet desire for territorial gain or to that of some others who without denying that desire stress the overriding importance for the USSR to go, in the face of a German threat, for the best security deal on offer. The originator of that latter interpretation was not a mere historian but Winston Churchill himself. In his broadcast of October 1, 1939, he explained that the USSR had to enter into the pact with Nazi Germany in order to be able to build up its line of defence against a potential German aggression, the future "eastern front", as far to the west as

possible.⁹ After the war, when he should have known better already, he repeated this thesis. In his *War Memoirs*, Churchill wrote:

“On the Soviet side it must be said that their vital need was to hold the deployment positions of the German armies as far to the west as possible, so as to give the Russians more time for assembling their forces from all parts of their immense empire. They must be in occupation of the Baltic States and a large part of Poland by force or fraud before they were attacked. If their policy was coldblooded, it was also at the moment realistic in a high degree.”¹⁰



Two heads, one hat.

The consistent misintepretation of the motives of Soviet behaviour in 1939 by a man of Churchill's caliber and status should, however, not surprise us too much, for the statesmen learn about politics from no other sources than the books of historians whereas the historians get their inspirations from the speeches and deeds of leading statesmen. It is therefore only natural for both to think about the present in terms which firmly belong to the traditions of the long-gone past.

That Stalin, upon whom the decision about the outbreak of World War II ultimately rested, sought an alliance with Hitler for the specific purpose of unleashing that war is an idea so alien to the Western "mainstream" historians and policy makers that they find it very difficult to swallow. It simply does not make sense to them. From their pragmatically biased point of view, a power which is on the defensive and whose national security is threatened by a more powerful and dynamic neighbour simply cannot afford to entertain such grand and, no doubt, dangerous plans. It is therefore axiomatically obvious to them that war "was not the intention of Soviet policy" and that "the events of 1 September and 3 September could not be foreseen on August 23" - obvious, in spite of the plain fact that on August 23,¹¹ it was not simply foreseen but explicitly decided that the events of September 1 should actually take place¹² and that it was hardly possible for anyone to overlook or ignore the possibility, or rather certainty, of the September 3 Anglo-French reaction to these events. After all, British and French guarantees were given to Poland in March 1939, not by any secret additional protocols, but publicly and in a binding manner.

The mainstream Western historians of World War II know these facts very well indeed but nevertheless continue to insist upon their view that if only the Western powers had been less "dilatatory and half-hearted", more willing "to concede Stalin's exacting conditions, especially a free hand in the Baltic states",¹³ the Nazi-Soviet Pact would have never been concluded. Alas, the Western powers were not sufficiently forthcoming in meeting Soviet demands and in these circumstances "it is difficult to see what other course Soviet Russia could have followed".¹⁴ The attempts at exonerating Stalin and laying the full responsibility for his concluding the pact with Hitler at the doorstep of Britain and France were again authoritatively exacerbated by Churchill who, in tune with the leading Western historians of World War II, stated that the fact that the 1939 Nazi-Soviet agreement was made "marks the culminating failure of British and French foreign policy and diplomacy over several years".¹⁵

The dogmatic blindness of Western pragmatists, be they scholars or politicians, is best exemplified by the above utterances. Stalin's acceptance of an alliance with Hitler is to them in itself sufficient evidence that Hitler had offered Stalin a better security deal than the Allied Powers and that it is the fault of the latter that they did not come up with something which would have outmatched Hitler's bid. But this is simply and blatantly untrue. If one can free oneself of dogmatic assumptions and examine the facts of their own merit, one will inevitably arrive at the obvious conclusion that the anti-Hitler coalition with Britain and France was for the USSR an incomparably better security arrangement than anything that a Nazi-Soviet alliance could have offered. For whatever the deficiencies of the concrete terms of such a coalition were, it would have certainly kept Hitler out of Poland, far removed from the Soviet Union's frontiers, and this, together with French and British guarantees of the USSR's security against German aggression, would have made Hitler's attack against the Soviet Union, as well as World War II in general, virtually impossible.

The "cause"

Actually, Stalin was actively and genuinely striving for exactly such an arrangement when during the mid-1930s he used all means in his power to get the Allied Powers to agree to a collective security deal with the USSR. At that time he feared, and one must admit that this fear was not entirely unjustified, that the Allied Powers would do nothing to stop Hitler from attacking one East European country after another, which would enable him in the end to launch an attack against the USSR and eliminate it as a "fortress of communism". But as soon as this situation changed, as soon as in the Soviet view it became realistically probable that the growing conflict between the Allied Powers and Nazi Germany might result in a war between them (the likelihood of such a turn of events was already realised by the Soviets in the aftermath of Munich in late autumn 1938, when Hitler began to neglect and violate the agreements which he and the Allied Powers had signed there), the Soviet interest in "collective security" vanished without a trace. Now the worldwide cause of communism was best reserved by the USSR encouraging Hitler's expansionism to an extent which would indeed provoke a full-scale war between Germany and the Allied Powers. And the USSR, without hesitation, embarked on that "war-provoking" course, a course that promised to prize wide open the gates for the expansion of communism into Europe. This was a unique - though in narrow terms of national security an extremely risky - chance for a

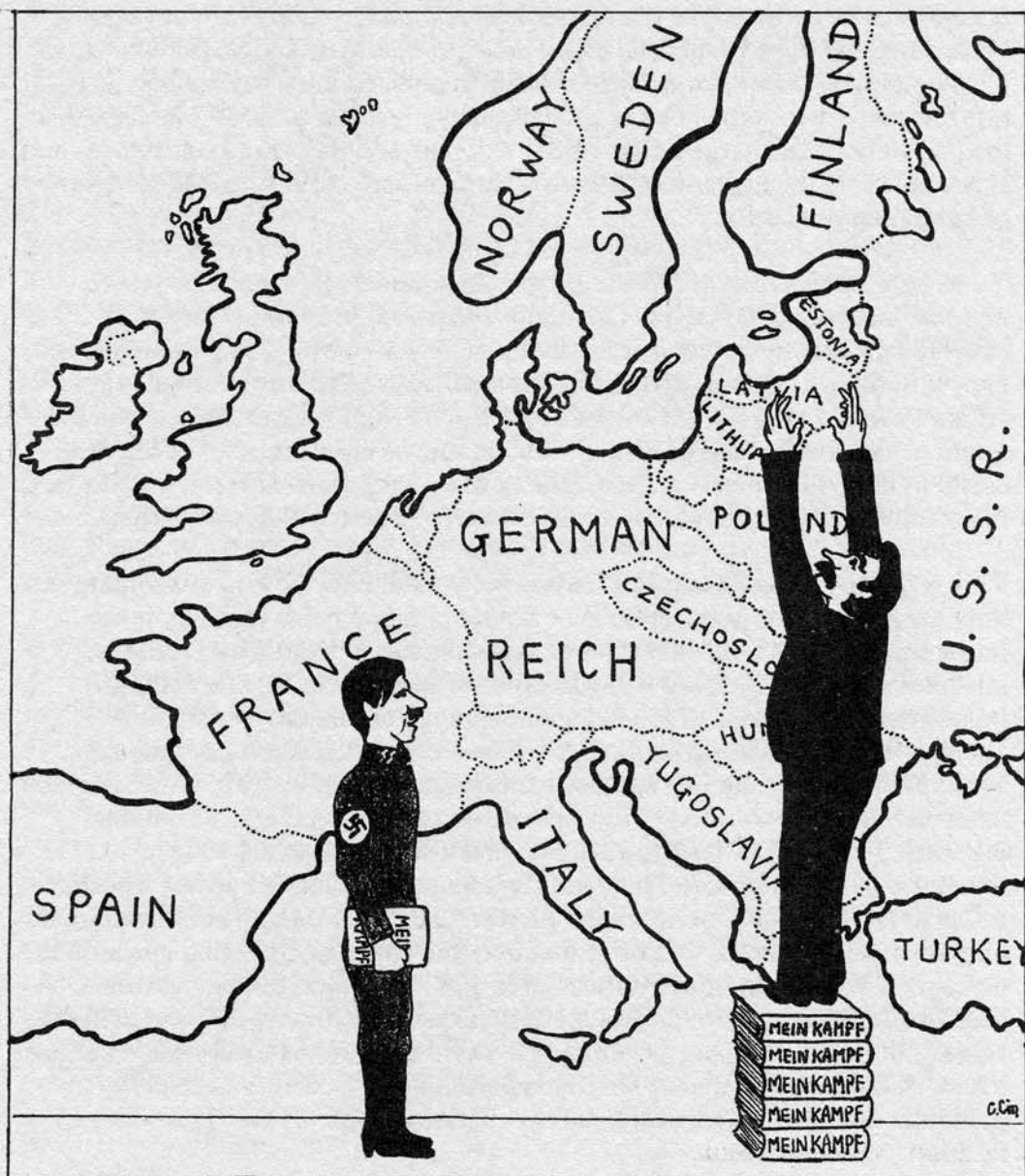
decisive advancement of communism, and the Communist rulers of the Soviet Union could not allow this chance to pass by them. All reasons, such as the USSR's national interest, that could deter them to take up this chance were of minor importance and had to be rejected.

To be sure, the Soviets still continued to pretend that their interest in a "collective security" deal with the West remained unaltered. The pretense enabled them on the one hand to keep Hitler constantly anxious about the real intentions of the USSR and thus to exact from him the highest possible price for the conclusion of the German-Soviet pact. On the other hand it made it possible for the Soviets to instill in the Allied Powers a false sense of security that kept Britain and France unprepared for the war until it actually broke out. As we see, Stalin's ruse worked pretty well on both accounts. Neither Hitler nor the Allied Powers had a good enough grasp of Soviet politics rightly to guess what Stalin was really after, and they did unwittingly fall into the trap which he had so skillfully set for them.

When Alain Besançon said that the "failure to understand the Soviet regime is the principal cause of its successes",¹⁶ he no doubt meant, among other instances confirming that maxim, also, the Soviet success of 1939 which enabled Stalin to unleash World War II and at the same time instantaneously to extend Communist rule to a few countries to the west of the Soviet Union's 1939 frontier.

However, in terms of protecting the USSR's national security, this was no success at all. In these terms it was rather a disaster. For by unleashing World War II Stalin made it possible for Hitler to visit that war later on the USSR, which in 1941 he really did, causing the Soviet Union so much damage that in physical and material terms this country became that war's main victim. But in terms of expanding and consolidating Communist rule in the world, Stalin's policy was indeed an unqualified success, and, as far as the Soviet rulers were concerned, this was the only success that really mattered. After all, for the sake of the success of the Communist cause in Russia, Stalin had killed scores of millions of Russian people, and in this and other respects inflicted on Russia much more damage than Hitler and his whole war machine ever did.

This is perhaps the most important lesson which we can and at last should learn from the Nazi-Soviet Alliance and the USSR's role in causing World War II. This lesson clearly teaches us never to mistake the USSR for a normal nation-



Need another volume?

state that in its own, maybe over-rapacious and under-civilised, way pursues what it regards to be best for Russia's national interests. The Soviet Union, as Charles Bohlen once succinctly remarked, is not a country but a cause. Indeed, it is the cause determined by the globally-conceived Communist ideology that the Party clique in charge of the USSR will pursue under all circumstances and, if necessary, at the expense of Russia's national interests, including also those of her national security.

To be sure, the interest of advancing the Communist cause and the Soviet national interest are not always mutually exclusive; sometimes they may entirely coincide as they coincided in the mid-1930s, when, as was mentioned above, Stalin was genuinely striving for a collective security deal with the Allied Powers. After all, the might of the Soviet ruling clique depends on the might of the country and people this clique rules. But if these set of interests clash, as they do in most cases, including that of the Nazi-Soviet Alliance, then the ideological interests will invariably take precedence over the national ones.

This is the key to understanding Soviet policy and thus the key to avoiding not only the historical misconceptions of Soviet political behaviour but, more importantly, the fatal mistakes in Western conduct in East-West relations, mistakes such as the Moscow negotiations of summer 1939, the Yalta and Potsdam agreements of 1945, and a whole range of others where similar attempts at accomodating the Soviet Union were undertaken under the false assumption of its being just another nation-state that, in its own, rather peculiar manner, is fully committed to the defence and advancement of its national interests. The Soviet Union always was and always will be, as long as it remains a Communist state, first and foremost an ideological power whose rulers have at heart only one single interest, that of Communist domination, not only over Russia and its vicinities, but over the entire world. Even when on the defensive, even when directly attacked in 1941 by Hitler, the Soviet rulers, be they Lenin, Stalin, or Gorbachev, have done and will always do their utmost to achieve the ultimate goal of Communist world control. As for Russia's national interests, they will always be strictly subordinated by the Soviet rulers to this particular goal and seen as valid and worth defending only insofar as they faithfully serve this goal.

This is perhaps the most general lesson to be drawn from the Nazi-Soviet Alliance, the one providing the widest framework for the correct interpretation of all aspects of Soviet politics without exception. The fate of the Baltic states

which we are about to start examining contains some other lessons that may be less general but which provide more practical guidance on how the West has to deal with the Soviets in the day-to-day relationship of peaceful coexistence with them on the same planet.

Checkmating the Balts

Even before the second (September 28) Secret Additional Protocol was signed (and thus the fate of Lithuania sealed), the Soviet Union had started to take energetic measures aimed at establishing its rule in the Baltic states. After having decided upon what the tactical master plan for the takeover should be, the Soviet Union had chosen Estonia as its first target. The escape of a Polish submarine from internment in the harbour of Estonia's capital, Tallinn, was used by the Soviet government as a pretext for starting the action. The submarine had escaped on September 18, 1939, and already on the following day Molotov summoned the Estonian Ambassador to Moscow informing him that, since his government was unable to protect its coastline and territorial waters, the Soviet Baltic Fleet was from then on to undertake this task.¹⁷

A week later, on September 25, 1939, Molotov presented the Estonian government with an ultimatum demanding the immediate conclusion of a Soviet-Estonian military alliance providing for the establishment of Soviet military bases on Estonian territory. If Estonia refused to comply, Molotov warned, the Soviet Union would have no choice but to use military force here which, to be sure, was massively (about 250,000 men equipped with artillery, tanks, and planes) concentrated from mid-September along the Soviet-Estonian border (on top of the naval blockade of the Estonian coastline). Molotov made clear also that in the present circumstances Estonia could not count on any aid either from Germany or from the Allied Powers and, when the Estonian government established that this was indeed the case, it agreed, though reluctantly, to sign the proposed treaty. The Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Treaty was signed on September 28, 1939, and the same day, Soviet troops rushed into that country to occupy the positions assigned to them in the treaty's Supplementary Protocol (according to it, the number of Soviet troops stationed in Estonia was 25,000).

After the pattern was thus established, Latvia's turn came. Here excuses or pretexts such as the escape of the Polish submarine from Tallinn, or the sinking of a Soviet ship by a submarine off the Estonian coast, another Soviet bullying

device used during the Soviet-Estonian negotiations of September 26-28, 1939, about the conclusion of the treaty, were not necessary any more. The Latvian government was forced to conclude the same sort of treaty (signed October 5, 1939) simply by the Soviet's using the Estonian precedent as a sufficient argument (substantiated by the same threats of using sheer military force against Latvia in case of her non-compliance).

Lithuania's treatment was somewhat different. In the first place, on September 26, 1939, the USSR quite politely offered to Lithuania to take over its capital city Vilnius, which the Poles had captured from Lithuania in 1920 and which now, after Poland's defeat and its (fourth) partition between Germany and the USSR, was under Soviet occupation. The offer which was entirely consistent with the first Secret Additional Protocol to the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty of August 23, 1939 (it was explicitly stated in it that "the interest of Lithuania in the Vilnius area is recognised by each party"¹⁸), was too tempting for the Lithuanian government to reject it, especially since no strings were attached to it. But the situation drastically changed after Germany conceded Lithuania to the USSR. On October 2, 1939, (that is, four days after the second Secret Additional Protocol was signed between Germany and the USSR to this effect) the Soviet government presented Lithuania with a demand to sign, in exchange for Vilnius, an "Estonian-type" treaty. In the beginning the Lithuanian government resisted quite fiercely. The Soviet offer was at first rejected without much discussion, but on October 5, 1939, when Latvia finally ceded to Soviet pressure, signing such a treaty with the USSR and, moreover, when the Red Army concentrated a massive force in the Vilnius area and now also in Latvia, ready for a military attack on Lithuania from the east and the north, the Lithuanian government found that it had no choice but also to yield, like Estonia and Latvia, to Soviet demands: on October 10, 1939, the Soviet-Lithuanian Mutual Assistance Treaty, the last in the series, was signed in the Kremlin; and in a few days Soviet troops had taken over the bases established on Lithuanian territory according to this treaty.

The second stage in the process of Sovietisation of the Baltic states was, however, delayed for more than half a year because Finland, in contrast to its southern neighbours, did not bow to Soviet demands. After having exhausted their patience in trying during the period between October 7 and November 13, 1939, to persuade the intransigent Finns to give in by voluntarily following the example of other Baltic states, the Soviets decided to use military force against Finland. On November 30, 1939, after a heated exchange of memoranda and

notes between the USSR and Finland, the Soviet Union launched a military attack against Finland, thus starting the infamous Winter War.

Suprisingly, Finland proved to be not an easy prey for the overwhelmingly superior Soviet forces. The Soviet advance was effectively stopped by the Finns for several months at the Mannerheim Line, and the Winter War became a protracted affair. The utmost concentration of Soviet military might against Finland, standing on its own, appeared to be necessary for the war to be at least half-won by the Soviet Union. And it was only half-won indeed. The Soviets failed to impose on Finland the "people's government" of Otto Kuusinen, which they had formed (the same day Finland was attacked) in Terioki, the first town they occupied on Finnish territory; and instead the Soviets were forced to agree to sign a Peace Treaty with the same "bourgeois" (usually called "white" by the Soviet media) Finnish government which they fought to destroy.

According to this peace treaty signed on March 12, 1940, the Soviet Union gained a certain part of the eastern and southeastern (the Karelian isthmus) Finnish territory but no real foothold in Finland itself (except for the Hango Peninsula which the USSR got from Finland on a 30-years' lease). The Soviet leaders had to be content with the conversion of the Karelian ASSR (originally a part of the RSFSR), to which the newly acquired Finnish eastern territories were added, into a new union republic, the Karelian-Finnish SSR. The new union republic was supposed to serve as the basis for the incorporation into the USSR of the rest of Finland at some time in the future, but somehow this future never materialised.¹⁹

The "safe war" tactic

There was nothing unusual or new in the 1939 Soviet behaviour toward the Baltic states. As on all previous occasions when the Soviets were prepared to go or actually went to war, they ensured beforehand that the war they were about to wage was an entirely "safe war", that is, a war which would not expose their system of rule in the USSR to any risks and which they could not lose too badly. For the war to be thus safe it was not enough to wage it against a minor and weak nation; one had to make sure that no major power would come to the rescue or defence of this nation. And it was a consistent pattern of Soviet policy that the nation they were about to attack was going to stand against them alone. When, for example, the Soviets attacked Georgia in 1921, they had received in advance an assurance from the then British prime

minister, David Lloyd George, that Britain, the only real military and political presence in the area of the Middle East, was not going to interfere with their conquest of that country. Now, similarly, before taking any aggressive action against the Baltic states, the Soviets made sure that Hitler would give them a free hand in that area.

The Soviets deemed Hitler's permission for them to take over the Baltic states an entirely sufficient guarantee of the safety of that enterprise, because in their view the Allied Powers were not in a position to interfere with Soviet plans in any substantial way. Britain and France were already at war with Germany and had no direct access to the Baltic area anyway. In this respect, however, at least insofar as Finland was concerned, the Soviets proved to be wrong. The reaction of Allied Powers to Soviet unprovoked aggression against Finland was very strong, determined, and even practical. Britain and France immediately started organising an expeditionary corps to be sent to Finland and they found for the corps a direct access route to the battle via their ally, Norway. According to Churchill, the French were to send 50,000 "volunteers" and 100 bombers and the British a proportionate force.²⁰ Unexpectedly, the United States reacted very strongly too. The Americans not only unequivocally condemned the Soviet aggression but extended their unrestrained support for Finland's "glorious battle for independence and freedom". To crown it all, the League of Nations solemnly expelled the Soviet Union for its aggression against Finland.

The Winter War the Soviets had waged against Finland was not sufficiently safe anymore, and characteristically the Soviets immediately backed down on their original plan of conquering Finland and imposing upon her a Communist government of their own making. Now they were happy to sign a peace treaty with the "white" Finns and limit their complete limited victory over them to a token victory in political terms.

The memories of 1939-1940 have most certainly deterred the Soviets from applying to Finland, after she had suffered at Soviet hands her second military defeat in 1945, the treatment which no other country in the eastern part of Europe had managed to escape. Although "Finlandised", Finland has remained a liberal democracy and has never been turned into a client state of the USSR.

Two major lessons are to be drawn from this experience: first, that the Soviets will never start a risky war and, hence, as long as the West remains strong and determined to fight against or otherwise effectively counter Soviet aggression,

the USSR will have no choice but to adhere to the principles of peaceful coexistence with the West; and second, that no nation, however small and weak, should ever give in to Soviet blackmail and threats even when standing alone against that giant power. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania lost their independence because they were intimidated into complying with Soviet demands; Finland, on the contrary, won her right to remain free because she refused to comply and, when attacked for non-compliance, bravely put up a vigorous fight against the Soviet aggressor. It was this fight that earned Finland such a determined and massive support of the nations of the free world, which even the Soviets were unable to ignore.

That it pays off to take an intransigent stance against Soviet aggressive acts was proved not only by Finland's Mannerheim in 1939-1940, but also by Yugoslavia's Tito in 1948. It was also proved during the Soviet-imposed blockade of Berlin in 1948-1949, and the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the two most outstanding among the rare instances where the United States took an intransigent stance toward Soviet aggressive moves. And who knows what the Soviet empire would be like today if Hungary's Imre Nagy in 1956 and Czechoslovakia's Alexander Dubcek in 1968 had been as intransigent and determined to resist the Soviets as were Mannerheim and Tito during their time of trial.

There is however yet another lesson for the Western Alliance to learn from this experience: action against any Soviet aggression, in order to be successful, must be taken timely, that is, as soon as a legitimate government of a country is subverted by the Soviets with the view of installing instead a stooge government chosen and supported by them. It was rather foolish, at least from the Soviet point of view, for the West and the Third World to start protesting about Afghanistan only after the Soviet military force was introduced into that country in December 1979, when those nations had remained completely silent in April 1978, when the real Soviet takeover in Afghanistan took place. After Afghanistan had been so compliantly conceded to them by the rest of the world, the Soviets felt that it was entirely proper for them to bring in troops to consolidate their grip on power over that country. The Soviet-installed but internationally recognised puppet government of Afghanistan was perhaps interested in the Soviet military presence in the country more than the Soviet Union itself; after all it was this "legitimate" government that called upon the Soviet Union to bring its troops in. It knew that without the Soviets it would be unable to retain power and the positions of privilege that go with it.

The situation in Afghanistan might have been entirely different if the West had refused to recognise as legitimate the government of Taraki and subsequently that of Amin, and if they had consistently followed through all the consequences that go with non-recognition. In that situation the Soviets would have thought twice before sending their troops to Afghanistan and most likely would not have dared to do so. And without their presence the Communist regime of Afghanistan would have probably crumbled very soon without a protracted civil war and all the hardship that ensued as its consequence. Amin would have then been remembered as the last Soviet-Communist plant in Afghanistan, and no one in the world would have known of somebody called Babrak Karmal.

Modus operandi

Only after the Winter War was over could the Soviet Union afford to concentrate again on its delayed plan of Sovietisation of the other three Baltic states. A press campaign against the Baltic states, accusing them of harbouring pro-Allied sympathies and plotting with each other behind the Soviet back with the view of undermining their alliances with the USSR, was mounted by the Soviet Union first, but already in May 1940 the Soviet government started to take practical steps aimed at the "final solution" of the Baltic problem.

This time Lithuania was chosen as the first target of the renewed Soviet attack. On May 25, 1940, Molotov summoned the Lithuanian Ambassador to Moscow and handed him a note accusing the Lithuanian authorities of kidnapping Soviet soldiers from their military bases in Lithuania and qualifying these acts as "provocative toward the Soviet Union" and fraught with "serious consequences".²¹ The Soviet government demanded from the Lithuanian government "to halt such provocative actions, to take the necessary steps immediately to search for the Soviet soldiers who had disappeared and to transfer them to the military authorities of the Soviet bases in Lithuania".²² In the conclusion of this note the Lithuanian government was warned that in the case of its non-compliance with the Soviet demands the Soviet government would be forced "to take other measures",²³ the content of which remained threateningly unexplained.

The Lithuanian government responded to this note immediately (on May 26, 1940), and in the most compliant way, but the Soviet government remained silent. Then, on May 28, 1940, the Lithuanian government sent another

message to Moscow reporting in detail about the findings of the Special Commission appointed by it to investigate the charges made by the USSR against the Lithuanian government agencies and their officials. The response this time came in a roundabout way: on May 28, 1940, the Soviet government issued an official communiqué broadcast by Moscow radio and published in the Soviet press, but the Lithuanian government still did not receive a reply addressed directly to it. The Soviet communiqué of May 28 amounted to a formal indictment of the Lithuanian government; this time it was made directly responsible not only for kidnapping soldiers but also for shooting one of them, a certain Junior Commanding Officer Butaev.²⁴ The “dialogue of the deaf” created such great tension and became so ominous that the Lithuanian government decided to send its prime minister, Antanas Merkys, to Moscow, in order to clarify the issue at stake by personal communication with Molotov. This proved to be of no avail either. Molotov did not want to listen to any explanations and rejected out of hand as falsified the information gathered by the Special Investigation Commission. Of course, he knew much better what was happening in Lithuania than the country’s devious prime minister thought; and he was determined to make his point by lecturing and instructing him, but by no means was he prepared to listen to what he had to say. Thus Merkys learned that his minister of the interior, Kazys Skucas, and the director of the Department of State Security, Augustinas Povilaitis, were the instigators of all the activities directed against the Soviet garrisons, that he himself was trying to turn the Baltic Entente into an anti-Soviet alliance, and many other similar things.²⁵

In desperation, the Lithuanian government sent its foreign minister, Jouzas Urbsys, to Moscow to help Merkys’s mission to succeed; he carried a new governmental message to Molotov and, most importantly, a personal letter from the Lithuanian president, Antanas Smetona, to the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mikhail Kalinin. Nothing could be more reconciliatory and, one could say, even submissive, than these documents,²⁶ but they also failed to impress the Soviet leaders, let alone to move them even an iota. After the last session of talks with Molotov on June 11, 1940, attended by both Merkys and Urbsys, Merkys returned to Kaunas leaving his foreign minister, Urbsys, to continue with the business in Moscow on his own. The next day (June 12, 1940), an official decree was published in Kaunas dismissing the minister of the interior, Kazys Skucas, and the director of the Department of State Security, Augustinas Povilaitis (both of them, at Soviet request, were turned over to Moscow a few days later, and disappeared

forever). These were the Lithuanian government's last desperate and, one must say, preposterous attempts to please (and appease) Moscow, to try to regain its trust of Lithuania's most precious possession - its independence and freedom.

What the Lithuanian government was unable (and probably also unwilling) to realise was the simple fact that there was nothing in its power to change Moscow's course or distract it from pursuing the master plan of Lithuania's full Sovietisation. Whatever the Lithuanian government did to comply with Moscow's demands, Moscow's task was to remain totally indifferent. The prime goal on the road to Lithuania's Sovietisation was the destruction of the incumbent government of that country and, in order to achieve this goal in the smoothest possible way, Moscow had to insist on the "criminal" record of this government, independently of how consistent this was with the real facts or even of how submissive to Moscow this doomed government was prepared to be. Moscow simply needed its own men to rule Lithuania; only they were to be trusted by it with the function of delivering Lithuania to the USSR in the precise way which Moscow planned for this process to take place. The old "bourgeois" leaders of Lithuania were simply unfit to fulfill this role in cahoots with Moscow and had to be removed and replaced by those who were fit.

On June 14, 1940 (the day the Germans entered Paris), just before midnight, Molotov summoned Urbsys to the Kremlin and handed him the famous (or, rather, infamous) Soviet Ultimatum to Lithuania.

The Ultimatum stated that the Soviet government considered as established the fact that by the "actions taken against the Soviet troops in Lithuania",²⁷ four such actions were listed in the Ultimatum, all known from previous Soviet documents, "the Lithuanian authorities tried to make unbearable the presence of Soviet government troops in Lithuania". Moreover, totally inconsistent with



Samson and Delilah.

the evidence presented (in addition to the four cases mentioned above, arrests of Lithuanians were involved), the Soviet government considered as also established the fact "that the Lithuanian government is wantonly violating the Treaty of Mutual Assistance concluded with the Soviet Union, and is preparing aggression against the Soviet garrisons, established in accordance with this Treaty."²⁸

The second part of the Ultimatum accused the Lithuanian government of having brutally violated the treaty by transforming the Baltic Entente into, as the Soviet government for unclear reasons considered established, a "military alliance ... directed against the Soviet Union".²⁹ For some peculiar reason the decisive evidence for proving the anti-Soviet nature of this alliance was supposed to be the fact that "in February 1940 there was established a printed organ of this military entente, *Revue Baltique*, in English, French and German",³⁰ but all these frantic inconsistencies and blatant abuses of elementary logic fade away before the conclusive, the real ultimate part of this ultimatum, which deserves to be quoted in full:

The Soviet Government considers it necessary and urgent:

1. That the Minister of the Interior, Skucas, and, the Director of the Department of Security, Povilaitis, be immediately delivered to the judicial authorities and tried as directly guilty of acts of provocation committed against the garrison of the Soviet Union in Lithuania.
2. That a Government be immediately formed in Lithuania capable of assuring and determined to assure the proper fulfillment of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance between the



Delilah and Samson.

Soviet Union and Lithuania and to suppress firmly the enemies of this Treaty.

3. That a free entry into the territory of Lithuania be immediately assured for units of the army of the Soviet Union which will be stationed in the most important centers of Lithuania and which will be sufficiently numerous to assure the enforcement of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and Lithuania and to put an end to acts of provocation directed against the garrison of the Soviet Union in Lithuania.

The Soviet Government will wait for the answer of the Lithuanian Government until 10 a.m. of June 15. The failure to respond at the established time will be considered as a refusal to carry out the above mentioned demands of the Soviet Union with the responsibility for all the consequences of such refusal falling on the Lithuanian Government.³¹

The Lithuanian Government, after a full night of deliberations during which it had established that no country was prepared to come to Lithuania's defence, decided that it had no choice but to accept the Soviet ultimatum, in spite of its total groundlessness and blatant illegality. At 9 a.m. on June 15, 1940, Foreign Minister Urbsys (still in Moscow but taking part in the cabinet meeting by phone) handed to Molotov, on behalf of the Lithuanian Government, a brief, positive reply to all Soviet demands. At 10 a.m. large contingents of the Red Army started crossing all of Lithuania.

The Lithuanian Government resigned immediately after reaching the decision on accepting the Soviet ultimatum (before 9 a.m.), and President Smetona appointed General Stasys Rastikis as new prime minister in charge of forming the new government. Urbsys reported this decision to Molotov together with the acceptance of the ultimatum, but to his shock and surprise was told by Molotov that the choice of Rastikis was unacceptable to the Soviet Union and that the president, before appointing anybody to the prime ministerial office, had to consult first the USSR's Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Dekanozov, who was now on his way to Kaunas. That was too much for President Smetona to bear. He declared that under such circumstances he

had decided to reverse his decision about accepting the ultimatum and urged the cabinet to follow him in doing so officially. The cabinet, however, declined the president's suggestion. In its view, it was now too late to reject the ultimatum, since the Soviet troops were already pouring into the country, and the Lithuanian Army, following its previous orders to let them in without resistance, was totally incapable of stopping them now. Smetona did not insist. Instead, he decided to leave the country, to thus assure from abroad the continuity of the constitutional order and the organisation of resistance to the Soviet *diktat*.

According to the Lithuanian Constitution (Art.71), in the president's absence all his functions in their full scope were performed by the prime minister. Hence, Antanas Merkys, who was already resigned from the prime minister's post, found himself in the position not only of acting prime minister but also of the acting president of the country. President Smetona explicitly endorsed Merkys to hold these offices before leaving the country. It was now Merkys's job to find a prime minister suitable both to him and to the Soviets. Merkys immediatly suggested a few candidates for the prime ministerial office, but Dekanozov found them all unacceptable. The deliberations between Merkys and Dekanozov took about two days, until on June 17, 1940, Justas Paleckis, a liberal journalist and a member of the Populist Party, emerged as a candidate for Merkys job. On June 17, Paleckis and the "people's government" he had formed officially took office with Paleckis being also elevated to the post of the acting president of the republic.³²

Paleckis's government was at first not Communist. It was rather based on the principle of a "popular front coalition". It consisted of several prominent intellectuals, progressive but not members of any party, as well as of members of different "democratic" parties, among them Populist and Social-Democrats. There were only two Communist among the ministers in the initial list of Paleckis's cabinet - but, significantly enough, they received the portfolios of the minister of the interior and of the director of the Department of State Security, which in that time of radical change carried probably more weight than all the other portfolios put together.³³

Variations on a theme

After having completed the occupation of Lithuania, the Soviet government took Latvia and Estonia to task. On June 16, 1940, the governments of both

these countries were presented by Molotov with similar ultimatums. The difference consisted only in that the arguments proving the non-compliance of these governments with the Mutual Assistance Treaties between them and the USSR were reduced from two to only one point, that concerning the Baltic Entente and the unfortunate magazine, *Revue Baltique*, which so ominously failed to produce a Russian edition. As for the ultimative parts of these ultimatums, they were the ones concerning the change of the governments and the free entry of Soviet troops into the respective countries. The response to the Soviet ultimatums by the two governments who had witnessed what had just happened in Lithuania, was the same as that of the Lithuanian government; the new governments formed at Soviet request also followed the same popular front pattern put there - in contrast to the action of Smetona, who left Lithuania, the legitimate presidents of Latvia (Karlis Ulmanis) and Estonia (Kostantin Päts) remained in their countries and for some time presided also over the new regimes.³⁴

This created certain difficulties in the process of formation of the new Latvian and Estonian "people's government". Both incumbent presidents initially bluntly refused to sanction them. In response, orchestrated "popular demonstrations" in front of the presidential palaces of Riga and Tallin took place, demanding the installation of "people's governments" and threatening, in case of refusal, to break the "presidential sabotage" by violence (many of these demonstrators were Soviet civil and military personnel; in addition a special shipload of such demonstrators was brought from the USSR to Riga by the Soviet cruiser *Marat* on June 18, 1940). As a result, in Latvia an unsigned (either by Ulmanis, who as President had to sign such decrees, or by anyone else in his stead) "Announcement of the Secretariat of the President of the Republic", proclaiming that a new cabinet led by Augusts Kirhensteins had been formed was published in the official government gazette on June 20.³⁵

In Estonia, on June 21, the demonstrations had been transformed into a stage-managed "popular uprising" against Päts, who was thus brutally coerced by the Communists to approve the cabinet formed by Johannes Vares-Barbarus. Despite the duress, Päts endorsed this government only after having secured the concession that no Communist would be on the list of its members. This is how "people's governments" were formed and started to function in Latvia and Estonia by June 22, 1940.

In any real terms these governments were totally dominated and guided in

every step they took not by the new, purely nominal heads of states, but by the special high-ranking emissaries of the Soviet government appointed for each Baltic state - Vladimir Dekanozov for Lithuania, Andrey Vyshinsky for Latvia, and Andrei Zhdanov for Estonia - with the Soviet polpreds (ambassadors) to those countries acting as their deputies and other members of the Soviet embassies' staffs supporting personnel. Very soon hundreds of Soviet citizens started to arrive from the USSR, most of them with special assignments to take up directly leading positions in the Party and government apparatuses of the Baltic states, first and foremost within their armies and police forces. Among them were Soviet Communists of Baltic extraction; for example, in Estonia almost all leading positions were occupied by "Russian Estonians" (called "Yestonians" by the natives) who even until the present day, though to a lesser extent, are dominating the power *apparatus* of that Soviet republic.³⁶

The measures taken by all three new governments were from now on pretty uniform. First of all, Communist political prisoners were released everywhere and subsequently Communist parties were formally legalised, whereas the formerly ruling parties and their support organisations were banned. In fact, by these measures a one-party Communist system was fully established by the end of June, in spite of the fact that many individual non-Communists were still members of the governments of all three countries. Most of them later joined the Communist Party but some either resigned (like the Lithuanian "people's government's" non-Party intellectual deputy prime minister, Professor V. Krève Mickevicius) or simply fled abroad (like the Lithuanian "people's government's" liberal minister of finances, E. Galvanauskas). A rapid expansion of governmental offices took place at the same time with the newly created (as well as vacated) ministerial positions being filled by Communists. By the beginning of July, the Communists were in the majority in each country's cabinet, which made possible the speeding up of the purge of the former governmental officials and their replacement by Communists and their supporters, many of whom, as was noted above, were Soviet citizens directly imported from the USSR.

These purges culminated in the two waves of mass arrests (each such wave accounting for thousands of victims in each country) on July 11-12 and 18-19 (before and after elections to the "People's Diets"), whereby the actually or even potentially non-compliant political, cultural, and religious elites of the three nations were put out of circulation by imprisonment and/or deportation to the USSR.

Alexander Shtromas teaches at Salford University in the UK. Formerly with the Legal Research Institutes of Moscow and Vilnius, in 1973 he was expelled from the USSR .

His most recent work is a four-volume study on *The Soviet Union and the Challenge of the Future*, 1988/89.

The next step was the announcement of elections for "People's Diets" to be held on July 14, 1940, in all three Baltic states. Changes in the electoral laws were introduced by government decrees, which were illegal in both form and substance (the constitutions did not permit electoral law to be changed by decrees, and the changes introduced were contrary to the electoral provisions of the constitutions then still in force). The obvious intention of these laws was to stage a Soviet-style election with single-slate candidates of the "Working People's Leagues" being unanimously voted in without any competition whatsoever. The implementation of that electoral system was not at all easy. Abortive (and severely suppressed) attempts to organise and present alternative electoral slates were made in all three Baltic states, with the most dramatic development taking place in Estonia, but all were to no avail. The elections took place as planned and the officially announced (but hardly credible) result gave the usual 90-plus per cent of the votes cast to the sole official slates of the Working People's Leagues.

All three thus "elected" People's Diets met on July 21, 1940. The same day they proclaimed, unanimously, of course, and by acclamation, the conversion of their respective states into Soviet Socialist Republics. The next resolution unanimously adopted by them was an application addressed to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for accepting the newly established SSRs as member-states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The assemblies concluded their two-day session by adopting laws on nationalisation of land (to go together with an agricultural reform) and of industry and banks; they also elected delegates to go to Moscow to present to the next session of the USSR's Supreme Soviet the applications for membership in the USSR.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR met on August 1, 1940. On August 3 it had decided to adopt Lithuania and, on August 5 and 6, Latvia and Estonia, respectively, as union republics of the USSR.

This is how by August, 1940, the Soviet takeover of the three Baltic states was completed in all actual and formal terms. After the almost forty-nine years which have elapsed since, the position of the Baltic states remains exactly the same - that of countries which being occupied by and forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union have ceased to exist as sovereign national and political entities and have virtually disappeared from the world's political map.

The history of the Sovietisation of the Baltic states exemplifies the general *modus operandi* of a Communist takeover. It is rather typical in terms of the close cooperation and coordination of action between the Soviet-Party state and its foreign constituencies that, however small and insignificant, exist in any country of the world and, if properly boosted up by unequivocal Soviet support, can become a formidably strong political force fully able to seize and even quite effectively exercise state power. It is the same pattern of close coordination of Soviet and indigenous Communist action which allowed the Soviet state in 1918-1921 to take possession so effectively of the Ukraine, Georgia and some other states newly formed on the former territory of the Russian Empire, or of a number of East European states in the aftermath of World War II. Basically the same pattern of coordinated action allowed for the establishment and consolidation of Communist minority regimes in countries like Angola (1975), Ethiopia (1974-1977), Afghanistan (1978), and many others.

Indigenous communism

It is not at all necessary in all such cases for the initiative of the takeover to come from the Soviet Union, as in the case of the Baltic states. In recent decades these initiatives very often came from the indigenous power-greedy Communist parties and groups which, however, before acting upon such initiatives, had to solicit and secure full Soviet support, not only for that action itself, but also for the regime which was to be established by that action. Without Soviet support, most of these regimes, even if established, would not be viable in any more or less long term view, which does not preclude the possibility of some of them becoming independent of the USSR after the time required for proper consolidation of their power within the country (as in the cases of Yugoslavia, China, and Albania).

This is another lesson to be drawn from the incorporation into the USSR of the Baltic states. If only the Western policy makers had learned these lessons in

good time, they would have been much better equipped to deal with the Soviet Union, both during World War II and its aftermath; they could probably have avoided the blunders of Yalta and Potsdam and perhaps even secured independence and democratic institutions for many a nation of Eastern Europe, now under Soviet control. It is still not too late to start learning these lessons, for the Soviet Union in its expansionist pursuits continues successfully to apply almost without modifications the same *modus operandi* which it used in 1939-1940 with regard to the Baltic states.

Of special significance is the lesson to be learned from the experience of the formation in the Baltic states of indigenous Communist administrations. In all these Baltic states the Communist parties were minuscule, secretarian and clandestine bodies which nobody took seriously as politically relevant, let alone significant, groups. Suffice it to say that, even according to official Soviet data, by the time of Soviet occupation in June 1940, the strength of the Baltic Communist parties was: in Lithuania, 1500 members,³⁷ in Latvia, fewer than 1000 members,³⁸ and in Estonia, only 130 members.³⁹ There were at that time few active Communist supporters and associates outside the ranks of the parties' membership - a few hundreds or thousands at the most.⁴⁰ These more numerous "fellow travelers" were as unrepresentative of the Baltic working classes or of any of the main sections of the populations of the Baltic states as the Communists themselves; they mainly consisted of some members of the radical intelligentsia and national minorities. And yet these small numbers of "Soviet constituents" were entirely sufficient for constituting the new Soviet-type administrations and establishing effective Communist control over all public bodies and economic units functioning in the Baltic countries, including also Estonia, where her mere 130 Communists had taken control over all walks of life. An established power, however repugnant, acquires some sort of legitimacy by the very fact of its ability to exercise authority effectively and thus attracts as many collaborators as it needs (and usually many more than it needs). But the Baltic Communists established an effective administration immediately by appointing to all key positions only their own members and fully-trusted supporters, with the personnel imported from the USSR occupying supervisory and in most cases, second-rate positions. This is to say that one should never dismiss the Communists and their fellow travelers as an irrelevant political force, however marginal and weak, under normal situations, they may seem to be. In certain situations and with Soviet assistance, even the smallest Communist bodies may easily put themselves in power and exercise that power effectively from the moment they get it.

One should not easily dismiss the Communists also because their relative strength as well as the depth of their penetration into different regular bodies of the existing societies can never be assessed in a precise manner. As the Baltic experience has shown, many highly regarded public figures never suspected of Communist sympathies (indeed many of them known to the public as people with established anti-Communist reputations) were in fact crypto-Communists who had shown their true colors only after the Soviets took over. Only then did it become apparent that the Communists had successfully infiltrated the non-Communist political parties of the Baltic states across their whole spectrum from left to right, with some of the crypto-Communists occupying in these parties highly influential positions. Most of these crypto-Communists posed as members of the liberal and social-democratic parties, but some also belonged to parties of right-wing nationalist and even explicitly fascist orientation. A few crypto-Communists were well established in the armed forces of the Baltic states and even in the counter-Communist departments of the secret police. But the majority of Communist fellow travelers were to be found among members of the cultural elite of the Baltic states that belonged to no party at all. A few prominent Baltic non-Party writers, poets, journalists, scientists, and even musicians turned into Soviet-type politicians and administrators literally overnight, and some of the less prominent ones followed suit.

Perhaps the crypto-Communist phenomenon explains best how it became possible to form in the Baltic states Communist governments without many (and, in the case of Estonia, any) members of the Communist Party participating in them. One can be sure that crypto-communism is as widespread throughout the entire non-Communist world today as it was in the Baltic states in 1939-1940, and one should always bear it in mind when assessing the reality of the threat of a Communist takeover in any non-Communist country of the world.

There is nothing much that one could or should do to prevent and/or eradicate crypto-communism. As long as Communist ideology is able to attract adherents there will inevitably be crypto-Communists too. It is a phenomenon one has to live with and be aware of in order not to become complacently dismissive about the Communist threat and its extent in every country in the world, however minimal the visible strength of communism in a particular country may seem to be. In this respect it is important to note that official prohibition and persecution of communism and Communists in the right-wing dictatorships are the best breeding ground for crypto-communism. The same is

true for democracies that are intolerant of or discriminatory against Communists. Anti-Communist hysteria and witch-hunts of the type associated with the name of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy are in this respect also most unhelpful. They only manage substantially to restrict political and intellectual freedom of the society as a whole, in most cases directly affecting totally innocent people; and thus, instead of combating communism, they help it to recruit new adherents among people who would otherwise have never been attracted either to communism or any other similar radical creed. And it goes without saying that under such conditions a substantial proportion of these recruits will be swelling the ranks of the crypto-Communists. Historical experience has proved that the more democratic and tolerant of communism and Communists the society is, the fewer crypto-Communists there are in it. There is simply no need or incentive for a person of Communist convictions to hide his true colors when he is able to express them openly without any hindrance or personal damage. It is true, of course, that undercover Communist agents will be trying to infiltrate militarily and politically sensitive establishments under any circumstances. But this is an entirely different matter which is in the domain of the effective organisation of national security and has very little to do with politics proper. Politically the best deterrent against crypto-communism is liberal democracy, under which communism as an ideology and political orientation is tolerated equally with all other ideologies and political orientations, that is to say, within the limits of the law that equally applies to all physical and legal persons.

Pieces of paper

The case of the Baltic states vividly exemplifies the Soviet attitude towards obligations under international agreements and treaties as well as the international law in general.

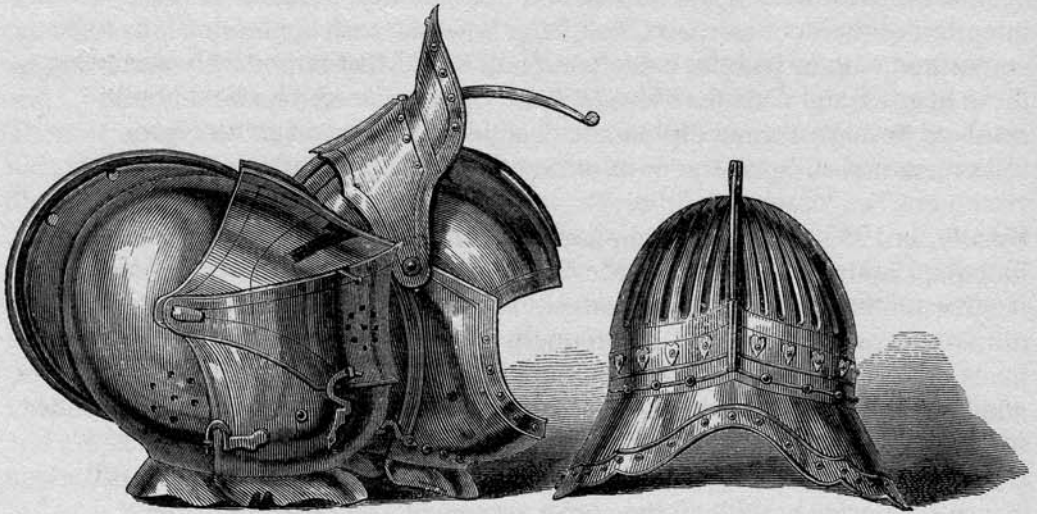
By 1940 the Soviet Union was bound in its relationship with the Baltic states by a series of quite complex international agreements and treaties. The first such mutually binding documents were the peace treaties of 1919-1920 between the USSR and every Baltic state separately, which established peace and good neighbourship as general principles of relationship between them. In 1929 Estonia, Latvia, Poland and the Soviet Union signed a protocol (known as the Litvinov Protocol) whereby the signatories took upon themselves an additional obligation to obey in their mutual relations the norms established by the Briand-Kellogg Pact of August 27, 1928, stressing that thereby they

renounced war as an instrument of national policy and committed themselves to seek resolution of conflicts by peaceful means only. This commitment was further elaborated and made more concrete in the Non-Aggression and Peaceful Conciliation Treaties concluded between the Soviet Union and made more concrete in the Baltic states in 1926 and 1932. These treaties, whose validity was supposed to last until December 31, 1945, and which were never abrogated by any of the parties involved, provided for an undertaking by all the contracting parties (e.g. the USSR) to refrain from any act of aggression against the territorial independence and inviolability, or against the political integrity, of their counterparts, no matter whether such aggression was to be committed with or without a declaration of war. Most importantly according to these treaties, any disputes between their signatories which could not be resolved through normal diplomatic channels were to be submitted for settlement and authoritative resolution to a Joint Conciliation Commission.

Finally, in 1933, the Soviet Union signed with a number of states, among them Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Conventions Concerning the Definition of Aggression in which all the signatories solemnly declared that no political, military, economic, or other claim might serve as excuse or justification for invasion by armed force, even without declaration of war, upon the territory of another state. On top of these documents came the Mutual Assistance Treaties of 1939 discussed above which, despite the provisions allowing for the stationing of Soviet troops on the territories of the Baltic states, were still basically consistent with all the above agreements and treaties as they explicitly stressed the inalienability of the sovereign rights of the contracting parties and their commitment to the principle of non-intervention in one another's internal affairs.

However, gross breaches of the USSR's formal international obligations and commitments vis à vis the Baltic states had already started with the preparation for the conclusions of these Mutual Assistance Treaties of 1939. First, by taking - on September 19, 1939 - direct action against Estonia and thus unilaterally depriving her of sovereignty over her territorial waters, the Soviet Union committed by any definition a straight act of aggression against this country. Second, there is no doubt that the Soviet Union coerced the reluctant Baltic states to sign these treaties by threatening them in case of non-compliance with direct military action. That this threat, substantiated by massive concentration of Soviet troops in the Baltic frontiers, was serious and real was later demonstrated by the Soviet attack against Finland which

followed her unequivocal refusal to sign the Soviet-proposed Mutual Assistance Treaty. All these Soviet acts were committed in direct violation of the Peace Treaty of 1919-1920, as well as the Litvinov Protocol of 1929 and the Conventions Concerning the Definition of Aggression of 1933.



Lithuanian and Livonian helmets.

If in 1939, however, the threat of direct aggression against the Baltic states was not expressed in any of the Soviet public statements or documents (except for the Soviet note on the takeover of the Estonian coastline, which actually was not a threat but a straightforward declaration of the Soviet Union's taking this unilateral action against Estonia), Molotov's note to Lithuania of May 25, 1940, already implicitly contained such a threat. Everything that happened afterwards was not simply a violation but, one could say, a direct unilateral denial by the Soviet Union of the principles of international law in general and of her international obligations to the Baltic states in particular. The Soviet Union behaved towards the Baltic states as if she had never pledged to them to settle any disputes unsolvable by normal diplomatic channels by submitting them to the Joint Conciliation provided for in accordance with the Non-Aggression and Conciliation Treaties between the USSR and the Baltic states

of 1926 and 1932. A proposal to this effect was never even put forward by the Soviet Union for the sake of outward demonstration of her compliance with mutually agreed forms of procedure, although this was supposed to be the ultimate instrument of conflict (any conflict!) resolution between the Soviet Union and the Baltic states. Redress beyond this level required, first, a formal abrogation of all Soviet-Baltic treaties and agreements and, second, a declaration of war. Neither of those measures was taken by the Soviet Union.

Spheres of influence

Instead, contrary to all mutually agreed upon arrangements, the USSR arrogated to herself the discretionary powers for dissolving (and creating) Baltic governments and for using her military forces in the capacity of a "treaty-enforcing agency" on the territory of foreign countries in the Baltic area. Because the Soviet Union had signed with the Baltic states the Agreement Concerning the Definition of Aggression, which stipulated that no political, military, economic, or other consideration could serve as excuse or justification of invasion by armed force upon the territory of another state, the USSR, by resorting to such measures, in fact, as B. J. Kaslas succinctly pointed out, "defined itself as an aggressor, such a presumption being irrefutable, *de juris* and *de jure*, with absolutely no evidence to the contrary being admissible".⁴¹ Moreover, by presenting the Baltic states with the ultimatum of June 14 and 16, 1940, ostensibly aimed at strengthening and enforcing the Mutual Assistance treaties of 1939, the USSR, in fact, broke those very treaties since under them she had undertaken a solemn obligation "never to infringe upon the sovereign rights of these states, with particular pertinence to their political structure and social and economic organisation".⁴²

The story of the incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR clearly and most illuminatingly demonstrates the opportunistic nature of the Soviet Union's attitude to international law and her own international obligation. As long as there are forceful external restraints on the Soviet Union's international behaviour, she will reluctantly honour them; as soon as the opportunity is offered to take another grasp without exposing herself to any substantial risk (which, under conditions of an ongoing war between Germany and the Allied Powers, the Nazi-Soviet Secret Protocols practically excluded), the Soviet Union will be ready to breach any international law and go in this respect to any lengths in order to take full advantage of such a situation. This is as true of the Soviet Union today as it was at any period of Soviet history. It was after all

Lenin who said that the dictatorship of the proletariat is "rule based directly upon force and unrestrained by any laws".⁴³

The nihilistic attitude of the Soviets toward international law and their international obligations under treaties with other countries extended itself in 1939-1941 also to their relations with Germany. As soon as they felt that they could breach some parts of the German-Soviet agreements without wrecking the whole relationship and being severely punished for that breach, the Soviets did not hesitate to go ahead contrary to the treaties and secret protocols concluded between Germany and the USSR. The best-known example of such opportunistic behaviour on the Soviet Union's part was its occupation and incorporations into the USSR, in June 1940, of the Rumanian territory of Northern Bukovina. According to the Secret Additional Protocol to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty of August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union was entitled to get from Rumania only the territory of Bessarabia which formerly belonged to the Russian Empire, but not that of Bukovina which had never been under Russian rule and was supposed to remain within Rumania. Hitler was furious about the blatant Soviet violation of the German-Soviet agreement concerning Rumania, but there was nothing he could have effectively done about getting Bukovina back from the Soviets. Having gotten away with that violation, the Soviets were preparing to take further steps which were eventually to lead to Rumania's definitive inclusion into their "sphere of influence". This was too much for Hitler to bear. In response to Soviet unilateral moves in this direction; he undertook decisive action that cut Soviet expansion short and finally put what remained of the Rumanian state into the German "sphere of influence".

Another example of a breach of the German-Soviet agreements consisted in Soviet occupation, together with the rest of Lithuania's territory in June 1940, of the so-called Lithuanian strip that, according to the Secret Additional Protocol to the German-Soviet Treaty of September 28, 1939, was to remain free of Soviet troops and be eventually transferred to Germany.⁴⁴

Above all, however, Germany was outraged about Soviet liberal interpretation of what it meant to include a country into the USSR's "sphere of influence". For the Germans this was not at all identical with the abolition of that country's independent statehood and its incorporation into the USSR. From their point of view, such an action, prior to being undertaken, required a specially negotiated agreement between the USSR and Germany, and since the Soviets took the

“incorporative” actions with regard to the Baltic states without negotiating them first with Germany, these actions were treated by the Germans as direct Soviet transgressions of the agreements concluded.

In almost exactly the same way a few years later, the Soviets breached the Yalta and Postdam agreements that they concluded with Britain and the United States in 1945. This shows that even the major powers have to be very careful about negotiating and entering into any kind of international treaty or agreement with the USSR.

As long as such a treaty or agreement is not properly verifiable and does not contain credible measures of deterring the Soviets from violating its provisions, any international agreement concluded with the USSR is hardly worth the paper it is written on.

The problem unresolved

When on June 22, 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union and thus forced Stalin to forge an alliance with the Allied Powers, one of the most important issues at stake became the Allies' recognition of the USSR's 1941 borders (including the incorporation into the USSR of the Baltic states). This issue was quite bluntly raised by Stalin in the course of the first Soviet-British talks in Moscow, in December 1941. When Foreign Secretary Eden tried to stall the discussion (by referring to the Atlantic Charter and the necessity of consulting his government), Stalin firmly retorted that the question of the Baltic states was “absolutely axiomatic” and ought not to require any governmental decision.⁴⁵ In response, Eden admitted that the Soviet Union was recognised as possessing *de facto* sovereignty of the Baltic states, but did not go further than that. When reporting to Churchill on his talks in Moscow, Eden actually argued for full recognition of Soviet demands and even suggested that “it is in our interest too that they [the Soviets] should be in strong position in the Baltic”.⁴⁶

Churchill, however, sharply rejected Eden's arguments although a few months later, when British-Soviet treaty negotiations were in a deadlocked position, he himself was ready to accede to Soviet demands in regard to the Baltic states.⁴⁷ Actually, the treaty was signed on May 26, 1942, without any such concessions on the British part being made at all. The Soviets were prepared to drop the 1941 frontier question in exchange for the Anglo-American offer of a second front and the twenty-year term of the Soviet-British political treaty itself.

In later negotiations among Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt the Soviet frontiers issue did not figure very prominently. There were larger issues at stake. Actually, Stalin tried to raise the issue of the Baltic states and the 1941 frontiers again at the Yalta Conference, but when his proposals were rejected he did not insist on them, preferring to concentrate on the more critical Polish problem.⁴⁸ Hence, the Baltic issue in Soviet relations with their Western wartime allies remained formally unresolved, which meant that both Britain and the United States could continue to stick to their original, pre-1941 position of non-recognition of the Soviet takeover of the Baltic states. But neither did they raise the Baltic issue with the Soviets on their own initiative, let alone protest the Soviet re-occupation and retention of the Baltic states as part of the USSR's territory in 1944-1945. In fact, they tacitly adopted the line which was suggested by President Roosevelt as early as March, 1942:

“With regard to the Baltic states, Roosevelt admitted that, were the area to be re-occupied by a victorious Red Army, neither Britain nor the United States could or would do anything about this. Why, then, should Stalin worry? In other words, Roosevelt was quite happy to bow to the inevitable, but did not wish to compromise by prior agreement the principles for which his government was fighting”.⁴⁹

As D. Kirby has pointed out, “the conclusion of the twenty-year treaty saved Britain the embarrassment of publicly reneging on her pledge not to recognise territorial changes during the course of the war The British and American governments managed to avoid recognition of the Soviet incorporation of the three states and ... are still burdened with their moral obligation”.⁵⁰ Burdened or not, both Britain and the United States continue to recognise the Baltic states as, in a legal sense, sovereign political entities. The legations of the pre-1940 Baltic states are still functioning in Washington and London, and their members enjoy the status and privileges accorded to diplomatic personnel.

Peculiarly, Nazi Germany, in spite of having shifted the Baltic states to the “Soviet zone of influence”, never granted *de jure* recognition of their annexation by the Soviet Union. As B. Meissner explained, this was due to the fact that because “of the German-Soviet war, an exchange of the already completed ratification documents of the German-Soviet Border Treaty of January 10, 1941, never took place”; Meissner thus concludes that in the view of the Federal Republic of Germany, “the Baltic states have not forfeited their sovereign international rights” either.⁵¹

In fact, none of the free states, except for New Zealand,⁵² have recognised the Soviet *coup de force* against the Baltic states as being legally valid and deserving *de jure* recognition. This is enough to vindicate the view that "the Baltic states continue to exist in international law owing to the refusal of the other states to recognise their incorporation into the Soviet Union".⁵³

The legal aspects of the Baltic problem contain serious political implications. Since the present status of the Baltic states is lacking any legal basis and therefore must be conceived of as illegitimate, null and void, the Baltic states should be seen as having an indisputable right to their status as fully sovereign nation states *ad hoc*, that is, without any preliminary conditions (such as referendum or decision of any authority in Moscow) attached to the restoration of their sovereignty.

This means that all nations for whom respect for the rule of law is one of the fundamental principles can never become reconciled with the Soviet rule over the Baltic states and are willy-nilly committed to campaigning for the due restitution of their independence from the Soviet Union. Moreover, the fate of the Baltic states serves (or at least should serve) as a useful reminder for these nations instructing them on how they have to deal with the Soviet Union, especially when negotiating with her any agreements or treaties. The lesson to be learned from the Baltic case, as B. Meissner has succinctly suggested, is that "the guarantees and treaty assurances against the threat of totalitarian powers make sense ... only when they are made in conjunction with a clearly recognizable deterrent".⁵⁴

Finally, sooner or later, the time must come when Russia itself will recognise the supremacy of the principle of the rule of law in relations with her own



citizens as well as with other nations. In preparation for this change, the legal aspects of the Baltic case should be made absolutely clear and in this form propagated as widely as possible throughout the world, as well as within the Soviet Union itself and the areas under its domination. This would be an invaluable contribution to an easy and uncontroversial solution of the Baltic problem in the hopefully not too distant future when the possibility of such a solution becomes politically viable again.

It is of crucial importance that the lessons of the Nazi-Soviet Alliance and of the plight of the Baltic states are properly learned by the West and its policy-makers. They contain everything that is necessary for an adequate and realistic understanding of the danger the Soviet Union represents to the outside world. They also teach how to defend freedom against the Soviet threat most effectively. These lessons show that by lending more support to the cause of freedom for the Baltic states one is providing better protection of freedom here in the West. Freedom as everyone knows is, after all, indivisible. By more actively helping the Balts to restore their freedom, we will certainly be able to help ourselves. The Balts by fighting against Soviet tyranny for their freedom have already put themselves on the frontline for the defence of ours.

References

¹ D. M. Crowe, Jr., "Great Britain and the Baltic States, 1938-1939", in V. S. Vardys and R. J. Misiunas, eds., *The Baltic States in Peace and War, 1917-1945* (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p.128.

² D. Kirby, "The Baltic States, 1940-1950", in M. McCauley, ed., *Communist Power in Europe, 1944-1949* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p.23.

³ For the full text of the Treaty and the Secret Additional Protocol see R. J. Sontag and J. S. Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1948), pp.76-78. (In future references referred: *Nazi-Soviet Relations*).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.166.

⁶ Not all of Lithuania. A strip of Lithuanian territory had to be given to Germany "as soon as the government of the USSR shall take special measures on Lithuanian territory to protect its interests" (*Ibid.*). The USSR, however, totally ignored this obligation and even directly broke its explicit pledge not to put Soviet military forces in this area when Lithuania would be occupied by them. This outraged the Germans and created much animosity and tension in Soviet-German relations of the time. The issue of "the Lithuanian strip" dragged on for a considerably long time (for more than fifteen months) until finally the Germans (after having already approved the Barbarossa plan about attacking the USSR in 1941) decided "to give in" by accepting from the Soviet Union, in exchange for the strip, 7.5 million gold dollars. Another German-Soviet Secret Protocol was signed to that effect on January 10, 1941, (*Ibid.*, pp. 267-268) making sure that the whole sum was paid by the Soviets "within three months after the signing of this Protocol". This time the Soviets were happy to keep their word and paid the whole agreed amount to the Germans by April 11, 1941

(two and a half months before Germany attacked the USSR) and took the strip together with the rest of Lithuania and many other Soviet territories. For a detailed account of this episode see B.J. Kaslas, "The Lithuanian Strip in Soviet-German Diplomacy, 1939-1941", in *The Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Fall 1973.

⁷ See, for example, B. Jonaitis, "Politiniai faktai ir mitai" ("Political Facts and Myths") in *Naujienos* (News, a Lithuanian daily published in Chicago, USA) of November 4, 5, 6-8, 1982; B. Raila, *Raibos agavos* (*The Giant Agavas*), (London: Nida Press, 1983), pp. 235-236; et al.

⁸ *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, p.103.

⁹ The Soviet propaganda has repeatedly praised Churchill for his "profound understanding of Soviet policies and defensive needs". In the notorious "Historical Memorandum" (*Istoricheskaya spravka*) issued in 1948 by the Information Bureau of the USSR's Council of Ministers under the title "The Falsifiers of History", this speech of Churchill's was quoted once more with a comment introducing that quotation and stating that Churchill was the first among Western politicians who had "enough acumen for understanding the essence of Soviet policy [toward Germany] and for recognising that the [Soviet] build-up of the 'eastern front' was right". See *Fal'sifikatory istorii. Istoricheskaya spravka*, (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1948), pag. 57-58.

¹⁰ W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Book 1, *The Gathering Storm: From War to War (1919-1939)*, Ninth Edition (London: Cassel & Co., 1967) p. 351.

¹¹ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), pag. 236.

¹² No other meaning can be attached to the joint German-Soviet August 23, 1939, secret statement that in "the area belonging to the Polish state the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR shall be bounded by the line of the rivers Narev, Vistula and San;" furthermore, that "the question of ... the maintenance of an independent Polish state ... can ... be definitively determined in the course of further political developments" and that the governments of Germany and the USSR "in any event will resolve this question by means of a friendly agreement". (The Secret Additional Protocol to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty of August 23, 1939, quoted from *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, p. 78.)

¹³ B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, (London, Cassel & Co., 1970), pp. 12, 13.

¹⁴ Taylor, p. 263.

¹⁵ Churchill, p. 351.

¹⁶ Alain Besançon, "The End of the Soviet Mirage", *Encounter*, vol. LVII, no. 1, July 1981, p. 90.

¹⁷ This information is based on official documents of the Estonian government, a collection of which was published in Stockholm in 1955 (in Estonian) and taken for this article from D. Kirby's "The Baltic States ..." in McCauley, p. 24. For much of the following information, in addition to the sources mentioned above, the materials collected in *Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression* (House of Representatives, Eighty-Third Congress, Second Session, Under Authority of H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438 Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1954) were used; see especially pp. 220ff. (in future references cited as *Third Interim Report*). A certified copy of the minutes of the negotiations between Estonia and the USSR signed by Karl Selter, Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with his statement on the negotiations, is held in the Archive of the Consulate General of Estonia in New York and in the Hoover Library in Stanford, California.

¹⁸ *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, p. 78.

¹⁹ After the conclusion of the Soviet-Finnish Peace Treaty, the Kuusinen government was transformed into the government of the Karelian-Finnish SSR, waiting there for the day when it would be able to extend its authority to the whole of Finland. The Karelian-Finnish SSR, with Kuusinen as its President, existed until 1956, when the Soviet leaders, responding to the insistent demands of the Finnish government, decided to extend a friendly gesture to Finland by abolishing the Karelian-Finnish SSR and reconvertng it back to the status of the Karelian ASSR within the Russian SFSR. Kuusinen was then recalled to Moscow and in 1957 started a new career as one of the Secretaries of the CPSU's CC and a full member of its ruling Politburo. (This promotion shows only too clearly that the Soviet leaders were

holding Kuusinen, one of their peers, in the relatively minor position of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of a union republic for 16 years, only with the view of promoting him one day to the major post of president of the whole of Finland. There is hardly another way to interpret this fact).

²⁰ Churchill, p. 573.

²¹ See the full text of the note in *Third Interim Report*, p. 319.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For the full text of that communiqué, see Ibid., pp. 320-321. The evidence now available shows that all the Soviet charges against Lithuania were totally groundless and therefore it is clear why the Soviet Union was determined not to allow their discussion in any reasonable form. In such a discussion all these charges would have fallen apart and the Soviet purpose was not to allow this to happen — the charges had to be upheld at any cost as the necessary vehicle to lead the process of Lithuania's Sovietisation to its very end. See B.J. Kaslas in *The Baltic Nations: The Quest for Regional Integration and Political Liberty (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland)* (Pittston, Pa: Euramerica Press, 1976), pp. 236-238.

²⁵ A detailed account of the Merkys-Molotov talks in June 1940 is given by the then-member of the Lithuanian Cabinet, Stasys Audėnas, in *Paskutinis Posėdis (The Last Meeting)* (New York: Romuva, 1966); for another such account see P. Maciulis, *Trys Ultimatumai (Three Ultimatums)* (Brooklyn: Darbininkas, 1962). A brief summary of these accounts in English is given by B.J. Kaslas, in *The Baltic Nations*, pp. 238-240.

²⁶ For the full text of A. Smetona's letter to M. Kalinin, see *Third Interim Report*, p. 327.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 333.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. In fact, the so-called "Baltic Entente", a treaty among Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia providing for periodical consultations of the foreign ministers of the three countries, was concluded long before 1934, and had remained unaltered in either word or substance since.

³⁰ Poor souls, if they had only known in February 1940 what were to be the repercussions of the merely trilingual scope of this magazine, they certainly would have added Russian as the fourth language in which it was published and thus possibly could have either prevented - at least in the case of Latvia and Estonia, whose governments were not accused of kidnapping and murdering Soviet soldiers or arresting their own citizens in order to launch an aggression against the Soviet garrisons - the whole fatal incident with the Soviet Union altogether, or at least, would have forced the Soviets to find some new arguments to justify their claims.

³¹ Ibid. The end of the last sentence (after the words, "of the Soviet Union") is not included in the text published in *Third Interim Report* and was added in the author's translation from the official Russian text published in *Vnesbnayaya Politika SSSR, Sbornik dokumentov*, vol. 4, Moscow, 1946, p. 511.

³² This was unconstitutional since Merkys had no authority to concede the post of acting president although, as such, he had the right to appoint as his prime minister any person of his own choosing. Because of that, the "people's government" under the "Acting President" Paleckis (as well as all acts issued by that government) was illegal from its inception, even if one discounts the fact that it was imposed on the country by a foreign power and was thus illegal.

³³ This is actually the whole trick about the Communist use of the "popular front" cover. Later it was successfully applied in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other countries which during the interim stage of popular front governments were skilfully manipulated by the Communists, who were controlling the countries' security services, into falling under their total rule, to the exclusion (and, in most cases, extermination) of all other political forces of those countries. This trick, which later became so common, was actually used by Stalin for the first time in Lithuania and then in other Baltic states with no one in the world, as it seems, learning anything from this experience.

³⁴ Both Karlis Ulmanis and Konstantin Päts formally remained in office until the mock elections to the "People's

Diets" in July 1940, after which they were forced to resign and subsequently were arrested, deported, and vanished without trace. However, the authenticity of Konstantin Päts's resignation came under suspicion after three of his messages written in captivity reached the West in 1977. In one of them he explicitly states, "I am here as President of the Republic of Estonia" (quoted from A. Küng in his *A Dream of Freedom*, [Cardiff: Boreas Publishing House, 1981], p.246). This statement could not have been made by Päts if he had really resigned, as the Soviets claim.

³⁵ See *Valdības Vestnesis* (the Latvian official government gazette) of June 20, 1940. The absence under such an act of the required signatures of President Ulmanis and a co-signatory made this act legally invalid. Hence, Kirchensteins's "people's government" was an illegal body from the moment of its inception as much as its Lithuanian counterpart.

³⁶ For more details see J. Pennar, "Soviet Nationality Policy and the Estonian Communist Elite", in T. Parling and E. Järvesoo, eds., *A Case Study of a Soviet Republic: The Estonian SSR* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 105-127, esp. pp. 120ff.

³⁷ A. Snieckus, *Ataskaitinis pranesimas V-me LKP(b) suvaziavime apie LKP(b) CK darba, 1941 m. vasario 5d. (Report on the World of the Central Committee of the LCP(b) to the 5th Congress of the LCP(b) on February 5, 1941)*, (Kaunas: State Publishing House of the Lithuanian SSR, 1941), p.57.

³⁸ *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoy Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz* (*The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*), Vol. 5, Book 1: 1938-1945, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), p.93.

³⁹ A. K. Pankseyev, *Na osnove leninskykh organizatsionnykh principov (On the basis of Leninist Organisational Principle)* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1967), p.81.

⁴⁰ The official (and, no doubt, overblown) Soviet estimate for Lithuania of June 1940 is about 6000 such Communist supporters and associates outside of the ranks of the Communist Party itself. See *Mazoji Lietuviskoji Tarybinė Enciklopedija (The Short Lithuanian Encyclopedia)* vol.2 (Vilnius: Mintis, 1966), p. 390. Of these 1000 were members of the League of Communist Youth.

⁴¹ Kaskas, p. 273.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1947), p. 365.

⁴⁴ How the Soviets got away by paying the Germans 7.5 million golden dollars has been briefly described in FN 6.

⁴⁵ For the text of the December 1941 Soviet-British talks see: Sir E.L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, vol. 2 (London: HMSO, 1971), pp. 226-233.

⁴⁶ Eden to Churchill, January 5, 1942, in PRO, FO, No. 106/86/38. Quoted here from D. Kirby, "Morality or Expediency: The Baltic Question in British-Soviet Relations, 1941-1942", in Vardys and Misiunas, p. 163.

⁴⁷ For the protocols of the British-Soviet May 1942 negotiations see: PRO, FO, No. 665/506/59; they are summed up in D. Kirby's contribution to Vardys and Misiunas, pp. 168ff.

⁴⁸ See B. Meissner, "The Baltic Question in World Politics", in V.S. Vardys and R.J. Misiunas, p. 146.

⁴⁹ As reported by Lord Halifax to Foreign Office on March 9, 1942 (PRO, FO, No. 1279/5/38) and summed up by D. Kirby in his contribution to Vardys and Misiunas, p. 166.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 172.

⁵¹ B. Meissner, "The Baltic Question in World Politics", in Vardys and Misiunas, p. 147.

⁵² In 1974 Australia's and New Zealand's socialist governments granted *de jure* recognition of the incorporation of the three Baltic states into the Soviet Union. However, in December 1975, when Gough Whitlam's socialist government in Australia was defeated and Malcolm Fraser's conservative government took office, one of its first acts was the repeal of that act of recognition, an unprecedented event in international legal history. Robert Maldoun's new conservative government of New Zealand, however, did not follow suit and the act of recognition is still valid there.

⁵³ Kaskas, p. 276.

⁵⁴ In Vardys and Misiunas, p. 148.