

The FRPS Baltic States Section

British Overt Intelligence from the Baltic States during
the Second World War and its effect on British Policy
towards the Soviet Union, 1941-1945

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Abstract

The prologue introduces the reader to Anglo-Soviet relations prior to the Second World War; this is followed by part one of the study which highlights the restrictions that were placed on SIS and SOE which effectively excluded them from operations in the Baltic states.

Part two of the thesis examines how this exclusion elevated the role of overt intelligence as a substitute form of intelligence; 'the power of the press' in this context is a very apt term. The enemy and neutral press were acquired, analysed and any relevant intelligence gained was quickly distributed around the various government departments by the FRPS. The key role the FO played in requesting, prioritising, and utilising the information provided by the FRPS Baltic States Section and the FRPS Russian Research Section is also examined. Part two of thesis concludes with a study of the fruits of the FRPS Russian Research Section's labours and how its work influenced British post-war policy towards the Soviet Union.

Finally part three examines the content of this overt intelligence in two case studies concerning German Economic Policy and Population Policy. Britain's wartime policy towards the Soviet Union is then described in order to set the work of the FRPS in context.

The thesis is not an attempt to complete a top-to-bottom study of the German occupation of the Baltic states, but rather to present the contemporary British perspective on this occupation, a perspective which was derived almost entirely from overt intelligence. How worthwhile this form of intelligence was and how far it helped to formulate wartime and post-war policy are the central questions.

Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Abbreviations	7
Introduction	9
Prologue	
British Pre-War Policy towards the Soviet Union and the Baltic States, 1917 - 1941	31
PART I The Restricted Services, British Covert Intelligence and Subterfuge in the Baltic States	
Chapter 1	
SIS, SOE and the NKVD	44
Operation Blunderhead	58
PART II The Central Role of British Overt Intelligence in the Baltic States	
Chapter 2	
The Importance of the Foreign Press to British Intelligence 1938 - 1941	67
The Origins of the FRPS Baltic States Section	67
The political climate, Anglo-Soviet relations in the second half of 1941	73
The Foreign Office Builds the FRPS' Reputation	80
The FRPS Organisation	88
The Relationship between FRPS and the Reconstruction Committee	91

Chapter 3

The Stockholm Press Reading Bureau	99
-------------------------------------------	-----------

Chapter 4

The Foreign Research and Press Service Baltic States Section 1941 - 1942	110
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------

Monitoring the Ostland	114
------------------------	-----

The 1942 Anglo-Soviet Treaty Negotiations and their Devastating Consequences for the Baltic States	118
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Monitoring continues regardless	125
---------------------------------	-----

Chapter 5

The Foreign Office Research Department Baltic States Section 1943 – 1944	132
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------

The Effect of Allied Diplomacy on Ostland Monitoring	140
------------------------------------------------------	-----

PART III Case Studies of the FRPS/FORD Baltic States Section's Intelligence

Introduction to the Case Studies	150
----------------------------------	-----

Chapter 6

Economic Conditions in the Ostland	152
-------------------------------------------	------------

Planning Economic Control	152
---------------------------	-----

Establishing German Economic Control, the Conflict between Exploitation and Reform	155
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

The Day of the Hardliners, Göring and Backe Halt Agrarian Reform	165
------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Infrastructure and Transport	168
------------------------------	-----

Industry	172
----------	-----

Industrial Trade	177
------------------	-----

Fiscal and Banking Policy	181
---------------------------	-----

Chapter 7

German Population Policy in the Ostland	185
------------------------------------------------	------------

The General Plan Ost and the Ostland	186
Structural Planning for a Baltic March	189
Creating the New Order, Population Transfers in the Ostland	194
The 'Evacuation' of the Jews	194
Colonisation Actions	199
The Germanic Brethren	209
Military Collaboration	212

Part IV Post-hostilities Planning

Chapter 8

The Foreign Office Research Department and Post-hostilities Planning	224
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------

Conclusion	234
-------------------	------------

Bibliography	243
--------------	-----

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At this point I must mention the generous financial support and continued encouragement I have received from my sponsor and uncle, The Rt Revd. Peter Wheatley, who has made my postgraduate studies possible. I am indebted to my parents, Kay and Michael, for their unstinting support throughout all of my years of education. I must take the opportunity to thank my wife, Emma, for her support in so many ways, particularly in shaping the environment which made my research possible. This work is dedicated to our son, Joshua.

Abbreviations

BHO	Mining and Smelting Corporation East
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
COS	Chief of Staff
FHQ	Führer Head Quarters
FO	Foreign Office
FORD	Foreign Office Research Department
FRPS	Foreign Research and Press Service
GC and CS	Government Code and Cypher School
GPO	General Plan Ost
GVD	General Transportation Directorate East
HBD	Main Railway Division
HSSPF	Higher SS and Police Leader
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IWM	Imperial War Museum
KdS	Commander of the Security Police and SD
LAF	Lithuanian Activist Front
LO	<i>Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft Ostland mbH</i>
MEW	Ministry for Economic Warfare
MoI	Ministry of Information
NKPA	North Korean Press Agency
NKVD	People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
NOC	Netherlands East company
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party or Nazi Party
OKH	Army High Command
OKW	High Command of the Wehrmacht
OT	Organisation Todt
PID	Political Intelligence Department
PID (EH)	Political Intelligence Department Electra House
PRO	The Public Record Office
PWE	Political Warfare Executive

RKFDV	Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of Germanism
RIIA	Royal Institute of International Affairs
RMO	Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories
RSHA	Reich Security Main Office
RuSHA	Race and Resettlement Main Office
RVD	Reich Transportation Division
RWM	Operating Office East
PHPS	Post Hostilities Planning Staff
PHPS/c	Post Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee
SA	Storm Detachment
SD	Security Service
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SPRB	Stockholm Press Reading Bureau
SS	Protection Echelon
SSPF	SS and Police Leader
STS	SOE Special Training School
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VoMi	Ethnic German Liaison Office
Wi Rü Amt	War Economy and Armaments Office of the OKW
Wi Stab Ost	Economic Staff East
Wi Fü Stab Ost	Economic Command Staff East
ZO	Central Trade Corporation East

Introduction

When the term intelligence is mentioned in a modern British historical context the image of covert operations instantly springs to mind: perhaps a shadowy figure lurking on a street corner observing his targets from afar, or an Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) agent obtaining secret documents from contact at a secret rendezvous. In the context of the Second World War, the image is further broadened to include the Bletchley Park code breakers. Although this popular image is an accurate one it, of course, only scratches the surface of genuine covert operations. It is naturally true that governments depend a great deal on covert intelligence, for in many situations it is the only way for top secret information, deemed necessary for state security, to be obtained from foreign states. There have been times, however, when, due to political restrictions placed on the covert intelligence services, overt intelligence has been at the forefront of Britain's intelligence arsenal. This study focuses on one such occasion, namely the Baltic states during the Second World War. Whereas Britain relied on SIS, and to a certain extent, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to provide its intelligence from the western, northern and southern parts of German occupied Europe, the German occupied regions which fell within the Soviet Union's 1941 borders were strictly off limits to SIS and SOE. Intelligence would instead be acquired by the ingenious use of overt intelligence, primarily from the enemy and neutral press.

Overt intelligence was the only form of intelligence available to the British, due to the Foreign Office (FO) suspension of all covert intelligence gathering from inside the Soviet sphere of influence, which undoubtedly included the Baltic states after their annexation in 1940.¹ The British fear of jeopardising the newly formed Anglo-Soviet alliance, on which so much rested, quite simply prohibited any covert intelligence operations in the Soviet sphere being contemplated.

¹ Keith Jeffery, MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service (London 2010), p.554, and Dónal O'Sullivan, Dealing with the Devil, Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War (New York 2010), pp.27-28

The ‘power of the press’ is a term which is often misused in today’s society of shallow tabloid headlines. However, between the years 1941-45 the enemy and neutral press which covered the German occupation of the Baltic states (or the Reichskommissariat Ostland as the states had been collectively been dubbed by the Germans) offered the British government a vital stream of intelligence. Intelligence is power, particularly in wartime.

This study will show how accurate and influential this form of intelligence could be and ultimately how those who analysed this intelligence would shape British post-war policy towards the Soviet Union. This is primarily a study of overt intelligence gleaned from the enemy and neutral press acquired by the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau (SPRB) in Sweden and analysed and despatched to the British government’s various offices and departments by the Foreign Research and Press Service (FRPS) Baltic States Section and its successor the Foreign Office Research Department (FORD). These organisations came into existence in the years 1939-1940 when it became evident that intelligence organisations which procured overt intelligence had a place amongst the traditional covert intelligence services. Overt intelligence was the only form of intelligence available to the British government from the region.² This is a little known facet of British wartime intelligence operations but one that would ultimately have a significant impact on Britain’s post-war policy.

It is important to remember that this is not a study of propaganda during wartime. It is a study of British intelligence gathering from the enemy and neutral press which was only meant for internal consumption. It is beyond doubt that the Germans in the Baltic states included propaganda intended for the indigenous Balts in their own newspapers but it was never intended to be directed against the British. The enemy press was therefore speaking to a sympathetic population and any propaganda was not as illusionary as it would have been, if it had intentionally been directed against a hostile or enemy population. Looking for similar historical precedents in the field of overt intelligence is problematic for seldom has it been as possible to find a similar set of circumstances where a third party, for example the British

² Robert H Keyserlingk, ‘Arnold Toynbee’s Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe’ in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 21:4 (1986), pp.543-44, and PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Letter from Mallet at the British Legation Stockholm to State Secretary Anthony Eden, 16th October 1941, pp.1-5

monitoring of the German press in the Ostland, had the capability or desire to view an enemy nation's press directed against an occupied country in wartime. It would not be until the First World War that the British first began to seriously investigate the potential of overt intelligence. During the First World War Britain's attempt to read the enemy press was directed by the miniscule four man Political Intelligence Department (PID). The generals, however, had little interest in overt intelligence, preferring instead to bludgeon on with conventional warfare on the battlefield.

The Napoleonic Wars escalated into what was essentially a world war and presented the conditions necessary for third party overt intelligence gathering. Overt intelligence from within the French Empire was, however, even less required by the British in the Napoleonic era than during World War One. Britain was simply not in a position to use overt intelligence on continental Europe. There is some evidence, however, that Napoleon himself did make use of overt intelligence. Indeed extracts from Napoleon's letters confirm the extent to which he relied on British newspapers as a source of military information.³ Again during the Crimean War the British once again fell foul of overt intelligence lapses, this time to a far greater extent as a result of the appearance of a large volume of war correspondences. The correspondent for *The Times*, for example, gave highly detailed information of British military dispositions with the result that the Russians targeted their guns accordingly. The Tsar was even reported to have said 'we have no need of spies... We have *The Times*'.⁴ Therefore this study presents a unique opportunity to understand the role of overt intelligence during wartime when the political will was there to do so and a level of modernity existed which made such an undertaking a realistic proposition. For example, prior to the Second World War and the refinement of air transport, there was no way to promptly obtain the enemy press from neutral nations. The Ostland press was seen as a reliable form of intelligence that could be relied upon to be procured regularly from Sweden. As a result overt intelligence would become a highly inviting form of intelligence to the British for, by its very nature, covert intelligence is irregular and temporary in nature and therefore overt intelligence clearly had an important advantage over the more traditional form of intelligence.

³ Brian Parritt, *The Intelligencers, British Military Intelligence from the Middle Ages to 1929*, (Barnsley 2011) p.80

⁴ *Ibid*, pp.80-81

The opportunity to obtain enemy newspapers from neutral nations was fundamental to the success of overt intelligence during the Second World War. With the onset of the Cold War the eastern European press soon became riddled with propaganda, directed by the Soviet Union and her puppet states' press chiefs behind the Iron Curtain. With the Soviets very much aware that their press was being closely monitored by the West, the USSR unlike the arrogant Germans in the Second World War, took steps to ensure important information was never included in its press. The Germans in the Second World War were far more open in their reporting for, quite simply, the Germans never considered the possibility that the British might find the Ostland press to be of interest. The Germans had little fear of ever being defeated and consequently saw no need to heavily censor the Ostland publications. As the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) has subsequently noted, 'in wartime there is relatively little purely open information, though German newspapers in the Second World War were quite revealing, despite Nazi censorship'.⁵ In fact it has been estimated that three-fifths of the economic intelligence obtained on Germany and German-occupied Europe in the Second World War came from the newspapers and similar sources.⁶ Given this knowledge and the fact that the British covert intelligence services were banned from operating in the Baltic states, it can be appreciated how vital overt intelligence must have been to the British government.

In the post-war period FORD personnel reverted back to being purely staff of the RIIA at Chatham House. Having honed their skills since 1939 on the scientific analysis of the enemy and neutral press, the former FORD members had acquired a vast amount of experience and understanding of the techniques that were required to successfully extract overt intelligence from the enemy press. As a result the RIIA would be much better placed at the start of the Cold War than the Second World War to supply the government with overt intelligence and political analysis. As the RIIA website states: 'Chatham House seeks to deliver independent, policy-relevant analysis and new ideas to decision-makers around the world. This is achieved in part through government briefings, testimony to parliamentary committees and dissemination of the institute's research'.⁷ This statement clearly indicates that the RIIA still

⁵ Michael Herman, Intelligence Power in Peace and War (Cambridge 1996) p.101

⁶ Frank Hinsley, British Intelligence in the Second World War II (Bath 1981) p.130n

⁷ Chatham House, Government Relations <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/government-relations> viewed 29/7/13

performs a fundamentally important role in the formation of British foreign policy just as it did during the years 1941-1945 regarding the Ostland. Quite obviously there is a demand for such an organisation within the FO otherwise, as during the Second World War, requests for studies would not be forthcoming. This direct access to government decision makers can be traced back in its origins to the seminal R.A. Butler report of early 1941 (see chapter 2). This is the FRPS/FORD's legacy.

The question may be asked; what part does overt intelligence play in the formation of the modern RIIA studies? The recent studies focusing on North Korea clearly show that analysis of foreign newspapers still play an important part in the formation of RIIA papers. The North Korean Press Agency (NKPA) issues copies of its main press bulletins to the outside world via its Japanese based website. The website allows the RIIA to use its overt intelligence gathering skills to procure detailed intelligence from the highly secretive state.⁸ RIIA documents regularly refer to this as a source of information, highlighting the fact that the spirit of the FRPS/FORD wartime press analysis continues today within Chatham House. Press analysis is the only realistic way for overt intelligence organisations to acquire information from North Korea. Apart from a small group of diplomatic representatives, the West is completely isolated from North Korea. The NKPA is therefore of fundamental importance to Chatham House as a source of overt intelligence.

As the RIIA studies are presented to the British government the organisation continues to influence British policy makers, just as it did during the Second World War. There is therefore a clear similarity between the work of the RIIA today and its forbearers at the FRPS/FORD during the Second World War. The organisations look to acquire overt intelligence via newspapers (including their contemporary online equivalents), construct position papers and present these to the British government with the goal of influencing British foreign policy. The FRPS/FORD legacy enables the RIIA to be highly relevant to the contemporary British government and intelligence gathering community.

Prior to the German invasion of June 1941 the British considered the Baltic states to be of a western disposition, albeit temporarily under Soviet occupation. Despite protesting against

⁸ Korean Central News Agency of DPRK <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> viewed 4/8/13

the Soviet occupation in 1940, Britain was in no position to intervene on their behalf, as occurred with Poland in 1939, as she was fighting for her survival at home. When Britain and the USSR were thrown together to face a common enemy in Nazi Germany in the summer of 1941, the issue of the Baltic states' loss of independence resurfaced and became a potential hindrance to Anglo-Soviet relations.

The case of Poland was viewed differently. Although the eastern half of the country had been occupied by the Soviets in September 1939, the USSR did not lay claim to the whole nation. It is true, however, that both Stalin and Hitler desired Poland to be removed from the map of Europe. Following the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, the Soviets demanded that the British recognise their 1941 frontiers.⁹ This gave the British the impression that, once victory had been achieved, Poland could be reconstructed from the part of the country that had been occupied by the Germans in 1939. This formula would contain the majority of the Polish ethnic group.

The Baltic states, having been annexed by the Soviet Union, presented the West with a serious problem as Britain and the United States were unwilling to grant *de jure* recognition of the Soviets' aggressive occupation. There were fears, however, that, if this policy continued, it could affect the long term stability of the burgeoning wartime alliance.¹⁰

It is precisely this situation which makes a study of the British policy in regards to the Baltic states, following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, so interesting. The Baltic states still had fully functioning embassies in London and Washington which would pressurise the British and United States governments to reconstitute the independence of their homelands. At the same time influential Baltic émigré communities in America were pushing the US government not to recognise the Soviet annexation. There was a strong group of MPs in the House of Commons who vehemently opposed the Soviet Union's actions in the Baltic states. Any recognition by the British government of the Soviet annexation could prove extremely hazardous to the British government, due to its precarious position during the years of military failure in 1941 and 1942. The effectiveness of Churchill's government was being

⁹ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), pp.67-68

¹⁰ Ibid, p.113

questioned by MPs and the population. It was therefore determined that the best course of action, difficult as it might be, would be to postpone any recognition until the post-war peace conference, in order to maintain the official stance that the British government was opposed to the Soviet annexations. In December 1941 Eden hinted at British acceptance of the Soviets' position of dominance. Then, in discussions over a proposed treaty with the Soviets in May 1942, the British committed themselves to recognising the Soviets' claims to the Baltic states, which would become effective at some future date.¹¹

The British acceptance of the Soviets' rule over the Baltic states was a sign of the British desire to not risk the breakup of arguably the most important military alliance in her history. As a result, the British government's covert intelligence and military services were ordered not to engage in any form of anti-Soviet activities.¹² In August 1941 spheres of influence would be established in an agreement between the SOE and the Soviet Union's People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). The agreement placed the Baltic states firmly inside the NKVD's area of jurisdiction and the agreement effectively removed the Baltic states from the areas of operations of the SIS and SOE.¹³

It is the analysis of the way the British adapted to this black hole in intelligence gathering in the Baltic states that makes this study so worthwhile. The British turned to overt intelligence, using the enemy and neutral press, to fill the vacuum (in intelligence). The British government would focus her resources on this 'safe' form of intelligence, for it was conscious that even the ever-suspicious NKVD would find it difficult to complain about intelligence gleaned purely from the newspapers of enemy and neutral counties. A study of this substitute form of intelligence gathering has not been undertaken before with regards to the wartime Baltic states. This is surprising given the western orientation of the pre-war Baltic states, and the vital role that overt intelligence services played in formulating British post-war policy towards the emerging Soviet superpower.

¹¹ Ibid, pp.111-12, and PRO CAB 66/23/24, War Cabinet Memoranda, Proposed Anglo-Soviet Treaty, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 5th April 1942

¹² Keith Jeffery, *MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service*, p.554

¹³ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil, Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War*, pp.27-28

Perhaps the reason for this is that, prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the FRPS, the leading overt intelligence organisation, had a poor reputation in government circles. Following the German invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940, the FRPS had found it hard to source the enemy and neutral press on which it based its existence. At the same time SIS, and even SOE, were allowed to operate with impunity in the West, but also enjoyed little success in the early years of the war.¹⁴ Without the special circumstances which existed in the East from 1941 (which prohibited the covert intelligence services from operating), and thrust the FRPS Baltic States Section to the attention of the British government, it is highly doubtful that the FRPS would have played any meaningful part in the British war effort. A study of the FRPS operations elsewhere in Europe would not have been as significant, since the British government looked to the covert intelligence services for its main streams of intelligence. In the Baltic states the British government always turned to the FRPS Baltic States Section for intelligence. It is true that it had little alternative but to utilise the FRPS Baltic States Section but this should not diminish the role played by the FRPS with regards to the Baltic states and the East at large. The FRPS Baltic States Section also benefited from a government enquiry early in 1941 that emphasised the important role the FRPS should play in the sphere of intelligence analysis and post-hostilities research. The enquiry encouraged government departments to put aside their prejudices and misconceptions about intelligence gained from overt sources.¹⁵

The SPRB was ideally situated across the Baltic Sea in Sweden, as the Nazis' exported the leading German newspaper from the Baltic states, the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*, to Sweden. This remained the case until, as a measure of 'total war' following the Stalingrad disaster, the paper's export to Sweden was halted by the Germans in February 1943.¹⁶ Following this, the German press from the Baltic states would have to be smuggled across the Baltic Sea or the Finnish border. Due to the Finns' close relationship with the Germans and

¹⁴ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 21:4 (1986), pp.548-49

¹⁵ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Result of Government Enquiry into FRPS, conducted by R. A. Butler, 8th February 1941

¹⁶ Gerhard P. Bassler, *Alfred Valdmanis and the Politics of Survival* (Toronto 2000), p.164

their ethnological connections with the Estonians, the *Revaler Zeitung* could still be brought to Sweden by secret courier.¹⁷

The SPRB would be a vital component in the success of overt intelligence, for the bureau was able to supply a steady stream of intelligence from the Baltic states to the FPRS. The British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) aircraft that carried the precious cargo of newspapers on the hazardous trip from Stockholm to Scotland would also play a significant role.¹⁸

The FRPS, based in Oxford was a private body outside of the British government and had been formed from RIIA personnel. The short and successful struggle for supremacy that the FRPS fought with the PID is discussed. The PID would ultimately be absorbed into the FRPS in 1943 to form the FORD, which meant that the former FRPS became an integral part of the FO.¹⁹ The FRPS was divided into research and geographical press sections. Given the predominance of the covert intelligence services the FRPS did not play an important role in the construction of government policy in the West. In the East, however, the FRPS Baltic States Section, for the reasons already outlined, achieved a well deserved reputation for in depth analysis, a capability to produce excellent reports that would be of great value to the British government in formulating war-time policy and for creating a large pool of intelligence for reference purposes. The FRPS Russian Research Section would help formulate the British government's most important post-hostilities planning paper, which was eventually printed in April 1944 after approval by Eden and the Prime Minister. Its findings would become official government policy and the political blueprint for dealing with the Soviets after the war.²⁰

¹⁷ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.44 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 6th July 1943, p.1

¹⁸ British Airways, History and Heritage http://www.britishairways.com/travel/history-ata/public/en_gb viewed 18/2/10

¹⁹ John D. Cantwell, The Second World War, A guide to Documents in the Public Record Office (Kew 1998), p.99

²⁰ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from Anthony Eden to Prime Minister, 8th May 1944 and PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from V.G. Lawford of the Cabinet Office to Sir E. Bridges at the FO, 11th May 1944

For these reasons the study focuses on the activities of the FRPS Baltic States Section between 1941-1945. The study also looks at the key role that the SPRB played in allowing the FRPS Baltic States Section, under the leadership of Elisabeth Pares, to concentrate on the analysis of intelligence and prepare policy documents for the British government. The functions of the bureau and its relationship with FRPS are described. There is also an analysis of how the SPRB, following the turning of the tide in the East, managed to interview refugees from the Baltic states, therefore providing another source of intelligence for the FRPS.

In terms of key secondary literature, those dedicated to the field of Anglo-Soviet medium level diplomatic relations are very sparse. There are very good general works on Anglo-Soviet relations that cover a large time frame. These include the recent study by Keith Neilson, but the leading work is undoubtedly by Britain's former ambassador to the Soviet Union Curtis Keeble. Two important works highlight the role played by the FO in the field of wartime diplomacy between the British government and the Soviet Union. Martin Kitchen looked closely at the debate over the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states and the role of post-war planning in a Soviet dominated Eastern Europe, while Martin H. Folly's study is again most helpful in examining the British government's post-war planning for Eastern Europe. Both works, however, only briefly cover the FO's wartime interest in the Baltic states, while the role played by the SPRB and FRPS in intelligence gathering and analysis is not examined.²¹

I am indebted to the recent publication of the official history of SIS by Professor Keith Jeffery who had unique access to SIS files. The book confirms that the SIS did not operate in the Baltic states prior to May 1944. This study, therefore, arrives at the most opportune time and shows that the British government was able to adapt well to this ban.²²

There is also a lack of secondary literature concerning overt intelligence; there are many general texts that deal with covert Anglo-Soviet intelligence cooperation, particularly

²¹ Keith Neilson, Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939 (Cambridge 2006); Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89 (Basingstoke 1990); Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union (Basingstoke 1986); Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945 (Basingstoke 2000)

²² Keith Jeffery, MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service (London 2010)

concerning deciphered enemy signal information and Ultra usage, including the studies by Bradley F. Smith and Frank Hinsley.²³ Again these are broader accounts that do not specialise on the Baltic states and do not cover overt intelligence at all. The work that best attempts to analyse the impact of the FO's decision to prohibit covert intelligence in the Soviet sphere, as far as it affects SOE, is undoubtedly by Dónal O'Sullivan. The author clearly defines the boundaries between the British and the Soviet spheres of influence. O'Sullivan also describes the roles of the covert intelligence agencies, SIS and the NKVD in the East. It is also an important study on the cooperation between the NKVD and SOE.²⁴

There are very few works concerning the SPRB and its role as a supplier of intelligence and the FRPS as a research body, while no study has identified that the FRPS Baltic States Section was Britain's primary source of intelligence from the Baltic states. C. G McKay has highlighted the SPRB's potential to be a provider of overt intelligence, yet he does not examine this any further and certainly does not cover the special circumstances that existed in Sweden that enabled the SPRB to supply the FRPS Baltic States Section with a steady stream of overt intelligence. Robert H. Keyserlingk is one of the few historians to have engaged in any aspect of the FRPS, but, his research focuses on the FRPS post-war plans for south-east Europe. Nevertheless his research was invaluable as it goes into great detail describing the formation of, and early difficulties faced by the FRPS. Other than a brief mention of the *Review of the Foreign Press* (the FRPS' circular) there is no mention of the FRPS as an intelligence organisation. The only historian who has examined the FRPS' role in overt intelligence is Isabelle Tombs. Her work is important, yet, because it concerns the West, where the FRPS faced stiff competition from the traditional covert intelligence services, it is clear that the FRPS' findings had little impact on the British government's wartime and post-war policy. This is therefore the first complete study of the FRPS as an effective overt intelligence service and research organisation.²⁵

²³ Bradley F. Smith, *Sharing Secrets with Stalin* (Kansas 1996); Frank Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War V/II* (Bath 1981)

²⁴ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil, Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War* (New York 2010)

²⁵ C. G McKay, *From Information to Intrigue, Studies in Secret Service Based on the Swedish Experience, 1939-45* (London 1993); Robert H. Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe', *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986): pp.539-58; and Isabelle Tombs, 'Scrutinizing

The short biography of Elisabeth Pares by her husband Robin Humphries was extremely helpful in substantiating her family connections, as well as providing the personal background of the head of the FRPS Baltic States Section.²⁶

The studies that focus on the Baltic states during the Second World War usually deal with the occupation from either a Baltic, German or Russian perspective and not from the perspective of British intelligence or diplomatic policy making. This study should therefore be of interest to the scholarly community and fill a gap in existing literature.

Martin H. Folly has written that the FRPS/FORD political analysis which fed into the Northern Department's political discussions, 'was not particularly influential' except those contributions made 'by Skaife on reconstruction'.²⁷ Through the evidence provided in this study I intend to argue that this was not the case. In fact, it would be Skaife's work for the PID which was not particularly influential when compared to the FRPS Baltic States Section's intelligence analysis and post-war Soviet research. In reality the FRPS Baltic States Section and the FRPS Russian Research Section would make a very considerable contribution to the British government's war effort.

This investigation takes a multifaceted approach to determine whether the FRPS was an effective substitute for the loss of covert intelligence from the Baltic states. This is achieved by examining the predicament that the covert intelligence services were placed in by the FO's order not to engage in any covert intelligence gathering in the East, which established the need for the FRPS' overt intelligence skills. The FO's demand for, and acceptance of, overt intelligence together with its subsequent correspondence with the FRPS, is analysed with the aim of proving that the SPRB and the FRPS were up to the task of being a suitable substitute for covert intelligence. Finally, the evidence presented in the two case studies is designed to demonstrate that the FRPS Baltic States Section succeeded in its task of providing the British government with a steady stream of detailed intelligence from the occupied Baltic states, and

France: Collecting and Using Newspaper Intelligence during World War II', Intelligence and National Security 17.2 (2002) pp.105-26.

²⁶ Robin Humphreys, Elisabeth Humphreys 1904-1990, A Memoir (Ipswich 1992)

²⁷ Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, p.44

that overt intelligence was as capable as covert intelligence of providing reliable intelligence streams. Additionally, the research ability of the FRPS Russian Research Section is explored. There is compelling evidence that the Section's work was of such importance that it helped to influence the British government to formulate a post-war policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union.

A combination of subterfuge, intelligence gathering, intelligence analysis and post-war planning makes the study of Anglo-Soviet policy towards the Baltic states an intriguing one. A study of this combination helps us consider why and how the FRPS stepped into the breach to provide the British government with intelligence throughout the German occupation of the Baltic states. This intelligence helped the British government to make informed rational decisions and most, importantly, provided the FORD with the requested information to complete important works on post-hostilities planning. Elisabeth Pares would form the link between the British government and the FRPS, and her efforts deserve to be recognised and well regarded by historians. Without the overt intelligence that the FRPS Baltic States Section could offer the British government, the British would have been blind to the political developments in the Baltic states. This also applied, to a lesser degree, to the entire German occupied East as many German decrees and orders were not just confined to the Baltic states but also applied to the wider East. The output of papers from other FRPS sections, which covered the German East, paled in comparison with the FRPS Baltic States Section's output. Nazi ideological policy towards other ethnic groups in the East, such as the Ukrainians, prohibited the wide readership of any press that was produced. This effectively placed the German press from the Ukraine out of the British reach. The press reading bureaux in the other neutral counties of Europe did not read the German press. This made the SPRB (as the FRPS Baltic States Section was for the FRPS) the leading Press Reading Bureau for all matters concerning the German East. The FRPS would therefore be viewed, due to its regular supply of overt intelligence, as the primary supplier for information on the Germans' activities in the civilian ruled East. As a result Elisabeth Pares would be asked to write not just on the Baltic states, but also on the entire East and was included as a member of the FRPS Russian Research Section's team. The demand for Elisabeth Pares' Ostland supplements and specialist reports highlighted the fact that the FRPS Baltic States Section was playing a much larger role in the field of intelligence analysis than the other FRPS

geographical sections. The FRPS Baltic States Section's high output of supplements and specialist reports is testament to this.

Part I of the thesis examines how the impotence of SIS and SOE in the Baltic states meant that the two covert services had little or no involvement in the region. SOE only attempted one operation in Estonia, with Soviet permission, in 1942. It was, however, an unmitigated failure and no future operations were attempted.²⁸ SIS did not even go this far, and it was not until May 1944 that it was significantly involved the East. By this time it had become clear that the Soviets were determined to follow their own path regarding the reconstruction of post-war Eastern Europe, with Poland in particular becoming a contentious issue.²⁹ Nevertheless an in-depth analysis of the limited involvement of SOE and SIS in the Baltic states is included in this study in order to convey to the reader the importance and essential nature of the work undertaken by the FRPS Baltic States Section as a substitute intelligence source.

Part II looks at the central role of British overt intelligence from the Baltic states with Chapter 2 examining the importance of the foreign press to British intelligence and the background of the FRPS together with its founder, Professor Arnold Toynbee. The FRPS' structure is described and the problems the organisation experienced prior to 1941 are fully explained, as well as its growing reputation following the government enquires of early 1941. R. A. Butler's subsequent report stated 'the FRPS will be given assistance in securing the foreign press at the earliest possible date and in the co-ordination of its work with other departments'. Eden's support would be crucial as he instigated the government enquiry into the FRPS and pushed through its positive findings.³⁰

The reader is given a clear idea of the FRPS operations, from the time it received the enemy and neutral press from the SPRB until the despatch of reports in the *Review of the Foreign*

²⁸ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Copy of translated Luftwaffe interrogation reports conducted in Berlin on 6th and 26th February 1943, 6th December 1943

²⁹ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil*, p.248

³⁰ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Result of Government Enquiry into FRPS, conducted by R. A. Butler, 8th February 1941

Press or as specialist memoranda for the British government. The role of the FRPS research sections is also described. The FO, together with the Government Committee on Reconstruction Problems and its successor from late 1943, the Post Hostilities Planning Sub Committee (PHPS/c), would be heavily influenced by the FRPS/FORD. This influence would eventually result in the production in April 1944 of a (FO) paper which pushed for cooperation and not hostility with the Soviets in the post-war period. This was at a time when the Chiefs of Staff (COS) was starting to exert pressure for a more aggressive approach towards Anglo-Soviet post-war relations.³¹ There is therefore an important link between the FRPS Russian Research Section and post-war Anglo-Soviet policy; this link should not be underestimated.

Chapter 3 focuses on the SPRB and explores the prejudicial view, held by many FO members prior to 1941, against the use of overt intelligence. This view was dismissed in spectacular fashion by the chief of the SPRB Cecil Parrott in his October 1941 report which highlighted, if there were still any doubt by this time, just how illuminating overt intelligence could be.³² In some cases it was the only form of intelligence available to the British government; it would be for this reason that the British government turned to the FRPS Baltic States Section for its intelligence from the Baltic states.

Chapters 4 examines the precise role of the FRPS Baltic States Section from the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 to the end of 1942, while chapter 5 explores the work of the section from 1943 until the end of the German occupation of the Baltic states in September 1944, this latter chapter follows the section's evolution as part of the FORD.

Due to its geographically focused nature the role of FRPS Baltic States Section's was well defined and necessary. However, the question has to be asked: why did the FO require intelligence from the Baltic states when the military and political reality meant that a return to Baltic independence was unlikely? The answer may simply be that, although a return to

³¹ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, FO paper, Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests, 29th April 1944

³² PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Parrott Memorandum, 9th October 1941, p.1

Baltic independence was improbable, it was by no means impossible. The British government had to be prepared for every eventuality, even a British occupation of the Baltic states. After all it would have been fresh in the mind of those in the FO that in the immediate post-war years the British government with direct Royal Navy support had played a significant role in establishing the independence of the Baltic states.³³ For both these scenarios the British would require adequate intelligence from the region. A common theme amongst intelligence agencies throughout the world is the insatiable desire to gather ever more intelligence, whether it is required at the present time or not. The effective disappearance of SIS from the Baltic states did not mean that intelligence gathering had to be halted; it just had to be procured in a 'safer' manner. This simple premise is, perhaps, the main reason for the FO's interest in the FRPS Baltic States Section's work.

Regardless of the intended use of the intelligence, the FRPS Baltic States Section's analysis of intelligence itself was roundly viewed inside the FO as being first class, particularly in the years 1941-43 when the FRPS Baltic States Section outstripped all other FRPS Sections that monitored the occupied regions of Europe. This was some achievement.³⁴

As far as the FRPS Baltic States Section is concerned, the focus of the study is on the work of its head, Elisabeth Pares. Pares singlehandedly wrote the entire contents of the Ostland supplements to the *Review of the Foreign Press* and the level of detail of her work is evident in the FRPS Baltic States Case Studies in chapters 7 and 8.³⁵ Her wartime work would become well respected, with many FO departments outside of the FO Baltic States Department making requests for specialist memoranda.³⁶ Elisabeth Pares excellent working relationship with Armine Dew of the FO Northern Department, who generally handled the FO Baltic States Department's work, would be crucial in establishing the FRPS Baltic States

³³ Olavi Hovi, The Baltic Area in British Policy, 1918-1921 Vol I (Helsinki 1980), pp.97-99

³⁴ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, List of Supplements to the Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, 1st March 1943, p.3

³⁵ The Information Department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, The Baltic States, A Survey of the Political and Economic Structure and the Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (London 1938)

³⁶ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Wilson at the FO Northern Department, 22nd January 1943

Section reputation as a reliable and efficient body which was capable of producing high calibre work for the FO.

The doubting voices were soon extinguished and Elisabeth Pares' work would be in wide circulation, particularly within the FO, the Ministry of Information (MoI) and the Political Warfare Executive (PWE). Elisabeth Pares was also a key member of the FRPS Russian Research Section; she therefore played her part in the construction of the crucial April 1944 FO post-hostilities paper.³⁷ Naturally a large proportion of this study concerns her work.

The chapters also detail the precise relationship between the FO and the FRPS/FORD and examine the personal correspondence between the two organisations, with particular emphasis on the Baltic states. For example, as the reputation of Elisabeth Pares grew within the FO, she was asked to produce wider surveys of the entire German occupied East, such as a study of the framework of banking in the German occupied East. These studies are examined closely. The position of the PID is examined as well, including Brigadier Skaife's decision to defer matters concerning the Baltic states to Elisabeth Pares after he had realised that the FRPS Baltic States Section was better qualified to produce the detailed memoranda desired by the FO.

Another reason that helps to make a study of Baltic overt intelligence and its effect on British policy unique is that, unlike in the case of the Baltic states, the FO did not possess specific departments that focused on the Ukraine or White Russia; instead all matters relating to these areas were referred to the FO Russian Department as both nations had been long term members of the Soviet Union. As the Baltic states had, until 1940, been independent nations, the FO still possessed a fully functioning department for the Baltic states. There was therefore a department within the FO that was specifically seeking information from the Baltic states. This was one of the reasons which accounted for the large number of Ostland supplements to the *Review of the Foreign Press*, compared to those for the Ukraine and White Russia.

³⁷ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, List of Staff of the FRPS Research Committee and Research Sub-Committees, 2nd January 1941

The pre-war Baltic states were, for these reasons, on the fault line between East and West and from 1940, with the Soviet annexation, the States moved over this fault line into the East. However in the consciousness of the FO, the War Cabinet as well as the wider public in both Britain and the United States, the Baltic states remained part of the West, and had been absorbed by the Soviet Union against the wishes of the indigenous population. This explains the reticence of the West in granting recognition of the Soviet annexations and why intelligence from the region was still of interest to the British. The decision to allow the Baltic diplomats in London and Washington to continue to operate throughout the war, despite strong Soviet pressure, was also important as the Baltic diplomats were seen by the FO as an additional source of information from the region. Therefore to a great extent, perhaps even on a subconscious level, the intelligence gathered from the Ostland was not anti-German in nature but rather anti-Soviet, given that the USSR was the first aggressor in the region and was seen by many as the greater evil; particularly from 1943 as she posed a greater threat to Eastern Europe due to her rapidly growing political, economic and military strength. As a result of her proven prowess, any intelligence analysis for the other parts of the occupied Soviet Union was chiefly undertaken by Elisabeth Pares and produced in general FRPS studies of the entire East. This placed Elisabeth Pares in a position of authority and she could justifiably claim to have laid the foundations upon which much of the British government's policy for the East was built.

Chapter 5 also details the early successes of Elisabeth Pares that allowed her work to be reluctantly accepted by the traditionalists within the FO which included the head of the Northern Department, Geoffrey Wilson. The FRPS Baltic States Section's popularity with the Central and Economic and Reconstruction departments is also examined.³⁸ This success would lead to the FRPS' transfer to London and its absorption into the FO as the FORD.

The output of the FRPS Baltic States Section was superior to other sections due to the quantity and quality of its sources. This was chiefly due to the regular procurement of the

³⁸ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Pares at the RIIA, 27th January 1942, and PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Wilson, 1st November 1942

Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland and *Revaler Zeitung* by the SPRB.³⁹ These papers contained detailed decrees and orders for the local population to follow; therefore matters of German economic and population policy were regularly included. This allowed Elisabeth Pares to draw, over time, a precise and detailed picture of events in the Ostland. German propaganda directed towards the Balts would tend to be more positive, than the type offered towards the Slavs as the Germans viewed the Balts as ‘kindred peoples’. As a result it seems the Balts were allowed a greater understanding of German policy, although the Germans were by no means honest. Matters concerning the intended annexation of the Baltic countries into the Reich were, of course, not mentioned. Yet the Balts could expect to live a post-war life similar to that offered by their pre-war dictatorships, with a degree of internal autonomy.

The chapter also goes on to highlight the relationship between the FORD Baltic States Section and the Polish government in exile. The latter became an important source of information following the German decision to halt the export of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* to Sweden in 1943.⁴⁰

Part III of the thesis presents the results of the FRPS Baltic States Section’s work, and allows the reader to see the astounding level of detail achieved by Elisabeth Pares. Two topics have been chosen that best highlighted the diverse nature of the FRPS Baltic States Section’s studies. Both case studies, economic policy and population policy, are further divided into distinct sub-chapters, as each case study is of considerable length. They are based on the FRPS Ostland supplements in the *Review of the Foreign Press* and specialist memoranda prepared for the FO. The case studies stand testament to Elisabeth Pares’ skills, and also to the ability of the SPRB to source the majority of the chapters’ content. The case studies highlight what could be achieved from the scientific examination of the enemy and neutral press and the occasional document that was smuggled out. There can be little doubt that the work produced by the FRPS Baltic States Section made up for any loss of covert intelligence from the Baltic states. Taken as a whole, the case studies reveal the remarkably good level of intelligence that the British government had at her disposal from the Baltic states and the

³⁹ Gerhard P. Bassler, Alfred Valdmanis, p.164

⁴⁰ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Letter from Savery at the British Embassy to Poland to Allen at the FO, 27th August 1943

East. It is this aspect of the study which is intended to further our understanding of British wartime intelligence in the East and, in particular, the Baltic states.

Part IV's sole chapter examines what was possibly the FORD Russian Research Section's most important legacy, namely its production of the draft copy of the April 1944 FO paper which would champion, if at all possible, the maintenance of, at least, a cordial relationship with the post-war USSR.⁴¹ The chapter looks into the difficulties faced by Eden and the FO in suppressing the anti-Soviet COS lead Post Hostilities Planning Staff (PHPS), which wanted to plan for the worst case scenario of war with the Soviet Union.⁴² Eden would prevail as he enjoyed Churchill's backing; this would enable the policy of cooperation, as advocated by the FORD Russian Research Section, to be implemented.⁴³

The key primary sources for the study are located at the Public Record Office. The War Cabinet Minutes and Memoranda series were of immense value in constructing the study's postscript, which outlines Britain's wartime relationship with the Soviet Union, as well as providing vital information concerning the future post-war policy of the British government towards the USSR. The War Cabinet Reconstruction Secretariat series contain files relating to the organisation of the FRPS and its policies and practices, as well as early FRPS post-war planning documents. The FO General Political Correspondence files contain all the documents relating to the crucial FO April 1944 paper on the Soviet Union which had been prepared by the FORD. In describing the role and operations of the SPRB, the Political Warfare Executive's files were vital and contain files that outline the establishment, organisation and operational procedures followed by the SPRB in obtaining and dispatching the enemy and neutral press from Sweden to Britain. The SOE Eastern Europe series enabled me to detail the restrictions placed on the SOE in the Baltic states as well as the failure of its

⁴¹ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Internal FO letter from Christopher Warner Head of the Northern Department to Deputy Under-Secretary Sir Orme Sargent, 4th January 1944, and PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, FO paper, Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests, 29th April 1944

⁴² Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, pp.129-30

⁴³ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from Anthony Eden to Prime Minister, 8th May 1944 and PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from V.G. Lawford of the Cabinet Office to Sir E. Bridges at the FO, 11th May 1944

solitary mission in the region. The main body of the project's sources are derived from the FO Baltic States Section Department files, (again located in the FO General Political Correspondence series). These files contained draft copies of FRPS Ostland supplements with the accompanying communications between Elisabeth Pares and the FO and other government departments. Requests for more specialist FRPS Baltic States Section's reports were also found, together with high praise for the work of the FRPS. The communications between the FRPS and the FO add life to government requests for information that would ordinarily have been rather sterile.

The Public Record Office also possess the complete volumes of the FRPS/FORD *Review of the Foreign Press*, which helped to fill in the gaps when issues of the *Review* were missing from the FO Baltic States Department's files. Although they do not, of course, contain the FO communication with Elisabeth Pares, or the FPRS Baltic States Section's specialist reports, they do help to complete the picture.

The Hansard website provided access to parliamentary debates in the House of Commons on the subject of the FRPS' and FORD's role within government, while the Avon Archive, at the University of Birmingham, was also utilised to access FO files which were otherwise not available to view at the Public Record Office. The Avon Archive documents helped to illustrate the struggle that took place between MPs at the time of the Anglo-Soviet treaty negotiations of mid-1942, a time when many MPs feared that the country was heading for a 'Second Munich'.⁴⁴

Due to a conscious decision to primarily focus on Anglo-Soviet relations from a British perspective the findings of this study lay open to the accusation that the archives of Germany and Russia have been neglected. This study does not, however, claim to provide an in depth Soviet perspective of Anglo-Soviet relations. Instead the study is an attempt to display the contemporary understanding of events in the Baltic states from the previously mentioned British perspective; this was the projects fundamental goal. Further research could be undertaken in both Germany and Russia in order to determine the level of Nazi and Soviet use of overt intelligence; however, such research was well beyond the parameters of this

⁴⁴ FO 954/25A/9423, Soviet Union: Private Secretary, No 10 to Private Secretary weekly report on Parliamentary business. Growing opposition to Baltic Agreement, 27th April 1942

study. In addition it is disappointing to note that not all the FRPS/FORD Ostland supplement documents that remain in the Public Record Office archives contain FO cover sheets. It was these cover sheets that proved to be so illuminating in expressing the FO officials opinions of matters concerning the Baltic states during the German occupation. As a result their incompleteness is regrettable.

The combined complexities of the western cultural status of the pre-war Baltic states, Soviet demands for recognition of their 1940 annexation and the wartime exclusion of British covert intelligence services from the region positively encouraged the use of overt intelligence. As there was no ban on covert intelligence gathering elsewhere in occupied Europe, overt intelligence failed to make much of an impact, but given the reverse was true in the Baltic states, this study will be important. The work of the FRPS Baltic States Section would be frequently utilised by the British government during the war, while the FRPS Russian Research Section would heavily influence British post-war policy towards the Soviet Union.

Prologue

British Pre-war Policy towards the Soviet Union and the Baltic States 1917 - 1941

In order to understand the development of Anglo-Soviet relations in regards to the Baltic states during the Second World War, it is first essential to understand the two nations turbulent history following the Bolshevik ascent to power in 1917. The mutual distrust that so often surfaced during the Second World War grew from seeds sown in the interwar years. This chapter observes how Britain, a fiercely capitalist nation, was so utterly intolerant of communist Russia that she took up arms against her and assisted the Bolsheviks enemies during the Russian Civil War, in the hope of establishing a more favourable regime in Russia. Although this policy would fail it was not before the Baltic states gained independence from Russia. As a result the status of Baltic states would frequently be at the centre of Soviet foreign policy. As will be seen following the Russian Civil War efforts were made to establish cordial relations between the two nations, the chapter will describe in detail that these efforts, though partially successful, would be punctuated by several periods of crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations. There would be no better illustration of this, than during the events of 1938-1939 which led to the failure of the tripartite Anglo-French-Soviet treaty negotiations in mid 1939. Arguably it would be the Soviet Union that felt the consequences of this failure the hardest when, in June 1941, she was invaded by her erstwhile ally Nazi Germany.

The First World War was the trigger for a series of events in Eastern Europe which ultimately enabled the Baltic states to achieve their goal of independence. Lithuania and Courland were quickly occupied by the German Army and a military dictatorship, known as the Ober Ost, was established by the German high command in 1914 to rule the provinces. The Ober Ost would last until the German capitulation in 1918. Northern Latvia and Estonia remained under Russian control; therefore these provinces were greatly affected by the events of 1917 which culminated in the Russian revolution. The fall of the Romanov dynasty in February enabled, for the first time, Latvian and Estonian provisional councils to be formed with the

result that the powers of the Baltic German nobility were curtailed. Under Kerensky's government independence was not particularly high on the Balts' agenda, as increased autonomy was the chief aim. However the Bolshevik seizure of power soon changed this with the fear of the 'red menace'. There would be fierce resistance to the Bolsheviks' doctrine in Estonia and her ethnological neighbour Finland. The more indoctrinated Latvians, however, were more susceptible and in Riga the Bolsheviks gained 41 percent of the municipal vote. Although Riga was soon occupied by the Germans there was considerable Bolshevik support in Latvia.¹

The March 1918 treaty of Brest-Litovsk was undoubtedly the main factor in the establishment of Baltic independence. Under the terms of the treaty the Bolsheviks would withdraw from the Baltic region and German administration would be extended to include all of the future Baltic states territory.² There was little protest from the Balts at this stage as the majority of the population were, by now, thankful for the Germans' involvement. By the time of the Armistice in November the Balts had become set on independence, having witnessed at first hand the brutality of Bolshevism, although a large force of Latvians remained in service with the Red Army. Following the Armistice the Balts had the necessary breathing space to build up their own forces to defend their homelands, as it was well known the Bolsheviks were intent on the recapture of all the territory of the former Russian empire.³

Following the Armistice, the Germans passed power in Estonia to a provisional government which was headed by Konstantin Päts, who had been freed on 19th November. In Latvia Karlis Ulmanis formed a provisional government on 18th November, whilst in Lithuania the puppet German, Prince Wilhelm von Urach, who had been installed in July, was dethroned and Augustinas Voldemaras formed a national government on 11th November. The two northern States were given *de facto* recognition by the British. In the case of Lithuania recognition was withheld until the level of collaboration that had existed between the Lithuanian government and Germany became clear. All three governments strove to organise national military forces and procure aid from the West.⁴

¹ Anatol Lieven, The Baltic Revolution (New Haven 1993), p.57

² Vejas G Liulevicius, War Land on the Eastern Front (Cambridge 2000), p.207

³ Anatol Lieven, The Baltic Revolution, p.57

⁴ Olavi Hovi, The Baltic Area in British Policy, 1918-1921, Vol I (Helsinki 1980), p.65

Immediately after the German Armistice, the Soviets began to advance on the Baltic states, having declared the treaty of Brest-Litovsk null and void. This presented Britain with a difficult dilemma as there was no appetite for British troops to be sent to the region, yet the Armistice demanded that she should stop the spread of Bolshevism.⁵ On 20th November the Cabinet came to the conclusion that, despite the Admiralty's reservations over the impending winter, a small fleet should be sent to the Baltic. Balfour believed this would have an enormous effect on the morale of the fighting men of the new states. The fleet was to be based in Copenhagen. The German Navy was no longer a threat as on 21st and 22nd November the vast majority of the fleet had surrendered in Scapa Flow. The decision to send a British fleet to the Baltic Sea would also act as a warning to the Germans not to conduct any further Armistice violations. Her withdrawal of troops from the Baltic states, which left the region open to Bolshevik attack, was in clear violation of Article XII of the Armistice. The fleet was to supply weapons to the Baltic forces. Under the command of Vice-Admiral Edwyn Alexander-Sinclair, the Sixth Light Squadron included five cruisers and nine destroyers and troop tenders as well as support vessels. The fleet set sail for Copenhagen on 26th November 1918. The former British Consul to Riga, Vivian Bosanquet, was appointed as Sinclair's political advisor and representative of the FO. Sinclair was authorised to provide naval artillery support, if necessary, but only to engage Bolshevik shipping if it appeared hostile. Eventually France and the USA would also send small fleets to the Baltic.⁶

On 22nd November the Red Army began its offensive against Estonia and by 29th Narva had fallen. By 24th December they were less than 20 miles from Tallinn. Another force captured Tartu on 21st December and soon afterwards reached the Baltic coast, south of Pärnu. In Latvia the Red Army Latvian regiments captured Riga on 3rd January 1919 and, within a week, Jelgava was in Bolshevik hands. In Lithuania the Red Army pushed south from Courland towards Kaunas, while Vilnius was captured by an advance from the East on 6th January. By this time more than half of Lithuania had been conquered.⁷ With the Red Army so close to the East Prussian border, Germany felt compelled to act, and the German forces were reorganised and strengthened. The first *Garde-Reserve* Division was transported from

⁵ Ibid, p.64

⁶ Ibid, pp.71-73

⁷ Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States, The Years of Independence (London 1974), pp.50-51

East Prussia to Libau and Major Bischoff took over the Iron Division, while the '*Baltische Landwehr*' was placed under the command of Major Fletcher. Major-General von der Goltz was named as commander-in-chief of all German forces in the Baltic area.⁸ However, von der Goltz refused to sanction this, and the *Baltische Landwehr* organised a coup to overthrow the Latvian government on 16th April. This came to be known as the Libau putsch. Ulmanis and most of his ministers sought safety on a British warship. The British assured Ulmanis that his government would be reinstated and on 22nd April the Allied Armistice Commission in Paris declared that there must be a return to the status quo. The Commission demanded Germany must recall von der Goltz, but the Germans called the Allies' bluff as they knew the Allies were reliant on German military power in Latvia.⁹ In fact Sinclair urged the backing of the German plan to liberate Riga. Von der Goltz approved the plan and the city was taken on 22nd May 1919. By 3rd June the *Baltische Landwehr* had linked up with the Estonians who had attacked from the north. With Riga liberated and the strength of the Baltic's allies growing stronger, the Council of Foreign Ministers at the Paris Peace Conference, in light of the Libau putsch, called for the Germans to withdraw their troops from Latvia and Lithuania as soon as the Balts were able to provide adequate replacements.¹⁰ Meanwhile on 4th July 1919 the Cabinet decided that 'a state of war did exist between Britain and Bolshevik Russia' and consequently British naval forces were authorised to engage Bolshevik shipping.¹¹

On 13th December 1919 the Allied Supreme Command recognised the political reality and decided to withdraw support for the White Russian armies (the loose confederation of anti-Soviet forces, primarily consisting of former Tsarist officers, Cossacks and conscripted peasants). On 2nd February 1920 Estonia made peace with Soviet Russia in Tartu.¹² After the Latvia-Polish conflict liberated the Eastern province of Latgale, Latvia concluded an armistice with the Soviets on 16th April 1920, with a full peace treaty being signed on 1st August 1920, while Lithuania signed a similar peace treaty with Moscow on 12th July 1920.¹³ The British fleet, now under the command of Admiral Cowan, remained off the coast of Tallinn over the winter as a show of support during the Estonian-Soviet armistice

⁸ Olavi Hovi, The Baltic Area in British Policy, 1918-1921, Vol I, pp.97-99

⁹ Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States, The Years of Independence, pp.59-61

¹⁰ Ibid, pp.62-63

¹¹ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89 (Basingstoke 1990), p.57

¹² Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States, The Years of Independence, p.72

¹³ Ibid, pp.74-75

negotiations and headed home in early January 1920. The fleet handed over its duties to a token force of light cruisers based in Copenhagen which was to visit Memel, Windau and Danzig at least every ten days. The blockade against the Soviets was to be maintained for the time being.¹⁴ Lloyd George was determined to push through a trade-agreement with the Bolsheviks, for he had long recognised that the Soviets were firmly in control of power in Russia. The first meeting took place in Downing Street between British and Soviet negotiators on 31st May 1920. The Soviets demanded: firstly the ending of the state of *de facto* hostilities, including, the Polish war which had just began; secondly the formal lifting of the blockade; and, finally, the legal protection of Soviet assets.¹⁵

Following the end of the Polish-Soviet war in 1921 and the establishment of an Eastern Polish frontier which was far to the east of the Curzon Line, the Anglo-Soviet treaty was signed on 16th March 1921.¹⁶ This therefore granted the Soviet government *de facto* recognition by a Western power for the first time. Under the treaty ‘pending the conclusion of a formal general peace treaty’, the countries agreed broadly to most-favoured nation treatment of trade and shipping, together with consequential arrangements including the appointment of ‘official agents’. The two parties were to refrain from ‘hostile action or undertakings’ and ‘official propaganda against each other’s institutions’.¹⁷ For the next fifteen years or so the foreign policy of the three Baltic states was based on two fundamental principles, namely, operating in close cooperation with each other and, secondly, maintaining friendly relations with the western powers, who they hoped would continue to be as supportive of their independence as they had been during their wars of independence. The Allied Supreme Command gave *de jure* recognition to Estonia and Latvia on 21st January 1921; and the United States followed suit on 22nd July 1922; later that same year, on 20th December, the Allies also recognised Lithuania. Meanwhile, on 22nd September, the Baltic states were admitted to the League of Nations.¹⁸

¹⁴ Olavi Hovi, The Baltic Area in British Policy, 1918-1921, Vol I, p.206

¹⁵ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, pp.69-70

¹⁶ The Curzon Line was proposed in 1919 by the then British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon as a demarcation line and future border between the new state of Poland and Bolshevik Russia. At this time the line was not, however, implemented.

¹⁷ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, pp.78-79

¹⁸ Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States, The Years of Independence, p.81

The economic impact of the First World War was felt across Europe. Germany was struggling to meet her war reparations, with the result that the French were becoming ever more hostile to the Germans, while in Britain unemployment was rising; famine was hitting Russia as the Bolsheviks had begun to requisition grain from the countryside in order to feed the cities, the home of their political support. Lloyd George came up with the idea of a general economic conference in Genoa, which he hoped would re-establish full diplomatic relations with Russia and relieve her population's plight. Lloyd George wanted to 'make it quite clear to the Russia that we can only trade with her if she recognises the honourable obligations which every civilised country imposes upon itself'.¹⁹ However, the Genoa conference, which convened on 10th April 1922, was a failure, as half way through the conference, the German and Soviet governments concluded a bi-lateral treaty at a hotel close to Rapallo. The Rapallo Treaty gave the Soviets full diplomatic recognition from the German government with the Germans receiving, in return, favourable treatment in trade. The Soviets were no longer isolated in Europe and no longer felt any need to be conciliatory, and therefore no significant agreements were made at Genoa.²⁰ Therefore on 1st February 1924 Britain gave *de jure* recognition to the Soviet Union and, by 8th August 1924, a General Treaty and a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was signed which covered all outstanding economic disputes between the nations. The Conservative press and politicians viewed the treaty with contempt.²¹

The appointment of Ivan Maisky as Soviet Ambassador in 1932 and, more importantly, the appointment of Maxim Litvinov in 1930 as Commissar for Foreign Affairs, boded well for future Anglo-Soviet relations.²² In July 1931 Litvinov first spoke to the British Ambassador of his concerns about the possible emergence of 'some form of Fascist government' in Germany. When Japan invaded Manchuria in September 1931, Litvinov began his long campaign for collective security to protect the Soviet Union from threats from both the West and the East. On 25th July 1932 a Soviet non-aggression treaty was signed with Poland and a similar treaty followed with France in November. This search for collective security would

¹⁹ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, pp.69-70

²⁰ Ibid, p.87

²¹ Keith Neilson, Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939 (Cambridge 2006), p.48

²² Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, pp.111-12

form the pattern of Soviet foreign policy until the summer of 1939.²³ The rise of Hitler's Germany and Japanese imperialism forced the Soviets to return to the table of international diplomacy and seek a less confrontational relationship with Britain and France, in the hope of forming a policy of collective security against these new threats. The French suggested a collective mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany, backed by a French guarantee to the Soviet Union and by a Soviet commitment to underwrite the Locarno structure. The Soviets insisted that the Baltic states were included, while the French made it clear that Soviet membership of the League of Nations was a prerequisite. Despite the failure of the 'Eastern Locarno' to materialise as Churchill said 'the reassociation of Soviet Russia with the Western European system (was) ... an historic event'. On 18th September 1934 the Soviet Union was elected to the League of Nations with a permanent seat on the Council.²⁴ Despite this progress, the Soviets still did not feel secure and continued to search for an 'Eastern Locarno'. Poland and Germany, however, had little interest in a multinational agreement, while Britain feared becoming embroiled in an Eastern war if she became involved in such an agreement. This attitude from the British would ultimately lead them to the policy of appeasement.

On 16th March 1935 Hitler had introduced conscription and so in late March 1935 Eden, still only 37 and Lord Privy Seal with responsibility for League of Nations questions, was sent to visit Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow to discuss the European political climate with the respective governments. In Berlin Hitler spoke of the Russian menace to Europe, and Eden wrote in his diary that he was strongly against letting Germany expand eastwards as he believed 'it would be our turn next'. On his journey through the Soviet Union to Moscow, Eden wrote to the Cabinet that there was no basis for a general agreement with Germany. He recommended that the principles of the League of Nations should be adopted and all countries who believed in the policy of collective security should unite against Germany. On 28th March Eden became the first British Minister to visit Moscow since the Revolution. Eden told Litvinov that given the Germans' attitude, the countries that believed in collective security had to act even more strongly. Eden did not mention, however, that he knew there was little stomach in the Cabinet for a policy of collective security which included the Soviet Union and that it believed such a policy might very well provoke war. Little was agreed at the

²³ Ibid, p.113

²⁴ Ibid, pp.123-24

meeting.²⁵ From 1935 until the spring of 1939, when Hitler conquered Bohemia and Moravia, Britain once again turned its back on the Soviet Union; instead following a policy of appeasement in an attempt to avoid war.

The German occupation of the rump state of Czechoslovakia on 15th March 1939 finally brought to an end the British policy of appeasement. Britain guaranteed Poland's borders, without considering how, if any, practical help could be offered. An alliance with the Soviet Union was the natural course, despite the grave misgivings of the Conservative government. The Soviet government offered a tripartite British-French-Soviet treaty for a period of five to ten years, which would provide for military assistance between the parties, and also to the East European states bordering the Soviet Union. There was, however, still little effort being made by the Conservatives to conclude an alliance with the Soviets despite the desirability to do so. Churchill, by now the government's leading champion of an Anglo-Soviet alliance, was strongly in favour but Halifax, unsurprisingly, given his past support for appeasement, was against such a treaty. The British were only willing, at this stage, to try and influence the Soviets to follow the British policy of unilaterally guaranteeing the borders of Poland and Romania, but this was something the Soviets were unprepared to do.²⁶

In Moscow, however, events were occurring that would alter the direction of the USSR's entire foreign policy. On 4th May 1939 Litvinov was replaced by Molotov who, for the time being, continued to talk to the British regarding a treaty but was simultaneously open to offers from Germany. In the House of Commons Lloyd George, Eden and Churchill all advocated the signing of a tripartite pact with the French and Soviets.²⁷ Halifax finally faced the reality of the situation that a failure to reach an agreement with the Soviets would eventually lead to war with Germany over Poland, and may well push the Soviets into an alliance with Germany. Therefore on 27th May the British and French ambassadors presented Molotov with a proposal for a tripartite alliance. Molotov, to the ambassadors' surprise, declined.²⁸ On 2nd June Molotov demanded that the guarantees be extended to include Latvia, Estonia and Finland, and should take effect either with, or without, the consent of those

²⁵ Keith Neilson, Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, pp.132-34

²⁶ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, pp.143-44

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp.145-47

²⁸ Keith Neilson, Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, p.296

states. Clearly this would be a precursor to Soviet occupation of these countries under the pretence of defence against Nazi aggression. This demand would prove to be the major stumbling block to any agreement.²⁹

Eden was refused permission to go to Moscow by Chamberlain, so the ambassadors continued the negotiations. Halifax was perplexed by Molotov's demands. Seeds, the British ambassador in Moscow, clearly spelt out Molotov's motives. The Soviet Union wanted 'assistance or connivance if they found it expedient to intervene in the Baltic states (... in conditions which we would not regard as threatening the peace of Europe) on the plea that the governments and ruling classes as distinct from the rest of the population ... were about to compound with Germany'.³⁰

On 22nd July the Soviet Commissariat of Foreign Trade announced that trade and credit negotiations had been reopened with Germany. In response on 25th July the British and the French proposed that the Soviets should make an announcement that 'such a measure of agreement has been reached on the provisions of the political Agreement ... that they can now proceed without delay to the consequential examination ... of practical measures'. Molotov, however, objected and refused to make any announcement.³¹ On 31st July Chamberlain irritated the Soviets when he informed the House of Commons that the Soviet formula of 'indirect aggression' appeared to carry 'the signification of permitting encroachment upon other states'. Butler then further angered the Soviets by adding: 'The main question is whether we should encroach on the independence of the Baltic states'. The government, Butler said, was opposed to this 'and the difficulty of reaching a formula on this point is one of the main reasons why there has been delay in these negotiations'. These ill considered comments scuppered further tripartite negotiations. The Soviet Union was now looking towards Germany to grant her desires in the Baltic states and Finland.³²

On 2nd August Ribbentrop put to Astakhov, the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, a proposal for conclusion of a Soviet-German political protocol. There were, he said, no outstanding issues

²⁹ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, pp.147-48

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp.148-149

³¹ *Ibid*, p.151

³² *Ibid*, pp.151-52

between the two countries in the whole territory from the Black Sea to the Baltic.³³ On 12th August Astakhov informed the German government that the Soviet government would be willing to open discussions in Moscow on a wide range of questions including the Polish question and the old German-Soviet political agreements. Therefore on 23rd August 1939 Ribbentrop and Molotov signed a non-aggression pact in Moscow. The pact contained a secret protocol which delimited spheres of influence ‘in the event of a territorial and political transformation’ of Poland and the Baltic states.³⁴ With this pact the fate of Poland and the Baltic states was sealed and, following the German invasion of Poland on 1st September 1939 and the subsequent British and French declarations of war on Germany two days later, the Soviets invaded Eastern Poland on 17th September. The Cabinet was relieved that its pledge to Poland did not commit them to declaring war on the Soviet Union. On 29th September, in yet another secret agreement, Lithuania was transferred to the Soviet sphere of influence. In compensation the Germans received a larger part of Poland. The Soviets would soon force upon the Baltic states mutual assistance pacts which enabled the Soviet Union to station troops in these countries.³⁵

Following the German invasion of the West in May 1940 the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, replaced Seeds as British ambassador to Moscow with Stafford Cripps. Seeds had been withdrawn from Moscow in protest to the commencement of the Soviet attack on Finland in November 1939. Churchill hoped Cripps arrival in Moscow on 12th June 1940 would herald a more positive Anglo-Soviet relationship.³⁶ On 15th-16th June the three Baltic states were occupied by the Soviet Union under the pretext of thwarting a military conspiracy against the Soviet Union. Meanwhile on 27th June the Romanians, under heavy Soviet pressure, were forced to cede Bessarabia to the USSR.³⁷ Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were subsequently annexed by the Soviet Union on 1st, 5th and 8th August respectively.³⁸ The British, despite their determination to improve Anglo-Soviet relations, merely granted the

³³ Ibid, p.152

³⁴ Ibid, p.153

³⁵ Ibid, pp.158-59

³⁶ Gabriel Gorodetsky, Stafford Cripps’ Mission to Moscow, 1940-1942 (Cambridge 1984) pp.41-42

³⁷ Ibid, p.49

³⁸ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, p.347

Soviets *de facto* recognition of the annexations and decided to withhold *de jure* recognition until after the war.³⁹

Molotov's visit to Berlin in November 1940 was politically a disaster for German-Soviet relations with Molotov infuriating Hitler over his protests to German overtures, towards Finland, which the two governments had agreed lay in the Soviets sphere of influence. Germany was now determined to invade her ideological enemy, the Soviet Union. Her attempts to invade Britain, in all probability had never been serious, but were merely a bluff to try and force the British government to the peace table. Planning had begun in July 1940 for an invasion of the USSR and on 18th December Hitler made the final decision to invade the USSR. Hitler saw the liquidation of the Soviet state as the quickest way of forcing Britain out of the war as she would then, realistically, have been without hope of salvation.⁴⁰

In addition, Hitler was determined to utterly destroy his long-term ideological enemy. His tirades for living space in the East in *Mein Kampf* did not pretend to hide this. A war in the East also had the potential to shield from view another of Hitler's other long-term goals, the eradication of the Jews of Europe. In practical terms the Reich was also in dire need of fertile agriculture land. The drain on the Reich's resources as a result of having to feed the recently conquered Western territories was immense. The Ukraine was seen as the breadbasket of Europe which would be able to alleviate Germany's agricultural burden. The oil rich Caucasus region was also highly prized by the Germans, who were ever conscious of their dependence on Rumania's Ploesti oil fields.⁴¹ With the Red Army seemingly in disarray following Stalin's purges and its substandard performance during the 1939 Russo-Finnish Winter War, Hitler believed there would never be a better time to invade the Soviet Union, 'we only have to kick in the front door and the whole rotten edifice will come tumbling down' he told his officers in June 1941.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid, p.162

⁴⁰ Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Stafford Cripps' Mission to Moscow*, p.81

⁴¹ Rolf-Dieter Müller, "From Economic Alliance to a War of Colonial Exploitation," in Horst Boog, Jürgen Förster, Joachim Hoffmann, Ernst Klink, Rolf-Dieter Müller and Gerd R. Ueberschär, *Germany and the Second World War, IV* (Oxford 1998), pp.170-75

⁴² Isabel Denny, *The Fall of Hitler's Fortress City* (London 2007), p.116

British warnings of an imminent German invasion of the Soviet Union were frequently dismissed by the Soviets who simply believed the British were trying to drag the USSR into the war. As late as 12th June 1941, just ten days prior to the German invasion, the Foreign Secretary passed to the Soviet ambassador in London deciphered Enigma intelligence indicating that the Germans were poised to invade the Soviet Union. This information was brushed aside as provocation by the Soviet government.⁴³

⁴³ Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89, p.166

PART I

The Restricted Services, British Covert
Intelligence and Subterfuge in the Baltic States

Chapter 1

SIS, SOE and the NKVD

This chapter examines the role played by the British covert intelligence services in the Baltic states prior to and during the Second World War. It is the chapter's aim to articulate to the reader the level of constraint placed upon these services during the war, therefore highlighting the need for an alternative source of intelligence; overt intelligence would ultimately prove to be that alternative. The chapter looks at the establishment and later closing of the SIS stations in the Baltic region, as well as the key FO decision made in 1941 to ban covert intelligence operations in the soviet sphere of influence. The chapter indicates how closely this order was adhered to. Long-term agents were left isolated and contacts were forced to be broken off. Although this ban was lifted in 1944, by this time effective anti-soviet operations had become impossible due to interference from members of the 'Cambridge five'. Finally the chapter describes how the sole SOE operation in the Baltic states fared when launched in 1942.

Following the independence of the Baltic states in the early 1920s, SIS established stations in Finland, Estonia and Latvia (Helsinki, Tallinn and Riga). These three stations comprised SIS's Baltic Group which focused its attention on the Soviet Union and was led by Group Inspector Colonel Ronald Meiklejohn. He had served as an intelligence officer with the British in the period of intervention in Murmansk and from April 1921 was based in Tallinn. The three stations exchanged copies of the reports that they had despatched to London. Each station specialised on a particular aspect of intelligence. Helsinki's main priority was naval intelligence since it was best placed to monitor the Soviets' Baltic fleet. Tallinn concentrated on military intelligence while Riga focused on political and economic intelligence. Apart from military intelligence, the stations were to monitor the Communist threat to the security and internal stability of the United Kingdom, especially as represented by the Comintern.¹

¹ Keith Jeffery, MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service (London 2010), p.184

The three Baltic stations and the other European stations depended almost entirely for Russian intelligence on émigrés, and the most important agents were usually former Tsarist officers. There were issues concerning Soviet infiltration amongst agents and a number of forged documents were supplied to London. Examples of this type of falsification of documents occurred in 1921 when Lord Curzon was taken in by false documentation that indicated Soviet agitation in Ireland and India. Information from Estonian and German agents declared that the Soviets were supplying Sinn Fein ‘germ cells’ and were involved in India. After these embarrassing incidents, SIS endeavoured to tighten its procedures but, as we have seen, this did not prevent the far more damaging Zinoviev letter affair from developing in 1924. In May 1925, as result of these failures, ‘C’ (Sinclair), the head of SIS, sent out a circular to all stations instructing them ‘to use every precaution in accepting as genuine any alleged Communist document that may be offered to you... The only facts which can be considered in the future as in any way proof of authenticity is the complete story of the manner in which the alleged document has been obtained, and the hands through which it has passed between those of the alleged writer and the SIS representative’.²

The Riga station was the most productive of SIS’s Baltic stations. It was opened in February 1921 with Ronald Farina as its head under the cover of British Passport Control Officer. Farina had a staff of three, one assistant and two secretaries. Outside of his passport control duties Farina ‘was also to be responsible for the collection of special intelligence concerning Latvia and Lithuania’, and would be ‘the sole representative of the SIS for these two countries, directly under the orders of the Head Office in London and nobody else’. After arriving in Riga Farina was sent to Tallinn and told to ‘spend ten days or a fortnight there with Ernest Boyce (Boyce had been head of the Tallinn station since 1920), seeing how he does intelligence work, and picking up as much information as he can give you on the spot’.³

Across the Baltic region SIS appointed individuals who had some Russian experience. In November 1926 Ernst Boyce, Passport Control Officer at Helsinki as well as Tallinn, was replaced as head of station in Tallinn by a Cambridge graduate and son of a British shipbuilder and Russian mother. In March 1930 he was in turn replaced as Passport Control Officer by an Oxford man, who had served with the British Military Mission in south Russia

² Ibid, pp.185-87

³ Ibid, pp.188-89

in 1918-19 and who was described as ‘an eccentric individual who flies off at a tangent and is difficult to pin down’. He remained in Tallinn until the entire British diplomatic mission had to withdraw in September 1940.⁴

Harry Carr, born in Archangel in 1899 where his father managed a sawmill, spoke Russian like a native. He had been sent to north Russia as an interpreter in 1919. Following the war Carr became Boyce’s assistant in Helsinki and when the latter left the service in the summer of 1928, Carr became acting head and then head of the Helsinki station. Carr would remain in Helsinki until July 1941. At Riga, Farina was succeeded in March 1931 by Harold Gibson, who was followed in 1934 by Captain Leslie Nicholson.

The Riga station tended to deal with the Russian émigrés due to the political nature of its contacts material. By contrast the Tallinn station’s most important and trustworthy contacts were from local intelligence organisations. An Estonian signals intelligence agency, for example, provided intercepts of Soviet wireless messages between 1931 and 1939 which contained order-of-battle information ‘of great value’ to the War Office.⁵ The Tallinn and Riga stations remained in operation until 1940 when it became apparent that the Soviets were about to occupy the Baltic states. At this point London closed down the two stations and relocated some of their staff to Helsinki, from where they could continue to run some of their agents.⁶

In September 1940 one of Carr’s former agents, an Estonian codenamed ‘Outcast’, turned up in Helsinki. He had escaped from Tallinn, with the help of the Germans at the price of working for the Abwehr Russian section in Berlin. In Helsinki Outcast had told SIS that he would be regularly visiting Finland and offered to act as a double agent. He provided a valuable source of intelligence from within the Reich. In November 1940 he even reported that ‘German command [was] preparing (June) campaign against USSR which could begin spring 1941 possibly earlier’. The report, however, was not believed in London.

⁴ Ibid, p.191

⁵ Ibid, p.192

⁶ Ibid, p.372

When Churchill first learned of the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941 he immediately pledged Britain's support to the Soviet Union. He instructed Stafford Cripps, his ambassador in Moscow, to offer assistance to the USSR, including joint subversive action.⁷ Due to the rapid advance of the Wehrmacht the NKVD soon lost contact with its agents in Nazi-occupied Europe. The Red Air Force's limited range simply prohibited the dropping of supplies and new agents to French, Belgian or Dutch territory. Although, at the outbreak of war, Stalin had ordered the NKVD First Directorate to set up a special department responsible for maintaining contact with groups operating in Nazi occupied Europe, it was too late; soon only a solitary agent in Belgium remained in contact with Moscow. When the Vichy government broke off diplomatic relations, NKVD agents could no longer count on diplomatic cover in France. Without the means of supplying the agents, radio contact soon dried up. The Soviets urgently needed information on German troop dispositions in the west as this was the main destination for troops recuperating from tours of duty on the eastern front. Enraged by this intelligence collapse in August, Stalin decided to acquiesce to the British proposal to collaborate on intelligence issues. The British sent Lt. Col Robert Guinness, a regular army officer and not a member of SOE, to Moscow as temporary representative.⁸

Cripps contacted Molotov on 6th August, ostensibly on the subject of coordination of propaganda efforts. During the meeting Cripps said that he had invited to Moscow an intelligence officer who was authorised to discuss subversive activities on a global scale, and it was agreed that both sides would not have to disclose their organisational structure to each other. SOE had obtained SIS's approval to collaborate with the NKVD on 6th August 1941 when Hugh Dalton, head of SOE, and the new 'C', Sir Stewart Menzies, agreed that Communists in occupied Europe could be valuable for espionage or covert operations.⁹ In September the final agreement was reached between Lt Guinness and General Nikolaev.¹⁰

⁷ Dónal O'Sullivan, Dealing with the Devil, Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War (New York 2010), p.16

⁸ Ibid, pp.25-26

⁹ Ibid, p.17

¹⁰ Ibid, p.27

Due to the loss of contact with its agents, the Soviets had little option but to accept Cripps' proposal. The Soviets were, however, determined to conceal from the British the failure of their intelligence networks in Nazi-occupied Europe.¹¹ In London there was an overestimation of the Bolsheviks' ability to raise an effective fifth column in Nazi occupied Europe. In reality the Communists were swiftly being captured by the Gestapo.¹²

There were signs of a basic lack of knowledge of each other's organisations. The Soviets believed SOE to be a part of SIS while Guinness had never heard of Lavrenti Beria, the head of the NKVD. For secrecy, the British referred to the NKVD as the Soviet guest, whereas the Soviets called SOE the 'British organisation'.¹³ As the NKVD thought they were dealing with their long standing adversary, SIS, the NKVD found it difficult to believe the reports of their agent inside SIS, Kim Philby, who maintained that Britain had ceased all intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. Philby later recalled 'that MI6 was not engaged in any subversive and espionage work against the Soviet Union ... MI6 was not permitted to engage in it then, the USSR was Great Britain's ally. But Moscow didn't believe it, it didn't believe it for a long time'.¹⁴ Other reports from NKVD agents, Donald Maclean and John Cairncross, did not dissuade the Soviets from the view that SIS must have agents in the Soviet Union or in its London embassy.¹⁵ In April 1942 the NKVD decided that Philby's reports must be disinformation as the reports stated that SIS had ceased all intelligence activities against the USSR.

The British decision not to pursue covert intelligence operations against the Soviet Union was part of a change of attitude by the British towards the Soviet Union that was designed to warm relations between the two states in wartime. It was thought that covert operations, if discovered, could lead to a possible collapse in the wartime alliance. As the alliance was of fundamental importance to Britain's survival, the pursuit of covert intelligence against the Soviet Union was thought to be an unnecessary risk.

¹¹ Ibid, p.26

¹² Ibid, p.18

¹³ Ibid, pp.26-27

¹⁴ Stephen Dorril, MI6, Fifty Years of Special Operations (London 2000), p.8

¹⁵ Dónal O'Sullivan, Dealing with the Devil, pp.283-84

As the FO had banned all direct work against the Soviets following the German invasion of the USSR, any request for covert intelligence gathering was therefore dismissed by SIS.¹⁶ This reluctance to endanger Anglo-Soviet relations was highlighted as early as July 1941 by the attitude of SIS to a proposal made by Admiral Godfrey, the Director of Naval Intelligence. Godfrey had written to 'C' about the possibility of embedding intelligence officers in Moscow as he believed it was a 'golden opportunity to obtain that intelligence regarding the USSR which we have lacked for so long'. 'C' believed this 'would only result in compromise' and argued that 'the Anglo-Russian alliance against Germany' had 'not altered my policy of endeavouring to obtain USSR information', but Godfrey must appreciate 'that I have to tread very warily as regards any further steps I may take'.¹⁷ The British ambassador and mission in Moscow, he continued, were 'most anxious that nothing should be done which may in any way impede their efforts towards a successful collaboration with the USSR authorities, the result of which may have much influence in winning the war'. 'C' was clearly aware of the political ramifications of the proposal and this was a definite SIS refusal. In early 1942 the FO placed on record its doubt that any intelligence of sufficient value and importance could be secured in Moscow to warrant the risks being taken to secure it.¹⁸

There had not been an SIS presence in the Baltic states for some time prior to the German occupation, ever since London had decided to close down its Tallinn section in 1940 when it became clear that the Soviets were going to occupy the Baltic states. Some of the staff were relocated to the Helsinki station, from where they continued to run some Baltic agents. The Helsinki Station was headed by the long serving Harry Carr who had a large range of Finnish contacts, including senior officers of the Finnish Military Intelligence such as Colonel Reino Hallamaa, head of the Radio-Intercept and Cryptographic Branch. Carr persuaded Hallamaa to present Colonel John Tiltman, of the Government Code and Cipher School (GC&CS), with a Red Army code book, that was later claimed by GC&CS to be 'of real assistance' to their cryptographers. Carr ran all Finnish and Baltic SIS affairs from Helsinki until Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Finland in August 1941. From then on Carr and his staff

¹⁶ Keith Jeffery, *MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service* (London 2010), p.554

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.562

¹⁸ Bradley F. Smith, *Sharing Secrets with Stalin* (Kansas 1996), p.114

operated in exile from Stockholm. By this time Carr had been ordered by the FO to end all anti-Soviet activities so as not to endanger the new Anglo-Soviet alliance.¹⁹

Although based in Stockholm Carr managed to maintain many of his Finnish contacts, and as the US legation in Helsinki remained until the summer of 1944, Carr was able to maintain a British representative in the US legation. Some of the Finnish contacts were able to travel freely to Sweden to meet Carr while couriers were also used. Contact with Outcast was lost in August 1941 when his handler, a Russian émigré, was arrested but Carr had made sure Outcast knew of a fall-back contact in Stockholm. Outcast duly made contact, although not until May 1942.²⁰

Meanwhile the final documents regarding SOE and NKVD collaboration were signed by Guinness and Nikolaev on 30th September 1941 and were the first agreements between a Soviet and any western intelligence organisation. Two documents were signed: an 'Agreed Record of Discussions between British and Soviet representatives on the Question of Subversive Activities against Germany and her Allies' and, secondly, a 'Preliminary Survey of Joint Subversive Policy for the Guidance of the British and Soviet Liaison Sections'.²¹

Both parties planned jointly to conduct 'subversive activities' in accordance with general military strategy. They agreed to refrain from undertaking operations in the 'sphere of responsibility' of the other. The British 'sphere of responsibility' was defined as Western Europe from Spain to Norway and Greece, while the Soviet 'sphere' included the Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria and Finland. Germany and Austria and the other central European countries were not cited.²² The agreement's 'spheres' bore a strong resemblance to Churchill and Stalin's 'percentage agreement' of October 1944. The 'percentage agreement' was an ad hoc proposal made by Churchill to obtain a semblance of control over the post-war affairs of the Eastern European countries. Churchill crudely proposed the dividing up of Eastern Europe, in percentage terms, between Britain and the Soviet Union. Though Stalin gave the

¹⁹ Keith Jeffery, *MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service*, pp.371-73

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp.371-73

²¹ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp.27-28

²² *Ibid*, pp.27-28

document an affirming tick, the agreement, with the exception of Greece, did not stop the Soviet Union from dominating Eastern Europe.²³

Although no complete exchange of knowledge on structure and operations was to take place, London and Moscow explicitly agreed to support the infiltration of agents into enemy territory. This was the formal basis for the Soviets to drop their NKVD agents into Western Europe in the hope of restabilising communications with its contacts in the West. These drops would be known as the 'Pickaxe' operations. SOE were not meant to know the purpose of the agents' missions 'on no occasion were we allowed to know their directives' an anonymous SOE official declared. The NKVD agents were often ill-equipped and ill-prepared for their missions, but SOE felt it could not advise the NKVD how to do its job and did its best to prepare the agents who, as a result, sometimes stayed in Britain for more than a year. A total of 34 NKVD agents arrived in Britain, of whom 25 were taken to the continent in 16 operations.²⁴

SOE's relations with the Soviet government were confined to a liaison mission with the NKVD in Moscow. The mission was confined to five men and was headed by Major George Alexander Hill. Initially Hill was drawn into the effective propaganda created by Goebbels. He stated 'we have in the Comintern a ready made fifth column organisation capable of penetrating into Germany'. Hill believed the population under German occupation only waited for a signal to rise up against their oppressors.²⁵

In Moscow Hill was to deal directly with the representative of the NKVD, in this case Colonel Ossipov. Meanwhile in London the head of the NKVD mission, which consisted of the same number of personnel, dealt with the head of the Russian section of SOE. Only once did SOE mount a mission in the Soviet 'sphere' of the Baltic states. This occurred in 1942 under the codename BLUNDERHEAD. On 15th July 1942 SOE declared 'our policy in the Baltic states is one of adherence to the terms of the agreement, which prevents us from operating there without Soviet approval. We have on one occasion suggested the introduction of an agent to Estonia and the NKVD agreed to assist us. Such a situation may occur again,

²³ Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, (Basingstoke 2001), pp.759-60

²⁴ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil*, p.69

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.18

and in order to prepare for it, SIS should keep us fully primed with all intelligence bearing on operations in these states'.²⁶ SIS would have found this extremely hard to do considering as it was supposed to have no contacts in the Baltic states at this time. All information would have to have been supplied by the FRPS via the SPRB.

Following this report SOE was asked to provide information on the outcome of Operation Blunderhead. On 17th July they replied: 'As you know the only operation contemplated in this area is 'Blunderhead'. Our arrangement with the Russians made this a Russian sphere of influence and we accordingly asked the Soviet authorities on November 28th 1941 for their permission to proceed with it. The reply of 6th December 1941 stated that there was no objection. We then asked Moscow to obtain some Estonian papers, which however were not available and nothing more transpired. Obviously in making preparations for the operation we have all along required as much intelligence as possible about conditions in Estonia, and would have welcomed any that Moscow could obtain, but as we omitted to ask specifically for such intelligence, we have only ourselves to blame. It might however have occurred to Moscow to see what they could get'.²⁷

The report of the SOE Russian section concerning 'Operation Blunderhead' clearly indicates the naivety of some its officers. As the NKVD had already proved both uncooperative and incapable of supplying its own agents with intelligence and documentation for the 'Pickaxe' operations, common sense should have said that the NKVD were highly unlikely to provide a British agent, who was to be dropped into Soviet territory, with intelligence and documentation. The idea of the NKVD supplying intelligence, without being specifically asked to do so, was fanciful. Indeed Sir Charles Hambo, the head of SOE, asked the question 'why?' regarding this very assumption.²⁸

On 1st December 1942 SOE reported that 'although the British Moscow mission is limited by charter to the alaboration of sabotage and subversive operations, it is, by reason of absence of

²⁶ PRO HS 4/327, SOE/Soviet policy; D/P section and Moscow mission 1940-1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 15th July 1942

²⁷ PRO HS 4/327, SOE/Soviet policy; D/P section and Moscow mission 1940-1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 17th July 1942

²⁸ Ibid.

any SIS representative, also used by NKVD as a channel for submission of intelligence to SIS through SOE. In this connection, it may be noted that NKVD does not admit any degree of partition in the various secret departments and they prefer - in fact, have insisted on – passing all such intelligence through our mission. We, in turn, act merely as agents and pass it to the appropriate authority'.²⁹ It is hardly surprising that the NKVD insisted on using SOE as a channel for intelligence for SIS as it considered SOE to be part of SIS.

The report went on to say that 'the London relationship between the NKVD and the Russian section, although cordial, is confined almost entirely to the preparation and dispatch of Soviet agents sent to this country for introduction into enemy occupied territory. It studiously avoids the collation and examination of pure intelligence other than that connected with sabotage. The Russian section of SOE is responsible for all such agents from the moment of their arrival to the moment of their departure, for accommodation, clothing and, unfortunately, in most cases documentation. In matters of principle and policy affecting NKVD aims and requests, they first obtain the advice and comments of the mission in Moscow. The Russian section has, from its inception, had to fight against a pronounced lack of desire for cooperation on the part of the NKVD and has been placed in the position of giver, without any reasonable return. They have had to contend with suspicion and mistrust'.

SOE were not impressed with the quality of NKVD agents given to them to be dropped into Western Europe. The NKVD's choice of agents was poor and their life expectancy was short after they had been dropped behind enemy lines. The majority were soon captured by German counter intelligence units.³⁰

The difficulties in acquiring the necessary documentation to enable an agent to successfully operate in the Baltic states would prove to be insurmountable. The chances of future operations being successful were considered low following the failure of operation Blunderhead in 1942 (see below) and consequently no more SOE operations were contemplated in the region. Meanwhile the unequal balance in the relationship between SOE and the NKVD would continue. As the Soviet Union's fortunes of war improved from 1943,

²⁹ PRO HS 4/327, SOE/Soviet policy; D/P section and Moscow mission 1940-1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 1st December 1942

³⁰ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp.8-9

her political position in the Baltic states, vis-à-vis the Western Allies, was further strengthened. As a result there would have been little prospect of the Soviets agreeing to the dropping of 'capitalist' agents within its 'borders', even if SOE had desired such an operation.

Towards the end of 1943 Colonel Reino Hallamaa met Carr and informed him of his plans to evacuate key members of his staff and all his records from Helsinki to Sweden to prevent them falling into the hands of the Soviets if Finland was forced out of the war. Hallamaa proposed that SIS should take over his organisation and relocate them to Britain, where they could continue to work on the Soviet target. Carr reported the proposal to London, where Menzies turned it down, on the grounds that he did not want a group of Finns (officially enemy nationals) working on cryptographic matters in Britain. Regardless Hallamaa evacuated his unit Sweden, where he offered the records to the French, who gratefully accepted them. Biffy Dunderdale of the SIS French section learned of this from his French contacts and was able to arrange for SIS to obtain copies of the material.³¹

The importance of maintaining friendly Anglo-Soviet relations greatly affected the policy of Carr's exiled Helsinki station. It was important that Carr was not seen to be encouraging or cooperating with anti-Soviet elements. This made for a difficult relationship with agent '43931', the former Estonian Director of Military Intelligence. Colonel Richard Maasing. Maasing was a fierce anti-communist who had been helped by the Germans to flee from Estonia in 1940. He had worked for the Abwehr for a time and then came to Sweden, where he offered his services both to SIS and the Japanese military attaché in Stockholm, General Makoto Onodera. Maasing was highly regarded by SIS, however. Following the German defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943 he began mainly to produce reports (which he supplied not only to the British and the Japanese, but also to the Swedes as well) on the Red Army as it swept westwards. An old intelligence hand, he had consistently refused to reveal his sub-sources to SIS. In 1942 he fiercely resisted a demand from London that he 'come clean in the whole matter of his organisation'. Maasing declared that obtaining information on German intentions was 'most difficult, dangerous and thankless work'. He claimed that he and his men were working for a cause and would continue to do so whether SIS needed the results or

³¹ Keith Jeffery, *MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service*, pp.371-73

not. As GC&CS were reading Onodera's cables they found out that Maasing was being more forthcoming about his sources to Onodera than to SIS. As the Soviets' importance to the Allied cause began to grow London became increasingly nervous about the risk of the Soviets finding out that SIS was associating with such an anti-Soviet character. Head Office gave instructions that Maasing should be given an ultimatum to reveal his sub-sources or the relationship be terminated. Maasing again refused so SIS broke off contact. Carr later discovered that one of the officers in Head Office who had strongly advocated the ultimatum was Kim Philby, who would have no doubt passed on whatever Maasing revealed to the Soviets.³²

As SIS was hamstrung by the FO's ban on covert intelligence gathering against the Soviets, the Maasing episode highlights precisely why the British government needed to procure intelligence regarding the Baltic states from overt sources such as the SPRB and FRPS.

The Soviets had widely infiltrated SIS headquarters in London as well as the FO and they even had an agent, John Cairncross, working for Government Code and Cypher School (GC and CS) at Bletchley Park. The Soviets amusingly termed SIS 'the Hotel', SOE the 'Hut' or 'sect', and Bletchley Park was the 'Resort'. In May 1944, as concern in London grew over the Soviets' post-war intentions for Eastern and Central Europe, SIS began to reactivate covert intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. The FO agreed, on the condition that necessary caution was exercised. Unfortunately for the FO and the British government at large, Kim Philby had managed to position himself as the head of the new anti-communist section IX of SIS and ensured Moscow knew of all the British counter-espionage operations against the Soviet Union.

It was only at this time that the Soviet Union began to believe in Philby's reliability, as we know Moscow could not believe that SIS had suspended all anti-soviet activities in 1941. Moscow asked itself, how could agents such as Philby claim to take out documents undetected? How could the agents hold high office when they were known communist sympathisers? Between 1942 and 1944, NKVD officer Elena Modrzhinskaya suspected the Cambridge five could be double agents, while Pavel Fitin concluded that Philby must be

³² Ibid, pp.551-54

supplying Moscow with disinformation.³³ Finally, in October 1943, the NKVD concluded that Philby, Maclean and Burgess must be double agents as this could be the only explanation for the fact that none of them had exposed a single British intelligence agent in the USSR or the Soviet Embassy in London. It was not until the last year of the war in the summer of 1944, that the NKVD renewed its trust in the 'Cambridge Five'. Philby in particular, as head of section IX, would go on to ensure Moscow knew all of Britain's post-war anti-Soviet intelligence operations. It was the detailed papers supplied by Philby and other agents such as Donald Maclean of the FO (who regularly supplied PHPS papers even those placed on restricted circulation due to their anti-Soviet content) that finally in 1944 made it clear, even to the ever suspicious NKVD officials, that their British agents were genuine.³⁴

It is therefore fortunate, given the level of Soviet infiltration of SIS, that covert intelligence gathering against the USSR had been banned. If the British had continued to conduct anti-Soviet espionage operations throughout the war the level of suspicion caused could have negatively influenced Soviet policy towards the west in the post-war period.

The British decision to reactivate an anti-communist SIS section in 1944 was part of a general cooling of attitude towards the Soviets in the last year of war as the fear of a Soviet domination of post-war Eastern and central Europe took hold. The USSR's worrying attitude towards Poland's independence in 1943/44 manifested itself in the establishment of the Lublin government in July 1944. This would ultimately force Churchill to seek a limited bilateral 'percentage agreement' with Stalin in October 1944, in the hope that Britain would retain at least some strategic influence in south-eastern Europe. Churchill now recognised that the Soviet Union was the pre-eminent power in Europe, and he felt that the British had to negotiate in 1944 while there was still the remote possibility of the British being able to exert any influence over Stalin.³⁵

With the lifting of the FO ban on covert intelligence gathering against the Soviet Union, Harry Carr could operate his exiled SIS Finland station unhindered. By the beginning of 1945 Carr was able to report to Philby that he and his assistant Rex Beasley were secretly gathering

³³ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil*, p.248

³⁴ Stephen Dorril, *MI6, Fifty Years of Special Operations*, pp.13-14

³⁵ Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp.283-84

intelligence on the Baltic states from some of the thousands of refugees who had reached Sweden. He could also report that SIS had, with the help of the Swedish Intelligence Service, established a radio link with an anti-Soviet resistance network in recently 'liberated' Riga. The network was asked to report on developments in Soviet held territory. SIS also remained in contact with the Latvians in the German occupied Courland peninsula by fast speedboat. The Latvians in Courland clung to the idea that the Royal Navy would honour the principles of the Atlantic Charter and appear off the Courland coast at the German surrender and restore Latvia's independence.³⁶

Carr had, in cooperation with the Swedes, kept in regular contact with the Baltic nationalists who had reached Sweden by speedboat and now Carr began to re-establish his intelligence network in the Baltic. By the summer of 1944 the first of approximately 60 cross Baltic trips had been made, the majority to Latvia. Many of these Latvian agents were pro-German and, at the very least, hoped to keep open an escape route to Sweden.³⁷

In March 1945 the British government made it clear that the population of the Baltic states were not considered by the British to be Soviet citizens and therefore not subject to repatriation to the USSR without their consent. This decision enabled large numbers of former Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian civilian refugees and former forced labourers to settle in the west.³⁸ On 31st August it was agreed by the FO, much to the Soviet Union's displeasure, that members of non-German SS formations and non-German units in the Wehrmacht who had surrendered to the Western Allies, and who were not citizens of the USSR in 1939, were also not to be forcibly repatriated as they would face certain death as collaborators. Like their compatriots, members of Baltic SS and Wehrmacht units captured by British troops would be sent to displaced person camps to be processed and eventually released.

SIS recruited several agents who had been former members of the Baltic SS, for it was believed that their knowledge of the Red Army could prove invaluable against a hostile Soviet Union in the post-war era. Some of these agents would be sent back to Latvia in 1946

³⁶ Stephen Dorril, *MI6, Fifty Years of Special Operations*, pp.274-75

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp.273-74

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.276

by speedboat in order to establish contact with the continuing 'Forest Brothers' resistance movement which was largely made up of former Baltic SS members who had not been so fortunate to be transferred west towards the end of the war.³⁹

The FO ban on covert intelligence gathering in the Soviet sphere effectively negated the involvement of SIS in the Baltic states. Operating initially from Finland, the FO ban pushed the organisation to the periphery of intelligence matters. The SOE agreement with the NKVD, which placed the Baltic states inside of the USSR's sphere of influence, effectively meant that covert military and intelligence operations in the Baltic states were under the control of the Soviet Union. Therefore an alternative to covert intelligence was required if intelligence from the region was to be acquired. The alternative, overt intelligence successfully plugged the gap.

Although SIS' Harry Carr did maintain contact with some agents in the Baltic, the fact that he was asked to break off contact with any agent operating in an anti-Soviet manner only highlighted the need for a 'safe' intelligence source that could not jeopardise Anglo-Soviet relations. SOE's failure can largely be attributed to the poor co-operation with the NKVD and the distances involved in operating within the Baltic states. The fact that Operation Blunderhead was the only covert mission attempted by the SOE Russian Section in the Baltic states, is testament to the difficulties such a mission faced.

SOE and Operation Blunderhead

As already outlined SOE only undertook one operation in the Baltic states during the war. The complications that manifested themselves during the preparations for Operation Blunderhead, as well as the absolute failure of the operation in late 1942, made the prospect of any future operations extremely unlikely. The fact that Soviet compliance was also required only made these operations even less attractive. As relations with the USSR deteriorated and Soviet confidence in victory increased, there was little reason for SOE to engage in such risky operations in the Baltic states.

³⁹ Ibid, pp.279-82

In November 1941 SOE approached the NKVD about launching a mission into Estonia with the goal of sabotaging the shale oil industry plants in north-eastern Estonia. The shale oil plants were a vital producer of fuel for the Wehrmacht and in particular the Kriegsmarine. Their successful sabotage would have severely hindered oil supply in the region whilst repairs were undertaken.⁴⁰ Moscow gave its approval to this one-off operation. It was envisaged by SOE that an agent would be sent to Estonia by sea under the alias of an Estonian seaman and make his way to the Narva shale oil plants and then conduct sabotage operations. The man chosen to undertake this operation was Ronald Seth, born in Ely in 1911 and formerly a professor of English at the University of Tallinn. His knowledge of northern Estonia made him an obvious candidate for the operation, which was codenamed 'Blunderhead'.⁴¹ During the operation Seth, who left Tallinn at the outbreak of war in 1939, was simply to be known as Ronald.⁴²

SOE provided Seth with the alias of Felix Kopti, an Estonian, born on 30th December 1908, who had worked as a fisherman's boy until 1919 when he went to sea on a Finnish ship as a galley boy.⁴³ It was decided; instead he would be dropped into Estonia by parachute.⁴⁴ At this time Seth's political opinions began to cause his superiors some concern. On 22nd April 1942 Seth requested a statement of policy from the FO declaring whether the British government intended to return the Baltic states to independence after the war. Seth was very sympathetic to the views of the Estonians whom he knew and loved, and therefore he held strong anti-Soviet beliefs. When discussing Seth's request on 6th May, SOE concluded that 'it

⁴⁰ PRO HS 4/327, SOE/Soviet policy; D/P section and Moscow mission 1940-1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 17th July 1942

⁴¹ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 31st January 1942 and PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, SOE Report on the Case of Ronald Seth, BLUNDERHEAD, 1st September 1944, p.1

⁴² PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 31st January 1942

⁴³ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 13th March 1942, The real Felix Kopti had deserted a British steamer in Port Lincoln, Australia in October 1940. He had a girlfriend in London, and it was therefore possible for the police to obtain copies of his handwriting.

⁴⁴ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 3rd April 1942

would be most difficult if not impossible to extract a statement of policy out of the FO and if it were forthcoming I am dreadfully afraid it would entail the sale of Estonia to the USSR. Unless the project is abandoned R (Seth) must be told that “as usual there is no policy” and that no assurance from the PM can be forthcoming’. Nevertheless it was thought that Seth’s ‘training should proceed all the summer as outlined but if he maintains his attitude regarding policy and if we get the inevitable reply to any question as to policy, we may very likely have to abandon the whole project and possibly use R (Seth) in some other sphere’.⁴⁵

Seth’s political persuasions had aroused a great deal of anger within SOE to such an extent that on 7th May his loyalties were being brought into question. ‘Unless R is prepared to carry out total warfare for the sake of his own country and leave the politics of other countries to be solved by wiser heads than his own, then there seems to be no point in sending him to Estonia. He has still to learn the true meaning of the word patriotism’. Despite this damning criticism the mission was allowed to proceed.⁴⁶ As it was expected that Seth would have to remain in Estonia until the end of the war, he was allowed to take with him the equivalent of £1,800 in local currency.⁴⁷

There were other reasons for SOE to feel apprehensive about the forthcoming mission. On 23rd September SOE declared that they considered it unwise to conduct an agent provocateur test on Seth for psychological reasons. ‘Although his sublime self confidence is ... possibly somewhat excessive, it is at the same time one of his strongest weapons, and we feel that if we were to undermine this in any way it might have disastrous results on someone so highly strung as he is. We think that his security is probably pretty good, but are anxious not to run the risk of upsetting him’.⁴⁸ This was hardly a glowing assessment for a man who was shortly to be dropped deep into occupied Europe. Seth had already been questioned politically, and

⁴⁵ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 6th May 1942

⁴⁶ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 7th May 1942

⁴⁷ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 15th September 1942

⁴⁸ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 23rd September 1942

now he was considered highly strung and over-confident. SOE must surely have had grave doubts over Seth's capability to successfully fulfil his mission.

Operation Blunderhead began on 24th October 1942. From the outset events did not go well. Seth was dropped 50km off target.⁴⁹ SOE had only limited contact with him after his landing but on 6th November Major Hazell was able to inform Seth's wife that her husband was well.⁵⁰ Nothing more, however, was heard from Seth and the operation was officially cancelled on 20th May 1943.⁵¹ Seth was listed as missing in action on 21st June.⁵² Two days later, and to SOE's surprise, news, was received from the Red Cross that Seth was alive and in enemy hands. Seth had written two letters to his wife. They did not conform to the letter code that Seth had been given.⁵³

More information of Seth's capture came to light on 5th October when SIS notified SOE that a coastguard at Hara, near Loksa, in northern Estonia, had related to an SIS source in April that a parachutist who had been captured in the neighbourhood, it transpired, was a person previously connected with the British Vice-Consul in Tallinn.⁵⁴ The source said that in the autumn of 1942 a parachutist had dropped from an unidentified plane near Hara. The Germans conducted a search and a man at the time was seen living on a farm, where he was not making any attempt to conceal himself. The man was known to the local community as he had in former years spent the summer near Loksa at the farm concerned and therefore his appearance did not surprise the local population. The Germans, however, connected his appearance with the parachute affair and he was arrested and taken to Tallinn. In February

⁴⁹ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Copy of translated Luftwaffe interrogation reports conducted in Oberursel on 6th February 1943, 6th December 1943

⁵⁰ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Letter from Major Hazel of SOE to Mrs. Seth, 6th November 1942

⁵¹ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 20th May 1943

⁵² PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 21st June 1943

⁵³ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 23rd June 1943

⁵⁴ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 5th October 1943

1943 another source had heard that, whilst he was in Tallinn, the man had taught English in Tallinn before the war. SOE had no doubt the man in question was Seth.⁵⁵

By 6th December 1943 SOE had received further information of Seth's fate in the form of a copy of two captured documents which had been retrieved from a German plane that had crash landed in Switzerland in mid April 1943. Amongst them was a copy of an interrogation report of an agent captured on 5th November 1942. This had taken place in Oberursel near Frankfurt am Main on 6th February 1943, by a Major I. Genst of the Luftwaffe. Seth's statements broadly followed those given to SIS by its Estonian sources. The interrogation report indicated that Seth had been advised by local Estonians to give himself up as he had been unable to find a boat to escape to Sweden. He was arrested by a member of the Estonian Home Guard and handed over to the Germans. Seth told his interrogators that, upon arriving in Estonia, he had no intention whatsoever of carrying out his mission. The reason why he had not surrendered straight away was that he had been informed that the Germans used cruel methods during interrogation. He had therefore tried to reach Sweden by boat, but when this proved impossible he gave himself up to the Estonian Home Guard.⁵⁶

Nevertheless nothing more was heard from Seth and by the summer of 1944 it was quite naturally presumed that, as a captured enemy agent, Seth had been executed. On 28th July the decision was made to officially list Seth as killed in action.⁵⁷ Remarkably, however, it seems the Germans believed Seth's story and that he was now willing to work for them as a double agent. The fact Seth had not committed any acts of sabotage or coercion in Estonia and that he displayed a total indifference to his mission, had no doubt saved his life. It was soon discovered after the liberation of Paris in August 1944 that Seth had been in the city at the beginning of the month. Seth had a fair degree of freedom in Paris and had been prepared by the SD, the intelligence wing of the SS, to work as a double agent. Seth had written a long 160-paragraph document in pencil and left it behind when he was forced to withdraw with the

⁵⁵ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Copy of SIS report 'Alleged British Parachutists', 17th September 1943

⁵⁶ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Copy of translated Luftwaffe interrogation reports conducted in Oberursel on 6th February 1943, 6th December 1943

⁵⁷ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 28th July 1944

Germans.⁵⁸ The report was passed to Air Commodore Jones in the Grand Hotel Paris by Emile Albert Riviera, a colleague of Seth, on 28th August.⁵⁹ After reviewing Seth's report SOE came to the conclusion that Seth was not a traitor and that he had only agreed to work for the enemy as a double agent in order to preserve his own life and he had no intention of carrying out any mission given to him, and that in fact had he been sent to Britain, he would have given himself up immediately on arrival.⁶⁰

In the document Seth admitted he had travelled to Paris following numerous threats of execution to complete his training prior to being dropped into England, but the mission fell through. Seth implied he had no other option other than to train as a double agent; otherwise he would have been executed.⁶¹ In the report Seth did make some peculiar remarks. He declared that he did not eat for twelve days after his landing in Estonia, but lived on whisky and morphine tablets, although he stated that he did commit daring acts of sabotage and did a great deal of walking. Seth also claimed he had shot two Germans in Paris. It was thought by SOE that, due to his sufferings, Seth had become temporarily unhinged. Although Seth's story was largely believed by SOE at this time, a strict watch was called for in case Seth did return to England as a double agent. As a result of his withdrawal with the Germans, once again Seth was classified as missing in action on 19th September 1944.⁶²

Seth's situation took an even more peculiar turn in the closing weeks of the war in Europe. On 14th April 1945 the British military attaché in Berne reported to the FO that Flight

⁵⁸ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 4th September 1944

⁵⁹ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Report on Interview Between Major Soskice, SOE, and Air Commodore Jones, DPR, Air Ministry, at the Air Ministry Reference Ronald Seth Alias BLUNDERHEAD on 1st September 1944, 2nd September 1944

⁶⁰ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 4th September 1944

⁶¹ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, SOE Report on the Case of Ronald Seth, BLUNDERHEAD, 1st September 1944, p.1-4

⁶² PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 19th September 1944

Lieutenant Ronald Seth had escaped from Germany and arrived in Berne on that day.⁶³ It was reported that Seth had met some leading Nazis on 11th March 1945 and was given a political mission. Seth was put over the border by the SS on the 12th April and was expected to work as a secret agent for Germany.⁶⁴

Seth was quickly sent back to England arriving on 19th April to face interrogation to determine whether he was in fact a double agent and held a long term SD mission.⁶⁵ By June 1945 Seth had been placed on indefinite leave and was ‘feeling a bit cold about the reception I have received from the org (SOE)’. Seth wanted to know if SOE could ‘give him any idea of what is happening’. For security reasons it was thought best that Seth should leave the service as early as possible. After much interrogation it was thought further evidence would be required to bring any case against Seth and this evidence would take time to locate in Germany. Ultimately this evidence was not forthcoming and Seth would be free to re-enter civilian life.⁶⁶

Operation Blunderhead had been a total failure. By the time of its cancellation in 1943, further operations in the Baltic states were seen as risky and unnecessary as a result of the Soviet Union’s seemingly unstoppable march to victory following the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk. No further requests were made by SOE to the NKVD for permission to undertake missions in the Baltic states; the difficulties in preparing these operations were just too great. The fate of Seth had highlighted that even an agent who knew the country as well as he did stood little chance of sabotaging the Baltic states major economic targets, such as the shale oil plants of Estonia. SOE realised such operations were unrealistic due to the fact that the local Baltic population was, on the whole, pro-German or, more accurately, anti-Soviet. The Balts knew that, by assisting SOE agents, they were only bringing a swifter occupation of their land by the Soviets. As Seth had found, the Estonians were not willing to collaborate

⁶³ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Telegram from British Military Attaché in Berne to FO, 14th April 1945

⁶⁴ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Telegram from British Minister in Berne to FO, 15th April 1945

⁶⁵ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Telegram from British Minister in Berne to FO, 19th April 1945

⁶⁶ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Internal SOE memorandum, 7th June 1945

with SOE agents. SOE would instead focus its activities in the West, Poland, the Balkans and on its collaborative Pickaxe operations with the NKVD.

Alongside SOE's failure in the Baltic states, the British had missed genuine opportunities to gain invaluable contacts with anti-soviet agents during the war, the fact that Kim Philby was a leading proponent of the decision to sever links with these agents is with hindsight no great surprise. These agents could have provided invaluable wartime intelligence and given the Western Allies an intelligence edge at the start of the Cold War in 1945. Nevertheless the British had to strike a delicate balance. Pre-war experience and the knowledge of Stalin's regimes supreme brutality forced the FO's hand. If the FO had not placed a ban on covert intelligence operations it is quite conceivable that the Soviet Union would have become even more obstructive and possibly even hostile towards the British in the critical war years of 1941-1944. At a time when the Red Army was bleeding the *Wehrmacht* white in Russia the collapse of Anglo-Soviet relations would have been unthinkable. The war would have, in all probability, been lost. Stalin may have sort a separate peace with Nazi Germany, as we know Stalin was not opposed to dealing with his ideological enemy. Perhaps understandably then, covert intelligence operations in the Soviet sphere of influence played only a minor role during the conflict. The door was therefore open for a substitute form of intelligence. As we shall see in subsequent chapters overt intelligence would prove capable of establishing itself as a viable and very effective alternative to covert intelligence.

PART II

The Central Role of British Overt Intelligence in the Baltic States

Chapter 2

The Importance of the Foreign Press to British Intelligence 1938-1941

This chapter examines the FRPS organisation as a whole, why it was established in 1939, its *Raison d'être*, how it functioned under the leadership of Arnold Toynbee and the key reasons why from 1941 the organisation would allow its Baltic States Section to flourish. The reasons for this primarily included government backing and encouragement from Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary would ensure that the air of suspicion that had hitherto surrounded overt intelligence would be dispelled. Dissenting voices in the FO would be won round when confronted by the highly influential R.A. Butler enquiry of 1941, which explored the functions and usefulness of FRPS. The operations of the FRPS are described in detail to allow the reader to understand how the FRPS interpreted its role in the intelligence field. Finally the chapter shows how the FRPS took its first tentative steps in the vital field of post-hostilities planning.

The Origins of the FRPS Baltic States Section

By 1938 war with Nazi Germany seemed inevitable to the civil servants in the British FO, and they were acutely aware that there was a lack of FO intelligence gathering and propaganda capabilities. The FO staff was already fully extended in dealing with normal peace-time diplomatic activities and there was a real fear that the FO political intelligence services would become overwhelmed in wartime.¹ Arnold Toynbee, Director of the RIIA, was contacted by Rex Leeper, head of the FO News Department, for assistance. Leeper had been a colleague of Toynbee's during the First World War in the small four man PID. The

¹ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in Journal of Contemporary History, Volume 21:4 (1986), p.542

PID was the closest the British government came to tapping academic knowledge for the war effort in the First World War.²

Toynbee was driven by a strong belief that the study of history could prove useful in the formulation of rational policies for the British government to follow in wartime. If this research was carefully analysed it would be of immeasurable value in the post-war reconstruction of nations with the ultimate aim of avoiding the mistakes of the Allied nation-builders of 1919.³ Toynbee had attended the peace negotiations at Versailles in 1919 as a junior member of the British delegation and as a specialist of Middle Eastern affairs. He therefore witnessed the mistakes that were made first-hand including the British duping of King Faisal over the Iraq question. He also helped to establish the Anglo-American Institute of International Affairs which was dedicated to producing ‘objective, unbiased, unpartisan and unemotional’ studies on international politics in the post-war world. This could also be described as Toynbee’s own personal maxim, which he would also instil in his subordinates throughout his academic career. Due to the geographical difficulties imposed on the Institute it was split in two: the Council of Foreign Relations in the United States and the British Institute of International Affairs, known as the Royal Institute of International Affairs after receiving its Royal Charter in 1926. The RIIA was based at Chatham House, London. Initially the FO did not look favourably on this new organisation and it barred its civil servants from attending RIIA meetings. Toynbee joined the RIIA five years after its formation as its new Director of Studies following his dismissal as chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek studies at the University of London. Toynbee was relieved of his position because his initial analysis of the Greco-Turkish war had angered his Anglo-Greek sponsors. The RIIA’s aim of writing objective, unbiased studies on current affairs fitted perfectly with Toynbee’s own personal beliefs. Toynbee produced the annual *Survey of International Affairs*, which occupied half his year’s work, with the rest of his time taken up as Professor of History at the University of London.⁴

The FO was determined to try and procure control over foreign propaganda from the newly formed MoI. Leeper saw the benefits of using Toynbee and the RIIA as potential allies in

² Ibid, p.541

³ Ibid, p.539

⁴ Ibid, pp.541-42

achieving this goal. Simultaneously Toynbee was determined that the RIIA should be involved in any future war effort, stating in September 1938 that ‘we shall have to put in some strenuous work persuading HMG (His Majesty’s Government) to use Chatham House instead of breaking us up’.⁵

There was a feeling at Chatham House, however, that the RIIA should maintain its independence from the FO. Its staff had excellent research backgrounds and a vast international network of academic and political connections. Toynbee had even managed to secure a meeting with Hitler in Berlin in 1936 as a result of the international reputation of the RIIA.⁶ In view of this Leeper and Toynbee agreed that, in the event of war, a large team of international affairs experts from Chatham House and the universities would operate as an independent information and intelligence section for the FO. An annual government subsidiary of £80,000 was agreed to fund the operation. Toynbee’s academic group would supply the FO with a regular survey of the foreign press, similar to the one supplied by the War Office during the First World War. It would also prepare memoranda as required on the historical-political background of specific foreign problems. The new organisation would be based at Balliol College, Oxford and would assume the title FRPS (Foreign Research and Press Service). Toynbee immediately set about recruiting eminent specialists in history and international affairs to his staff. In August 1939 the arrangement between Chatham House and the FO was confirmed.⁷

During the first two years of the war the FRPS budget and its very existence would be brought into question. The budget was lowered to £48,000 following angry protests in the British press and Parliament over the government’s powers of censorship. Chatham House agreed to contribute annually £6,000 to the FRPS to help cover the shortfall. Nevertheless this budget still allowed the FRPS to employ 131 staff. Eleven were professors whose salaries

⁵ Ibid, pp.542-43

⁶ William H. McNeill, Arnold J. Toynbee, A Life (Oxford 1989), pp.172-73

⁷ Robert H Keyserlingk, ‘Arnold Toynbee’s Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe’ in Journal of Contemporary History, Volume 21:4 (1986), pp.543-44

were paid by Oxford University, twenty-three worked as paid research assistants, twenty-four as volunteer researchers and seventy-four as assistants and clerical staff.⁸

The first year of the war, which included Hitler's rapid defeat of Poland and the subsequent period of British military inertia, was perhaps the most difficult for the FRPS. The British government received intelligence reports of Germany's dire economic state, due to her pre-war rearmament programme and therefore believed that Hitler could be forced to sue for peace by means of an economic blockade. The British believed, as erroneously as the Germans, in the 'stab in the back' theory of 1918, and therefore a massive propaganda campaign was launched against the population in the hope of causing a similar collapse on the German home front. The FO saw the FRPS' immediate role as assisting in the propaganda aspect of the war against Germany. The FRPS was asked by the FO's revived PID, now headed by Leeper, to help prepare some of the propaganda leaflets to be dropped over the Reich.⁹

Most members of the FRPS were reticent about becoming involved in the propaganda effort for they saw it as a waste of their talents and, in all probability, not in keeping with their principles in scholarly accuracy and integrity. There were members of the FRPS, however, who were keen to become involved. As opinion was divided on the issue friction occurred within the FRPS, and this hesitancy caused much annoyance between the FO and the FRPS. As long as the FRPS remained outside the direct control of the government, it would be open to attack from the FO and the MoI. The FRPS was not privy to confidential, official documentation and had to rely on its own private academic resources; therefore the value of its reports was questioned. Other government departments were creating their own information gathering and propaganda services that frequently overlapped with the work of the FRPS.¹⁰ In particular the PID began to organise its own intelligence and propaganda staff. In an effort to improve cooperation between the PID and the FRPS, Professor Heywood of the FRPS was appointed in November 1940 to be head of the German section of the PID.¹¹

⁸ Ibid, p.544

⁹ Ibid, pp.544-45

¹⁰ Ibid, p.546

¹¹ Ibid, p.556n

Even though seventeen government departments, both inside and outside the FO, received the various press surveys of the FRPS, the FO was unsure how to fit the FRPS press survey into its everyday routine. If it was not for propaganda purposes what use was the information provided by the FRPS? In August and again in November 1940 officials from the PID and the MoI began calling for the FRPS to be wound up, due to the apparent level of duplication and overlap that existed between the FRPS and other government bodies. The FO and the MoI insisted on the centralisation of the government's information and intelligence activities into a single department. There was great frustration and demoralisation amongst FRPS staff as their role was now in question.¹²

The Nazi invasion of the Low Countries and France on 10th May 1940 would transform the role of the FRPS, a change that would eventually lead it to become an indispensable part of the British intelligence network.¹³ Winston Churchill had, by a twist of fate, become Prime Minister on the same day as the Germans launched their offensive in the West. Churchill immediately reformed his administrative and military structures, the War Cabinet, chiefs-of-staff and intelligence, sabotage and propaganda communities. These reforms would remove the mundane propaganda work that the FRPS academics at Oxford despised. In 1940 the central political warfare organisation, the SOE, was formed under the leader of the Ministry for Economic Warfare (MEW), Hugh Dalton, and the following year the propaganda work of the SOE and the BBC was amalgamated into another new political warfare group, the PWE, under the leadership of Robert Bruce Lockhart. The PWE was integrated into the FO's PID at Woburn Abbey which provided a cover for it.¹⁴

The renaissance of the FRPS began when Duff Cooper, the Conservative Minister of Information, managed to persuade the War Cabinet in early 1941 to set up a War Aims Sub-Committee to plan for peace, under the chairmanship of the Labour leader Clement Attlee. This Sub-Committee was responsible to the FO. The government turned to Toynbee's FRPS to staff the Sub-Committee's research team. The FRPS was now free to pursue its scholarly

¹² Ibid, p.546

¹³ Norman Rich Hitler's War Aims V/II (London 1974), p.197

¹⁴ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in Journal of Contemporary History, Volume 21:4 (1986), p.547

influences and academic bent and escape the burden of being tied to mundane propaganda work. At the PID Leeper at first protested that his PWE staff was as able as the FRPS staff. Leeper believed that the FRPS' potential move into a post-war planning role was just a desperate attempt to rescue an organisation that was 'seething in revolt' and which is 'too academic and is now on the verge of disruption'.¹⁵

In early 1941 a government enquiry into the FRPS finally ended the sniping from other departments. The enquiry found that Toynbee and Clark had led the FRPS with patience and tact. The divisive elements had left and not behaved well and it was not the FRPS' fault that government departments directly involved with the war had not been able to find a use for the FRPS memoranda. Perhaps its foreign press surveys had become outdated because access to foreign newspapers had dried up and other departments, including the SOE, had begun their own survey, based upon their own special intelligence sources. What was indisputable was that no other body inside or outside government contained such a first class array of experts, researching history and international affairs and it would be wrong to disband it. The FRPS' loss of morale and the problem of its contribution to the government would be best solved by the FRPS' attachment to the War Aims Sub-Committee. The FO subsidiary should continue and, crucially, the FRPS should be granted access to confidential, official information and its staff should be strengthened. Other government departments could continue to concentrate directly on war-related activity, but the FRPS 'principal use now is not for winning the war but the winning of the peace'. Its internal structure was reorganised into specialised research sections under Toynbee. Toynbee's long term objective was to see the FRPS incorporated into the governmental structure so that he could be as close to any future peace settlement as possible. The War Aims Sub-Committee's first aim was 'to make suggestions in regard to a post-war European and world system, with particular regard to the economic needs of the various nations, and to the problem of adjusting the life force of small countries in a durable international order'. Ultimately this aim would prove to be unachievable in regards to the Baltic states.¹⁶

Before Toynbee's reorganisation, the FRPS contained eleven sub-sections, but by 7th August 1941 this had expanded to 17 and by 10th November 1941 the FRPS had 144 members of

¹⁵ Ibid, p.548

¹⁶ Ibid, pp.548-49

staff.¹⁷ The FRPS received renewed (if modest) backing from the government, particularly from the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden who, on 23rd July 1941 in Parliament, defended the FRPS from an accusation by Major-General Sir Alfred Knox: ‘Does not this body duplicate work done in the Foreign Office?’ Eden replied: ‘No, it does work not only for us but for other Departments. Its work is of course subject to review. I consider that it fulfils a useful function’.¹⁸

Following the FRPS permission to receive official government information, government bodies began to suppress their earlier hostility and recognise the unrivalled quality of the FRPS memoranda. This is borne out by the increase in the number of government enquiries which were made to the FRPS; in the first quarter of 1941 a mere eleven were received, but a year later this had jumped to 105 and by April 1942 the figure was 170 a week.¹⁹

The political climate, Anglo-Soviet relations in the second half of 1941

As the thesis will next follow the crucial year of 1941 and the establishing of the importance of foreign press to British intelligence, it would be best to outline the key political events of the Anglo-Soviet relationship of that year in regards to the Baltic states. This will allow the reader to have a better understanding of the political climate in which these momentous developments in the field of overt intelligence occurred.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union on Sunday 22nd June 1941, Britain leapt to the USSR’s side. Churchill felt great relief that Britain was not alone in the fight against Hitler. From the start of this new era of Anglo-Soviet comradeship, Britain found herself in a difficult position regarding the Baltic states’ independence. When Churchill spoke to the British people via the BBC that evening, his understandably rousing speech spoke of ‘Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which

¹⁷ Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> FRPS (staff), HC Deb 07 August 1941 vol 373 cc2141-2W and Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> FRPS, HC Deb 19 November 1941 vol 376 cc278-9

¹⁸ Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> FRPS, HC Deb 23 July 1941 vol 373 cc861-2

¹⁹ Christopher Brewin, ‘Research in a global context: a discussion of Toynbee’s legacy’ in *Review of International Studies* (1992), p.122

their fathers have tilled from time immemorial'. The fact that Russian soldiers were standing in Eastern Poland and the Baltic states had clearly been forgotten by Churchill, to the dismay of Eden. The Soviets would be sure to point to the speech as it gave, at least, tacit recognition to the USSR's 1941 frontiers. This, however, seemed of little consequence at a time when Britain had finally found an ally with the potential to match the might of the *Wehrmacht*. The British knew that they had no prospect of defeating Germany without either the USSR or USA as an ally; even then this was no guarantee of victory. Therefore any previous qualms over joining forces with a Communist state were simply swept aside as Churchill famously told his private secretary on the night prior to the invasion: 'I have only one preoccupation, the destruction of Hitler. If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least one favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons'. The vital importance of the USSR as an ally would colour all future political negotiations between Britain and the Soviet Union. The alliance was simply too valuable to Britain to be risked through political disagreements. The Red Army's masses would face the bulk of the *Wehrmacht* throughout the rest of the war, something which the modest British forces could never have contemplated.²⁰

On 20th June the War Cabinet discussed the matter of a possible German invasion of the Soviet Union and, although it was agreed that every possible support should be given to the Soviets, it looked as if this would not amount to much. The general feeling was that the Soviet Union would soon be defeated. The notoriously anti-Soviet COS felt there was little chance of Soviet success and many in Whitehall predicted that the Germans would be victorious within in six weeks.²¹ Despite the negativity in Whitehall and Downing Street it soon became clear that even though the Soviet Union had suffered immense casualties, including over three million captured in the first year of the conflict, Germany was also paying a very high price in men and material for her territorial gains in the East. She had suffered 680,000 casualties by the end of October and it was now unlikely that she would reach Moscow before the Russian winter.²²

²⁰ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), pp.56-57

²¹ Ibid, pp.54-55

²² Brian Taylor, Barbarossa to Berlin Vol I (Staplehurst 2003), p.158

Churchill immediately pressed the War Cabinet for military supplies for the Soviets and, although he succeeded in obtaining cabinet approval for the initiative, it was achieved against the advice of the COS, who thought any military supplies sent to the Soviets would soon be lost when the Red Army was defeated. A military mission was dispatched to Moscow under the leadership of the anti-Soviet Lieutenant-General F. N. Mason-Macfarlane, who soon upset the Soviets with his rough manner. As the British had little to offer, the position required a general of patience and tact, qualities Macfarlane did not possess. SOE also established itself in Moscow with a mission under the command of Colonel Hill. Although very few covert operations took place during the war in the East, this was primarily due to the September 1941 agreement between SOE and the NKVD. Although the Soviets predictably failed to keep to their side of the agreement, the British did so (until May 1944 at least) and this naturally helped to ensure the Anglo-Soviet alliance faced few awkward moments.²³

Any discussion which could possibly lead to the acceptance to the Soviet post-war frontiers claims was avoided, if at all possible. The German invasion of the USSR allowed the Soviet Union to argue that, at the time of the invasion, the Baltic Soviet Socialist Republics were legitimate members of the Soviet Union. As Britain had not recognised these annexations in 1940, Stalin would consistently push the British government for recognition of the Soviet Union's legitimacy over the Baltic states.

Churchill sent Stalin a telegram on 7th July 1941 in which he stated that Britain would offer 'every possible help in the struggle against Germany'. Stalin replied with the suggestion that there should be a mutual assistance agreement between the two countries and a declaration that neither country would make a separate peace with Germany. The War Cabinet, however, was uncertain, and rejected Churchill's suggestion that the treaty should mention the post-war frontiers. The idea of a treaty was therefore dropped and a joint declaration was deemed the best way to appease Stalin. In his draft reply to Stalin Churchill described the official British position towards Soviet demands for the recognition of their 1941 frontiers, a policy which was followed throughout the war. 'You will of course understand that at the victorious Peace Conference in which the United States will certainly be a leading party, our line would be that the territorial frontiers will have to be settled in accordance with the wishes of the people

²³ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, pp.58-59

who live there and on general ethnographical lines, and secondly, that these units, when established, must be free to choose their own form of government and systems of life, so long as they do not interfere with the similar rights of neighbouring peoples'. This draft was removed from Churchill's reply to Stalin and its lofty sentiments would, as the war years passed, become unrealistic due to the political might of the Soviet Union. In short political questions were to be avoided for as long as possible and quite understandably the war against Germany was to be the main focus of British policy towards the Soviet Union.²⁴

In response to fears that a German defeat in the East would lead to the Soviet domination of post-war Europe, Churchill stated the war in the East was just a question of 'killing Huns' and that all political questions should be left until the post-war period. 'As long as they (the Russians) go on', he stated, 'it does not matter where the front line lies'. This would soon prove to be a completely unrealistic attitude to take towards the USSR.²⁵

At the end of July Roosevelt's advisor, Harry Hopkins, went to Moscow to assess the best way of assisting the USSR. Hopkins returned to the USA with Churchill on the *Prince of Wales* where Churchill met Roosevelt in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. Roosevelt agreed with Churchill that supplies had to be sent to Russia if the front was to be maintained and so, on 12th August, Churchill and Roosevelt sent a joint message to Stalin, in which they promised to send the very maximum of supplies. Beaverbrook was to be sent to Moscow to organise the supplies while Eden would also go to Moscow to try and smooth over the political issues. On 14th August 1941 Churchill and Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter, which the Soviet Union would later adhere to. Parts two and three of the Charter would be seen by the population of the Baltic states as a declaration by the western powers of their determination to return the Baltic states to independence following the defeat of Hitler's regime, for the Allies had not hitherto recognised the Soviet annexations of the Baltic states.²⁶ By 4th September the Soviets were regularly requesting a second front in either France or the Balkans, which would draw approximately 40 German divisions away from the Eastern front. This would take some of the pressure off the Soviet armies fighting for their lives in the Ukraine and around Leningrad. Churchill, however, knew that at this time this was

²⁴ Ibid, pp.67-68

²⁵ Ibid, p.69

²⁶ Ibid, pp.71-72

impossible.²⁷ Beaverbrook's successful mission to Moscow guaranteed the Soviets 400 aircraft per month and 500 tanks. This was to be achieved by diverting part of Britain's lend lease allocation. Beaverbrook referred to the Atlantic Charter when he informed Stalin that he favoured a treaty that would extend into the post-war period and, most importantly for the Baltic states, he raised no objection when Stalin insisted that Britain should recognise the 1941 Soviet frontiers. Similarly Eden did not raise any objection when he heard these remarks, and suggested that they were an indication that Stalin was anxious to improve Anglo-Soviet relations.²⁸

Stalin's message to Churchill on 8th November once again raised the subject of war aims and the post-war settlement, the two subjects that Stalin felt were the principal causes of friction between the two countries. At a meeting of the War Cabinet Churchill stated that he had already informed Maisky that he would not go beyond the terms of the Atlantic Charter. Eden stated the Russians feared that the Americans and British would make a deal behind their backs, and they should be given assurances this was not the case. Eden informed Cripps that there could be no discussion of peace terms with the Soviet Union because the British government had already agreed with the Americans not to do so. The United States and Britain were both bound by the Atlantic Charter and therefore Britain could not make a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union on the subject of post-war frontiers.²⁹

The FO believed Stalin was concerned that he would be excluded from the post-war peace table, and that he was very anxious about Soviet security after the war. The FO had heard from Roosevelt's special envoy to Europe, Averell Harriman, that the US government favoured an agreement that would cover the post-war period. Therefore the FO felt that an agreement with the Soviet Union on the post-war settlement would solve many of the outstanding problems between the two countries, while at the same time meet with US approval. The views of the FO and the Prime Minister differed, with the PM wishing to postpone all discussions regarding a post-war settlement until after the war. On 21st November Churchill suggested to Stalin that Eden should go to Moscow to discuss the

²⁷ Ibid, p.73

²⁸ Ibid, pp.77-78

²⁹ Ibid, pp.106-07

political issues, to which Stalin agreed.³⁰ The FO position paper that had been prepared for Eden stated that the central issues concerned post-war frontiers: ‘They want us to approve their annexations of the Baltic states and Eastern Poland... It will be difficult at this stage to give the Soviet Government much satisfaction on these points, and presumably we shall have to decline for the present to go beyond the first and second clauses of the Atlantic Charter’.³¹

It is clear, however, that, if relations were truly to improve, some form of agreement would need to be reached regarding the Soviet claims to the Baltic states. Even when defeat seemed inevitable, the Soviet Union would continually push the West to recognise the Baltic states as member states of the Soviet Union.

A significant factor in the breakdown of the Anglo-Soviet alliance negotiations in 1939 had been the British refusal to accede to the Soviet demands for the Baltic states. Conversely a major factor in Stalin’s decision to conclude an agreement with Nazi Germany was Hitler’s willingness to allow the Soviet Union to occupy the Baltic states and Eastern Poland. Cripps had always felt that the Baltic states should be sacrificed in order to safeguard the Anglo-Soviet alliance. Although Eden was coming round to this idea, he was not yet ready to back it in the War Cabinet. Before he left London Eden was easily persuaded by the War Cabinet on 4th December that he should not to allow himself to be drawn into discussions on post-war frontiers.³²

When Eden met Stalin in Moscow on 16th December, Stalin immediately presented Eden with the draft of an agreement on Soviet frontiers. The main points were the recognition of the 1941 frontiers including the Baltic states and Finland, the annexation of Petsamo and Memel, a modified Curzon Line as the frontier with Poland and the transfer of East Prussia to Poland. Eden replied that it was impossible for him to agree to these requests until they had been examined by the War Cabinet. When, on the next day, Stalin demanded an agreement on the Baltic states and Finland, a shocked Eden replied that ‘there are no independent Baltic

³⁰ Ibid, pp.108-09

³¹ PRO CAB 66/20/11, War Cabinet Memoranda, Forthcoming discussions with the Soviet Government, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 29th November 1941

³² PRO CAB 65/24/11, War Cabinet Minutes, Confidential Annexes, Minute 3: USSR, 4th December 1941

states; in fact they do form a part of the USSR'. The British government was not able to grant *de jure* recognition to this undeniable fact because of an agreement with the Americans not to discuss post-war boundaries in Europe. Stalin raged: 'We are in the midst of the greatest war in history and I think these nice formulae about *de jure* and *de facto* etc., are rather out of place'. Stalin then threatened to postpone the signing of the general agreements. The third day's meeting was more cordial although Stalin refused to budge from his demands. It was agreed that no agreement should be signed on this area as the War Cabinet had instructed Eden not to make any pledges to the Russians on frontiers. Stalin did say, however, that he understood why a second front could not be launched, given the serious situation developing in the Far East.³³

Eden had realised that Stalin's request for the USSR and Britain to 'work for the reconstruction of Europe after the war with full regard to the interests of the USSR and the restoration of its frontiers violated by Hitlerite aggression' was another thinly veiled demand from Stalin for the recognition of the USSR's 1941 frontiers. On his return to London, Eden strongly recommended that the Soviets' 1941 frontiers should be recognised. Churchill, however, was unmoved, stating to Eden that the frontiers 'were acquired by acts of aggression in shameful collusion with Hitler' and their recognition would be 'contrary to all the principles for which we are fighting this war and would dishonour our cause'. He had no sympathy for the Russians' position, declaring that the Soviets 'entered the war only when attacked by Germany, having previously shown themselves utterly indifferent to our fate, and, indeed they added to our burdens in our worst danger'. Churchill believed that after the war the Soviets would need the British more than the British would need them. It was important to stick to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and allow the future of the Baltic states to be decided by 'freely and fairly conducted plebiscites'.³⁴ Eden ordered the FO to examine the Soviet 1936 constitution to see if it offered any protection for Baltic autonomy. Unsurprisingly the response was negative.³⁵

³³ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, pp.111-12

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.113

³⁵ PRO FO 371/32740, The Future of the Baltic States, Internal FO letter from Deputy Under-Secretary Sir Orme Sargent to Anthony Eden, 28th April 1942

Eden was frustrated that he had to find a solution that pleased both the ‘exaggeratedly moral’ United States, and the ‘amoral’ Soviet Union on the issue of the 1941 frontiers. Writing to Halifax in Washington, he stated that it was impossible to convince the Soviet Union of the British government’s goodwill unless she recognised her 1941 frontiers in Finland, the Baltic states, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. It was likely that, at the end of the war, the Red Army would be in Germany and there would be very little ‘we could do or say’ to affect the issue. Eden’s greatest concern was that if the Soviets’ request for recognition of the 1941 frontiers was turned down, Anglo-Soviet relations would be in ruins. He told Halifax that the main problem was to convince the United States.³⁶

The Foreign Office Builds the FRPS’ Reputation

During the Second World War, Germany’s occupation of the Baltic states raised several concerns within the FO in London. What fate would befall these states following Germany’s defeat? What interests did the Soviets have in the region? However, the collection of suitable intelligence to assist in addressing such questions was problematic owing to the FO’s decision to not procure covert intelligence from within territory perceived to be in the direct Soviet sphere.³⁷ The maintenance of the alliance with the Soviet Union was vitally important to the British war effort. Moreover, the risk of incurring the ire of the ever-suspicious Soviet government over intelligence issues would have been foolhardy. The British therefore had to find an alternative source of intelligence that would not jeopardise Anglo-Soviet relations.

The FO decision had a profound impact on the type of intelligence that could be obtained from the Baltic states, but the FRPS provided a workable solution. Press intelligence, though not considered as revealing as covert intelligence, provided enough insight into the Baltic situation to allow the FO to make informed decisions. Throughout the war, the FRPS gained the trust of the FO, organised its operations effectively, and developed a working relationship

³⁶ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.114

³⁷ Keith Jeffery, MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service (London 2010), p.554. For works which highlight the limited involvement of covert intelligence in the Soviet sphere, see Frank Hinsley, British Intelligence in the Second World War V/II (Bath 1981); Bradley F. Smith, Sharing Secrets with Stalin (Kansas 1996); Stephen Dorril, MI6, Fifty Years of Special Operations (London 2000); and Dónal O’Sullivan, Dealing with the Devil, Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War (New York 2010).

with the FO's Reconstruction Problems Committee and its successors. In particular, the FRPS 'Baltic States Section' played a vital role in influencing British policy decisions over the future of the occupied Baltic States.³⁸

Knowledge of the Soviet Union was surprisingly limited within the FO. The FO staff who did have a background in Russian affairs seldom had an intimate knowledge of the Baltic states. The head of the FO Baltic States Department, Armine Dew, was in demand throughout the Northern Department, so much so that he declared in September 1941 that 'we here hardly have the time to collect and collate any material there may be'.³⁹ The PID Russian Section was under the direction of the Russophile, Brigadier Skaife, who admired many of the achievements of the USSR.⁴⁰ His section supplied news in concise reports, but rarely in the detail required by the FO. As there was no specialist Baltic states section in the PID, Skaife's small section covered the whole of the USSR including the Baltic states. Skaife's fortunes would follow that of his department for, at the outbreak of war, many government departments preferred to deal with the more established PID rather than with the academics in the newly formed FRPS. The PID would, however, suffer from a lack of intelligence due to the aforementioned FO agreement with the Soviets, which left Skaife hopelessly out of touch with events in the Baltic states and Russia. This was highlighted on 9th October 1941 by Cecil Parrott, the head of the of SPRB, in his General Report on the Press Reading Bureau where

³⁸ For related discussions about the importance of wartime press intelligence, see Robert H. Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe', Journal of Contemporary History 21 (1986): pp.539-58; C. G McKay, From Information to Intrigue, Studies in Secret Service Based on the Swedish Experience, 1939-45 (London 1993); and Isabelle Tombs, 'Scrutinizing France: Collecting and Using Newspaper Intelligence during World War II', Intelligence and National Security 17.2 (2002) pp.105-26. For related discussions about the formation of British foreign policy during wartime, see Richard Higgott and Diane Stone, 'The limits of influence: foreign policy think tanks in Britain and the USA', Review of International Studies 20.1 (1994) pp.15-34; Andras D. Ban (ed.), Pax Britannica, Wartime Foreign Office Documents Regarding Plans for a Postbellum East Central Europe (Columbia, 1997); and Julian Lewis, Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence, 1942-47 (London, 2002).

³⁹ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Skaife at the PID Russian Section, 25th September 1941

⁴⁰ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), p.51

he stated that Brigadier Skaife had mentioned, in a somewhat desperate tone, that he 'would be grateful for any information about the morale of the USSR, also of conditions in the Baltic states and Finland. The Soviet press was not obtainable in England, nor was anybody reporting on it'.⁴¹ It is also quite clear that Skaife was more interested in the Russian rather than German press.

Brigadier Skaife was a military rather than a political specialist and was not therefore the most suitable person to judge political developments in the Baltic states. To his credit he would recognise this and go on to liaise closely with, and ultimately defer matters concerning the Baltic states to, the head of the FRPS Baltic States Section, Elisabeth Pares.⁴² By taking this action Skaife improved the analysis of intelligence regarding the Baltic states for the British government, particularly in the years 1941/42 when lingering doubts remained in other departments over the relevance of intelligence derived from the enemy press. In addition Skaife would liaise closely with the FRPS in his capacity as editor of the FO Soviet Union handbook.⁴³ The PID Weekly Intelligence Summary Section did receive the same dispatches as the FRPS from the SPRB, until its amalgamation with the FRPS in April 1943. The PID Weekly Intelligence Summary Section analytical skills did not, however, match the standards of the FRPS, once the latter had been fully established in 1941.

Thus only the FRPS had the potential to solve the FO's problem of maintaining an accurate picture of the events in the German-occupied Baltic states. The FRPS would receive, via the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau, newspapers and cuttings of the enemy and neutral press that concerned the Ostland as well as any other material the Stockholm Embassy could obtain. The traditionalists in the FO, such as Geoffrey Wilson, were dismissive of the idea of obtaining intelligence via this non-secret route. In his October 1941 memorandum Parrott helped to dispel the suspicions of the FO and other government departments regarding published intelligence: 'It is often objected that the German and occupied press contains nothing of interest, as it is subjected to the strictest possible censorship and would not be

⁴¹ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, General Report on Press Reading Bureau, 9th October 1941, p.7

⁴² PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Skaife at the PID to Dew at the FO Northern Department, 19th October 1941

⁴³ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.158

exported if it contained anything of use for the enemy. Experience has proved the opposite. While revelations of great significance are seldom to be found, the sum total of material available, if scientifically read and treated, often provides a remarkably revealing and coherent picture of the conditions in occupied territories. Moreover the press of the few surviving neutral states, especially those whose frontiers are contiguous with Germany, often contains most useful indications of the trend of opinion in Germany itself'.⁴⁴ Such a statement would have been music to the ears of the head of the FRPS, Arnold Toynbee. Indeed Parrott's memoranda, together with the glowing endorsement given to Eden by the February 1941 government enquiry into the role of the FRPS, would help to ensure that the FRPS became established as the British government's main source of intelligence regarding the German occupied Baltic states. Ultimately the FRPS would be absorbed into the FO in 1943, as it had become unthinkable that such an important intelligence organisation should remain outside direct FO control.

Eden's patronage of the FRPS was vital to its survival, following its dark days of 1940. The State Secretary must have recognised the importance of having an organisation that could read the enemy press and provide detailed reports for his office and the government at large. It was Eden who had requested the formation of the SPRB in September 1940, another sign of his regard for this type of intelligence gathering.⁴⁵ The FRPS could not have survived without the SPRB's ability to regularly obtain and supply intelligence from the enemy and neutral press.

Another clear sign that Eden supported the FRPS occurred in early 1941 when he ordered the FO to undertake a second government enquiry into the activities of the FRPS. This enquiry was led by R. A. Butler, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. On 11th February 1941 Eden asked that Butler's findings be forwarded to Arthur Greenwood, head of the newly formed Cabinet Committee for Reconstruction Problems.⁴⁶ The State

⁴⁴ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Parrott Memorandum, 9th October 1941, p.1

⁴⁵ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, letter from Mallet at the British Legation Stockholm to State Secretary Anthony Eden, 16th October 1941, p.1

⁴⁶ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from R. A. Butler at the FO to Arthur

Secretary clearly wanted the FRPS to be involved in post-war planning. Butler's report was also circulated to all FO departments, thus ensuring that the entire FO could no longer be in any doubt of the value of the FRPS.

Butler's report on the work of the FRPS was arguably the single most important factor in helping the FRPS to win its battle to gain credibility with the established order in the FO and Cabinet. Butler found that 'the work of the FRPS is of high quality; it provides an extensive and up-to-date reference service and is staffed by persons well equipped to make use of this material'. Butler then went on to highlight the chief problem which had hitherto hampered the effectiveness of the FRPS, namely that 'this reservoir of knowledge should be better known and more freely utilised by the Foreign Office, by the Dominions Office and High Commissioners, and by other Government Departments'.⁴⁷

Butler concluded that 'in the case of the Foreign Office, direct contact should be developed between the heads of sections of the Foreign Research and Press Service and the heads of departments in the Foreign Office'. This recommendation would greatly benefit the head of the FRPS Baltic States Section, Elisabeth Pares, in forming an excellent working relationship with Armine Dew, the head of the FO Baltic States Department. Butler also recommended that 'the Foreign Research and Press Service heads of sections should be given guidance from time to time as to matters of special concern to the Foreign Office in the parts of the world for which they are responsible, and as regards the general line of policy of His Majesty's Government. For their guidance they can be shown telegrams and print, within measure, and if required, be told the substance of confidential documents, but these points must be left to the discretion of heads of departments. They must on no account take copies of telegrams or other secret documents out of the Foreign Office. A room will be placed at their disposal inside the building for the purposes of their work'.

Greenwood Chairman of the Cabinet Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 11th February 1941

⁴⁷ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Result of Government Enquiry into FRPS, conducted by R. A. Butler, 8th February 1941

The latter recommendation was of great benefit to the FPRS as it granted them permission to view secret documents. However, it also highlighted the problem of the relative isolation of the FRPS from government, given its location in Oxford. This was a major factor in the FO decision to relocate the FRPS to London in 1943, which allowed the FORD to have direct access to secret documents. As outlined in Butler's report, Elisabeth Pares' Baltic States Section would receive, throughout 1942, FO guidance and requests for specialist papers from Dew, via the Northern Department. The FO made extensive use of the undoubted analytical talent of Elisabeth Pares, as she provided them with an array of highly detailed memoranda which could not be acquired elsewhere, given the restrictions imposed on gathering intelligence from within the Soviet sphere.

The Butler report went on to say that 'departments should not hesitate to draw upon the Foreign Research and Press Service for memoranda or notes on any general or particular subjects of which the Foreign Research and Press Service are likely to have knowledge'. Such glowing findings from a government enquiry, written by a leading FO member, must have influenced the opinions of FO officials, as well as the members of the Greenwood Committee, as to the value of the FRPS work. The FRPS must have been viewed by the FO as an organisation which could solve its deficiencies in intelligence analysis of German occupied Europe. Most importantly it would solve the FO's lack of knowledge of events in the German occupied Baltic states.

Butler described the FRPS weekly Review of the Foreign Press as 'a valuable piece of work', even though there were delays in receiving material. Arrangements were made to give it a wider distribution. The FRPS was told to 'continue its work for peace aims in touch with the Cabinet Committee and with Sir George Crystal, who is coordinating work and collecting material for that Committee'. Nevertheless Butler stated that 'the sole aim of the Foreign Research and Press Service work, however, should not be peace aims; their principal work should continue to be in connection with the press reviews and special memoranda and notes to help the policy of His Majesty's Government'. Crucially Butler added that 'the FRPS will be given assistance in securing the foreign press at the earliest possible date and in the co-ordination of its work with other departments'.

The recommendations drawn by Butler would be fully implemented throughout the rest of the war, namely that the FRPS should be heavily utilised by the FO departments, involved in post-war planning, and produce press reviews, special memoranda and notes to help the British government in its formation of policy. In regards to the Baltic states the FO would closely adhere to these recommendations, so that by the turn of 1942 the FRPS had become the British government's leading authority on the Baltic states.

Anthony Eden must have found the results of Butler's enquiry agreeable for he requested Butler to forward his findings to Arthur Greenwood, the Labour MP, who headed the newly formed Reconstruction Committee. In his 11th February 1941 covering letter to Greenwood, Butler stated 'as you will see from this note, there is undoubtedly a vast store of knowledge in the Foreign Research and Press Service organisation which should be of great value to His Majesty's Government. The extent to which this knowledge can be used is primarily a matter for the Foreign Office, since the organisation is carried on our vote, and does minister first and foremost to our needs. But undoubtedly many other departments, including your own, may well find that its services can be of greater use to them than they have anticipated (a reference to the British government's departments' traditional prejudicial view of non-secret intelligence). I hope therefore that this note together with the enclosed set of copies of the Weekly Review may be brought to the attention of all those officials of your Department who are likely to have use for the services of the Foreign Research and Press Service and through lack of information may not have had their attention drawn to the value of this organisation'.⁴⁸

Butler did, however, outline a proposal to monitor the progress of the FRPS for six months 'during which the functions of the Foreign Research and Press Service, as outlined in this paper will be carefully watched with a view to seeing whether the Service, as at present organised, has justified itself'.⁴⁹ On 22nd August 1941, following the expiry of this trial, G.W.

⁴⁸ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from R. A. Butler at the FO to Arthur Greenwood Chairman of the Cabinet Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 11th February 1941

⁴⁹ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Result of Government Enquiry into FRPS, conducted by R. A. Butler, 8th February 1941

Harrison of the FO wrote to T. Daish of the Committee for Reconstruction Problems to inform him of the FO verdict on the FRPS. Harrison stated that ‘our own general conclusion is that the work of the Foreign Research and Press Service has a definite day to day value. In addition, of course, we anticipate using the organisation largely when the time comes for peace making’. Harrison finished by asking for the Committee to submit its views on the FRPS work.⁵⁰

Daish replied on 2nd September that ‘Mr Greenwood has found the work of the Foreign Research and Press Service – both its press survey and its political and economic papers- of very substantial help in the preliminary survey of European reconstruction problems’.⁵¹ The FRPS was now seen as a valuable member of the British government’s information gathering network and would play an invaluable role in post-war reconstruction planning. There is little doubt that Eden had pressed for this outcome.

By the end of 1941 there were clear signs that Eden was championing the work of the FRPS in the House of Commons. On 30th July 1941 he was asked by Geoffrey Mander of the Liberal Party whether the FRPS ‘includes amongst its duties the study of peace aims and world reconstruction after the war’? Eden replied that the FRPS ‘are engaged in collecting and collating material of all kinds, including that bearing upon the problems of post-war reconstruction’.⁵² Similarly, in reply to an enquiry on 19th November 1941 from the Labour MP Philip Noel-Barker whether Eden was satisfied with the work (of the FRPS), Eden stated that ‘the work they do covers a large number of Departments. They do research work, and they supply information. For instance, they do translations from the foreign press, which

⁵⁰ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from G.W. Harrison at the FO to T. Daish at the Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 22nd August 1941

⁵¹ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from T. Daish of the Committee for Reconstruction Problems to G.W. Harrison at the FO, 2nd September 1941

⁵² Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> FRPS, HC Deb 30 July 1941 vol 373 cc1377

Departments must have, and if they did not do it, I am satisfied that an organisation would have to be set up in other Departments'.⁵³

The FRPS Organisation

Before embarking on a closer study of the relationship between the FRPS and the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems, it is important to examine how the FRPS viewed itself and in what way the organisation believed it could contribute to the war effort.

Correspondence between Professor Toynbee and Sir Quintin Hill in August 1941 revealed these views and beliefs. Sir Quintin arrived at the Office of the War Cabinet to work on American issues for Sir George Crystal, the Secretary of the Reconstruction Problems Committee. On 22nd August Toynbee sent Hill some relevant papers that Hill had requested.⁵⁴ On 29th August Hill again wrote to Toynbee asking him 'to clear up a rather blank spot in my mind on the subject of the Royal Institute and FRPS. I have not had anything to do with this Office until quite recently, so that not having grown up with it there are a number of points I do not know. Those on which I should like information are the following'. Importantly one of these requests was for 'a sketch of the functions which FRPS particularly performs and for whom are they performed?' Hill also requested a list of the staff of the FRPS and Chatham House.⁵⁵

On 30th August Toynbee replied with an attached memorandum concerning the activities of the FRPS and a list of the staff of the FRPS. Toynbee declared that 'the work of the FRPS is conducted under the conditions laid down by its Royal Charter for the work of the Institute, that it is not to engage in propaganda. A special arrangement has, however, been made with the Ministry of Information and the BBC under which members of staff of the FRPS may, as

⁵³ Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> FRPS, HC Deb 19 November 1941 vol 376 cc278-9

⁵⁴ PRO CAB 117/79, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs: Internal Aspects 1941, Letter from Arnold Toynbee Director of the FRPS to Sir Quintin at the Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 22nd August 1941

⁵⁵ PRO CAB 117/79, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs: International Aspects 1941, Letter from Sir Quintin at the Committee for Reconstruction Problems to Arnold Toynbee Director of the FRPS, 29th August 1941

individuals, take part in broadcasting or writing for the press'.⁵⁶ This was of the utmost importance to Toynbee as it allowed the FRPS to maintain its scholarly integrity by avoiding propaganda work.

The staff of the FRPS (apart from the Library, Press Cuttings and Administrative departments) was divided into sections. There was also a small section which channelled all enquires and another which organised the research work. The remainder were on a geographical basis, the countries being grouped in larger or smaller numbers according to the requirements of staff and other considerations. One of the geographical sections dealt with the British Empire, including the Dominions and India, so that the organisation covered the whole world and not merely foreign countries.

The work of the FRPS fell into four main parts the Review of the Foreign Press, Standing Orders from Government Departments, Enquiries and Research. In reference to the Review of the Foreign Press Toynbee declared that: 'Foreign and Dominion newspapers are received in large numbers mainly direct from the countries of publication where they are ordered on instructions from the Foreign Office. In addition to newspapers much other material is received and the press is read in the light of these'. In preparing the Review of the Foreign Press, senior members of the staff were responsible for the selection of topics and parts of the actual writing, while the preliminary reading and the making and filling of cuttings were as far as possible dealt with by juniors. The junior staff and the unpaid volunteers employed for these purposes have in the course of many months' work attained a considerable degree of skill. Toynbee stated that; 'A body of material has thus been collected and classified covering every kind of activity bearing on the war. All the senior members of the staff concerned in the work of the Review have other duties in connection with research or answering of enquires and some of them have administrative responsibilities. It is found that their supervision and contributions add materially to the value of the Review. As the Review is analytical and interpretative and draws together information from the press of all countries on the topics with which it deals, the expert knowledge, linguistic, political and economic, of senior members of the staff is essential for it. On the other hand the reading, cutting and filing of the

⁵⁶ PRO CAB 117/79, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs: International Aspects 1941, Foreign Research and Press Service, Outline of Organisation, by Arnold Toynbee, 30th August 1941, pp.1-4

foreign press and the study of the other current materials are necessary for the other types of work'.

The Review of the Foreign Press circulated originally only among government departments and organisations such as the BBC, but, with the approval of the Foreign Office, the circulation was widened, and the review of the press of Germany, Italy and enemy occupied countries reached most of the leading newspapers and to a certain number of other non-official recipients. The circulation of the other reviews was more restricted, but these were also sent to a few newspapers. The press and other non-official recipients were sent the review on the condition that in any use that was made of it the source of the information must not be quoted.

Arrangements were made at different dates for supplying regularly to various government departments material drawn from the foreign press which was either too bulky or too special a character to be included in the Weekly Review. The FRPS also undertook to answer enquires regarding international affairs and use was made of this service regularly by more than 20 government departments and from time to time by a considerable number of other government departments or bodies working for the government. The answers varied from brief telephone messages to substantial memoranda.

In terms of the FRPS Research activities Toynbee declared that the work undertaken by the other departments of FRPS 'sometimes involves research into the background of current international questions and some of the more important of the special requests for memoranda have necessitated prolonged and highly specialised work. The research work of the FRPS is organised in such a way that a continuous watch is kept on the principal topics of international affairs and a Research Committee, with a number of sub-committees, has been constituted to study such materials as are likely to be required for Government purposes during the war and more particularly in connection with war-aims and reconstruction. Within each field a number of short statements (about six typewritten pages) have been or are to be prepared giving the main points of each important problem. In addition to these short statements longer documents are prepared as time and staff allow in which a detailed justification of the short statements is worked out.

In the research work, as in the current work, much use is made, besides the newspaper press, of official and unofficial information from British and foreign sources, and personal contact is systematically maintained with several Government departments and with individuals who are able to communicate valuable information. Some of this information thus received is secret, and strict arrangements for its security are in force’.

From Toynbee’s account it is quite clear that the FRPS Baltic States Section and the FRPS Russian Research section would make an invaluable contribution to the formation of British government policy, as outlined in Butler’s enquiry of February 1941. The FRPS/FORD research abilities would prove useful in helping to formulate wartime policy as well as influencing the British government to produce a realistic post-war stratagem for continental Europe. The FO, together with the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems and its successor from late 1943, the Post Hostilities Planning Staff (PHPS), would all be heavily influenced by the papers produced by the FRPS/FORD. It would have been clear to the FO and Reconstruction Committee that, in matters concerning the Baltic states, the FRPS Baltic States Section would prove to be of inestimable value, given its prestigious output.

Toynbee’s FRPS staff list, issued in May 1941— a month before Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, shows that Elisabeth Pares headed both the Baltic States Section and the influential Enquiries Section⁵⁷ Elisabeth Pares would, on her own, out produce the two other ‘Eastern’ FRPS Sections of Poland and the USSR, which had two and five members respectively. The large number of papers produced by Elisabeth Pares is just as much an indication of the FO’s interest in the German occupation of the Baltic states, as it was an indication of the SPRB’s ability to procure intelligence from the region.

The Relationship between FRPS and the Reconstruction Committee

On 2nd January 1941 Toynbee wrote to Sir George Crystal, Secretary of the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems, enclosing a short note concerning the work of the FRPS Research Committees and a list of memoranda that the FRPS had hitherto produced.

⁵⁷ PRO CAB 117/79, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs: International Aspects 1941, Foreign Research and Press Service, Staff List, 5th May 1941

The Reconstruction Committee was placed on the distribution list for the Weekly Review of the Foreign Press.⁵⁸

The FRPS Research Committee was comprised of a staff of ten, eight of whom were professors, of whom Toynbee was one. Professor Paton was the chairman. There were eight Research Sub-Committees covering: International Organisation; Social and Economic Reconstruction; Disposal of Raw Material Surpluses; Minorities; France and French Possessions; The German State and the Nazi Regime; Germany: Regional Studies; and Regional New Orders. The Regional New Order Sub-Committee was organised into ten regional research sections: The Western Hemisphere Plan; The Japanese Plan for Greater East Asia; The German Plan for Europe; The Russian Order for Eastern Europe; The Latin Bloc; The Danubian Countries, States and Peoples; Internal Development of the Arab World; Political and Strategic Interest in the Eastern Mediterranean; Poland; and Non-Self-Governing Dependencies.⁵⁹

The Russian Order for Eastern Europe and Poland Research Sections consisted of the same nine members and included Elisabeth Pares, the head of the FRPS Baltic States Section. As the same staff conducted research into both regions, this was an early indication that Poland

⁵⁸ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Arnold Toynbee at the FRPS to Sir George Crystal Secretary of the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems, 2nd January 1941

⁵⁹ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, List of Staff of the FRPS Research Committee and Research Sub-Committees, 2nd January 1941, pp.1-4 The eight Research Sub-Committee's was staffed by the following number of personnel: International Organisation (20 members), Social and Economic Reconstruction (seven members), Disposal of Raw Material Surpluses (eight members), Minorities (seven members), France and French Possessions (seven members), The German State and the Nazi Regime (two members), Germany: Regional Studies (one member) and Regional New Orders. The Regional New Order Sub-Committee: The Western Hemisphere Plan (six members), The Japanese Plan for Greater East Asia (nine members), The German Plan for Europe (11 members), The Russian Order for Eastern Europe (nine members), The Latin Bloc (four members), The Danubian Countries, States and Peoples (nine members) Internal Development of the Arab World (five members), Political and Strategic Interest in the Eastern Mediterranean (eight members), Poland (nine members) and Non-Self-Governing Dependencies (17 members).

was viewed by the FRPS as, at the very least, a part of the Soviet sphere. The Baltic states were therefore viewed as being part of the post-war Soviet Union as Elisabeth Pares, the expert on Baltic states, was located in the Russian Order for Eastern Europe Research Section.

On 8th February 1941 the FRPS wrote to Crystal with the agreed draft list of research topics that they were to work on for the Reconstruction Committee. The list was described as ‘flexible’ and could ‘be adapted to changing circumstances and additional subjects can be fitted in if this is desired’.⁶⁰

The list of research topic titles was dated 13th February 1941 and included: Problems of Security; The Structure of International Order; International Problems of Economic and Social Organisation; The Implications of British Treaty Obligations and Other Commitments, and finally, Regional Political Problems. These topics were distributed to the relevant FRPS research sections, the chief category being Regional Political Problems, which was broken down into regional topics. The issues that were tackled in relation to the USSR and the Baltic states included foreign relations both political and economic; the USSR’s role as a power in Europe and Asia; the objectives of Russian policy and her frontier problems; and the role the USSR played in occupied Poland, the Baltic, Turkey and the Straits. Many of the other questions covered in other areas would, in fact, be relevant to the Baltic states, such as the effect of German withdrawal and the ensuing economic questions.⁶¹

There were many signs that, from the outset of the Anglo-Soviet alliance in 1941, government departments regarded a return to a democratically governed Baltic states as an unrealistic aim. Examples included the FO reduction of covert intelligence gathering from the area, the fact that Baltic states was placed in the FRPS Russian Research Section and that the topics given to the Reconstruction Committee to discuss reflected an expected Soviet

⁶⁰ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Ashton-Gwatkin at the FRPS to Sir George Crystal Secretary of the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems, 8th February 1941

⁶¹ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, FRPS Research Topics - Draft List, 13th February 1941, pp.1-4

domination of the Baltic states. The less significant members of the government had clearly given up hope on the moral argument for the independence of the Baltic states and appreciated the political reality that, if the Baltic states were ever to be reconstituted, this would only occur following a Soviet victory. Therefore a return to a democratic government, in the western sense of the word, would be out of the question. It would take until 1943 for those in high office on both sides of the Atlantic to bow unanimously to the inevitability of the future Soviet domination of the Baltic states.⁶² The FRPS also believed that Poland was destined to belong to the Soviet sphere, a long time before the British government would recognise this fact.

It was important that Greenwood received R. A. Butler's glowing testimony to the FRPS's research ability early in its existence and just two days after the Cabinet. This meant that any doubts the Reconstruction Committee would have held over the use of the FRPS intelligence, and the ability of its staff, would have been swept away at this crucial moment.

The Reconstruction Problems Committee would consider both the problems to be anticipated following a German defeat and also the best way to prepare for the many subsequent political, and economic, reconstruction problems that would inevitably ensue. In his letter to Leith-Ross at the MEW on 1st April 1941 Crystal stressed that 'the Committee on Reconstruction Problems is very much concerned with the German re-organisation of the European economy and with the legacy which it will leave after Germany has been defeated'.⁶³ For this reason the majority of Pares' FRPS Baltic States Section papers concerned either economic or political matters and, if required, studies would be expanded to cover the entire civilian ruled East i.e. including the Ukraine and General Government. An

⁶² PRO CAB 65/38/2, Foreign Secretary's visit to the United States, Cabinet meeting minute 13th April 1943

⁶³ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Sir George Crystal Secretary of the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems to Sir Leith-Ross at MEW, 1st April 1941

example of this occurred in January 1943 when Elisabeth Pares was asked to write a paper on the framework of German banking in Eastern Europe.⁶⁴

As the Reconstruction Problems Committee's research would mainly be undertaken by the FRPS, this arrangement would ultimately lead to a multi-ministry and department agreement that the FRPS should produce for the FO multiple regional handbooks for selected regions. These handbooks would come to be known as the 'Grey Books' due to the colour of their binding and were to act as the first point of reference for the FO and other bodies in the planning stage of the reconstruction of Europe. The handbooks would prove to be of immeasurable value to the Reconstruction Problems Committee, the PHPS and the FORD in providing a point of reference for planning and producing of estimates of the likely events in Eastern Europe following the German defeat.

In November 1941 the FRPS were given the task of preparing the 'peace' handbooks. They were the most important documents on post-war planning produced for the British government in the middle part of the war and can be seen as the culmination of the FRPS's work for the Reconstruction Problems Committee.⁶⁵ The importance of the handbooks was indicated in the reply to a query from Sir Quintin Hill to Standard in the FO on 21st November 1941. Standard stated that 'the peace handbooks will keep FPRS busy for some time to come. No other work will be undertaken, except when requested by government departments'.⁶⁶ Standard was referring to a statement made the week before by Toynbee that FRPS 'will not be able to do more than this new work on the Grey Books plus specially requested memoranda by the government departments'.⁶⁷ The importance of the FRPS as an

⁶⁴ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Viscount Hood at the Economic and Reconstruction Department to Balfour at PWE, 1st February 1943

⁶⁵ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Standard at the FO to Sir Quintin Hill at the Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 13th November 1941

⁶⁶ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Standard at the FO to Sir Quintin Hill at the Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 21st November 1941

⁶⁷ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Standard at the FO to Sir Quintin Hill at the Committee for Reconstruction Problems, 13th November 1941

organisation to the British government, particularly in regards to post-war planning, is evident. Ironically Hill's initial enquiry to Standard concerned a protest from Mr Owen of the MEW who had complained that a recent paper, produced by the FRPS's economic expert Fisher, was 'deficient because their sources have apparently only published information'.⁶⁸ This type of protest became less frequent as the reputation of the standard of work of the FRPS grew within government circles.

The research and formulation of the Peace handbooks would occupy the FRPS's research sections throughout 1942. On 29th April 1942 a Sub-Committee was established by representatives of the MEW (Enemy Resources Department), the Board of Trade, the Treasury, the Economic Section of the War Cabinet Offices, the FO, the Reconstruction Office and the FRPS to decide which part of the research for the handbooks should be undertaken by the FRPS and which part should be left to other departments, and to oversee those sections of the handbook which had important economic implications.⁶⁹ Ultimately the majority of work was left to the FRPS but the Sub-Committee had the final say on the printed version. This led to the provincial handbooks having to be revised several times, for example in the case of the Russian (USSR) handbook, on 8th March 1943 A. Baster from the Treasury commented 'that the former Baltic states also seem to have been overlooked in so far as they may be covered indirectly in V(2) or V(3) of the Russian handbook. I would agree that they are not worth a separate handbook but I do think they should have a separate section in the Russian handbook'.⁷⁰ Once again this was a damning verdict on any future hope for a return to independence for the Baltic states, given that the handbooks were to be the basis of post-war planning. In every sphere there were indications that the Treasury recognised the Baltic states as belonging to the Soviet Union. The Treasury believed only a minor distinction

⁶⁸ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Standard at the FO to Sir George Crystal Secretary of the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems, 16th October 1941

⁶⁹ PRO CAB 117/80, Foreign Research and Press Service Sub-committee of the Official Committee on Post-war External Economic and Anglo-American Co-operation and correspondence, 1942-1944, Terms of Reference, 29th April 1942

⁷⁰ PRO CAB 117/80, Foreign Research and Press Service Sub-committee of the Official Committee on Post-war External Economic and Anglo-American Co-operation and correspondence, 1942-1944, The Revised Provisional Scheme For Foreign Office Handbooks, Comments by the Treasury, 8th March 1943, p.1

should be made between the two. On 3rd June 1943 Dew suggested another revision to the provisional scheme for the Russian handbook. He believed that ‘Soviet relations with Finland, the Baltic states, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria can no doubt be covered under the proposed paper, The Western Borders of the USSR’, which suggested that these countries were considered likely to be under Soviet post-war rule.⁷¹ Nevertheless Dew viewed the document to be ‘on the right lines’.⁷²

By the middle of 1943 the FORD Research Sections had completed their work on the FO handbooks and were free to embark on new projects for the FO and the Reconstruction Problems Committee’s chief successor, the newly formed PHPS. The FORD was now in prime position to prepare papers for these two bodies on the reconstruction of Europe. As we have seen, the PHPS would use the FO handbooks as the basis for their appraisals of the potential European post-war political and military situation. As the FORD was now part of the FO, it would be in a much better position to influence post-hostilities planning. In fact the FORD would write the main draft of the FO’s most influential paper on Soviet post-war policy which was finally printed on 29th April 1944 as ‘Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests’.⁷³ Eden would describe the paper as ‘excellent’ to Churchill and he based his entire post-war policy for Eastern Europe on it.⁷⁴

Without the backing of those in high office such as Eden and Butler there seems little doubt that the FRPS would have continued to flounder in government circles. Cynical voices from within the FO would have continued to be heard and overt intelligence from the Baltic states would have been unable to develop into the important intelligence stream it later became. Butler had effectively ordered government departments to make use of the FRPS and Eden requested that the Reconstruction Committee bring the FRPS the field of post-hostilities

⁷¹ PRO FO 371/37017, Handbook on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 1943, Notes on FO Soviet Union Department cover sheet by Dew of the FO Northern Department, 3rd June 1943

⁷² Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, pp.158-59

⁷³ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Internal FO letter from Christopher Warner Head of the Northern Department to Deputy Under-Secretary Sir Orme Sargent, 4th January 1944 and PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, FO paper, Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests, 29th April 1944

⁷⁴ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from Anthony Eden to Prime Minister, 8th May 1944

planning into its sphere of influence. By 1941 it had been ensured that the FRPS had all the components at its disposal to be a highly effective and relevant intelligence source, which had, as a result of government backing, a reputation for excellence and regular access to a stream of overt intelligence which had been acquired by the SPRB. Importantly it had been highlighted that the FRPS should acquire economic intelligence, thereby giving the FRPS an important mission that would continue until the end of the war. This alone kept the work of the FRPS Baltic States Section relevant throughout the war.

Chapter 3

The Stockholm Press Reading Bureau

This chapter examines the crucial role played by the SPRB in the overt intelligence chain. As will become evident the organisation was the chief supplier of overt intelligence gathered primarily from neutral Sweden to the FRPS/FORD in Britain. The chapter explores the events that lead to the SPRB's establishment in 1940, as well as the rapid expansion of its operations in 1941 as demand for overt intelligence from occupied Europe grew. Also examined is the part played by the BOAC aircraft that flew the hazardous journey between Scotland and Sweden in order to deliver the enemy's press to the analysts in Oxford and Whitehall. The SPRB would prove to be a regular and reliable supplier of overt intelligence from the region. It was quickly established that overt intelligence may very well be of real importance to British policy makers. As a result of the positive developments regarding the promotion of overt intelligence in 1940 and early 1941 the SPRB was able to offer the British government overt intelligence from the start of the German occupation of the Baltic states in June 1941.

On 16th October 1941 the head of the British Legation in Stockholm, Victor Mallet, wrote a lengthy letter to Anthony Eden concerning proposals made by Cecil Parrott, the chief of the SPRB, to centralise all the Press Reading operations across Europe.¹ Although the proposals would be ultimately dropped in favour of the status quo, the debate over centralisation required Parrott to describe in detail the organisation and functions of the SPRB. Without the SPRB's steady supply of material, the FRPS Baltic States Section would not have been able to function effectively.

Following the defeat of France in June 1940 and the accompanying closure of the SIS bases in the West, there was a real concern over the lack of intelligence available to the British

¹ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Letter from Mallet at the British Legation Stockholm to State Secretary Anthony Eden, 16th October 1941, pp.1-5

government from Europe. Anthony Eden, then Secretary of State for War, realised that intelligence gleaned from the enemy and neutral press could be of great importance in determining the real state of affairs in occupied Europe. On 11th September 1940 he therefore requested that the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau be established. The Bureau was to be housed in the British Legation. The SPRB became operational on the 24th September 1940 and its function was to (a) prepare to take over the reading of the German press at short notice in case of the invasion of Switzerland; (b) arrange for the reading of Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Protectorate, Polish, Soviet, Dutch and Belgian newspapers for the specific purpose of supplying urgently needed information of conditions in enemy and occupied territories and material for propaganda.

There were four press reading bureaux in Europe – Stockholm, Berne, Lisbon and Istanbul. On 6th November 1940 the FO instructed the SPRB to immediately take over from Berne the reading of the majority of the German press. On 26th March 1941 the SPRB was informed that the financial responsibility for its establishment had been taken over by the MoI. Crucially, in terms of the FRPS ability to monitor the events in the Baltic states, the MoI requested on 7th August 1941 that the SPRB should take over the reading of the Finnish press and the German organ published in the Baltic states, the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*. Permission was granted for the employment of a special reader to undertake this task.

Of the three German organs in the Ostland the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*, printed in Riga, was the primary newspaper for the *Reichskommissariat*. As the paper was exported to Sweden, the SPRB was easily able to obtain the newspaper.² The *Revaler Zeitung* was acquired in Helsinki (due to Finland's close racial and cultural affiliations with Estonia) by US contacts who then smuggled the paper across the border to the British in Sweden. The *Kauener Zeitung* was not available in Scandinavia and, as it only had a circulation figure of just 1,200, the SPRB found it difficult to source.³ The Bureau also monitored both the Swedish and Finnish press as they often contained articles on the conditions in the Ostland, largely because both countries had sizeable minorities in Estonia and Latvia, as well as an

² Gerhard P. Bassler, *Alfred Valdmanis and the Politics of Survival* (Toronto 2000), p.164

³ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, Revised Guide to the Press in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd January 1943, pp.1-2

historical connection to the region.⁴ In Sweden the pro-Axis papers, such as the *Norrköpings Tidningar* and *Nya Dogligt*, took a considerable interest in the Ostland and would be regularly cited by the FRPS Baltic States Section in its Ostland supplements.⁵

The SPRB employed thirty-one full or part time staff comprising editors, readers, archivists, typists and messengers. The Bureau had two main fields of activity: the reporting by telegram and by bag of information derived from the press and the drafting of despatches, memoranda and, occasionally, telegrams reporting information not derived from the press.

Parrott protested that, on some occasions, the Legation despatched the same newspaper to six different departments, while there was also duplication of despatches of newspapers from other press reading bureaux. For example both the PID and FRPS received the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*. As we have seen Skaife, of the PID's Russian Section, was not a Baltic states specialist and was prepared to allow the FRPS Baltic States Section to write the necessarily lengthy memoranda for the FO. This therefore largely avoided the repetition that occurred in regard to the analysis of the press in other countries.

On 25th September 1941 Dew, of the FO Northern Department wrote to Skaife asking if he knew whether the SPRB had managed to obtain the newspaper *Ostland*.⁶ By the time Skaife received the letter and had replied on 19th October, he was already in receipt of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* from the SPRB and the FO had received his first summary of the paper.⁷ In the same letter to Skaife, Dew also declared that 'we have been somewhat exercised by the scantiness of our information about recent developments in the Baltic states. We here hardly have the time to collect any material there may be'. Dew went on to say: 'I see the Foreign Research and Press Service have recently produced a review of the situation in the Baltic states, and I suppose they can be relied on to do other such surveys, periodically from material provided by public sources'; The FO was clearly struggling for information on the German occupation.

⁴ Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder Without Hatred* (New York 2009), p.218

⁵ John Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin* (Edinburgh 2010), p.159

⁶ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Skaife at the PID, 25th September 1941

⁷ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Skaife at the PID to Dew at the FO Northern Department, 19th October 1941

By September 1941 both the PID and the FO Baltic States Department were trying to obtain copies of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*. On 19th September the PID wrote to the MoI asking whether the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau had managed to acquire the Kaunas paper '*Ostland*'. On 6th November 1941 Geoffrey Kirk of the MoI wrote to Walter Adams, the General Secretary of the PID (EH), stating that 'we have just heard from Parrott that he is trying to get *Ostland* and he says that his experience shows that immediately after a German occupation there are always difficulties in obtaining newspapers, but that in time, the authorities seem to put less and less restrictions in the way'.⁸ The MoI took its time to reply to the PID as by 3rd October 1941 Skaife's Russian Section of the PID were already writing short press summaries of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* for the MoI.⁹ The FO also received these reports. When Skaife realised that the FRPS Baltic States Section could better perform in-depth research on the enemy press, these summaries were replaced by the FPRS Ostland Supplements to the Review of the Foreign Press, the first of which appeared on 17th November 1941. The faith placed in Skaife's judgment by the FO would be the key factor behind the FO's decision to accept his opinion that the FRPS Baltic States Section was better qualified to provide the intelligence it required. The positive judgement of the February 1941 government enquiry of the abilities of the FRPS would, of course, have made this decision an easier one to make.

The information obtained by the SPRB was distributed to a variety of departments:

The PID and PID (EH) which were two separate organisations, the SPRB material was used by the PID for their general political summary and by the PID (EH) for special propaganda and intelligence purposes; the Ministry of Information; the BBC, whose intelligence section found the SPRB's material to be of great interest, it appeared to be one of the chief sources of material for their foreign broadcasts; MEW; Chatham House Press Reading Bureau (as

⁸ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Letter from Geoffrey Kirk of the MoI to Walter Adams the General Secretary of the PID (EH), 6th November 1941

⁹ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, PID Russian Section Overseas Press Summary, 3rd October 1941

Parrott sometimes referred to the FRPS); and Service Departments, for intelligence purposes.¹⁰

Parrott visited each of these organisations to receive their reaction to the work of the SPRB. In reference to the PID Russian Section, Skaife revealed to Parrott that he would be grateful for any information about morale in the USSR and also the conditions in the Baltic states and Finland. Parrott found that in almost every regional section of the PID 'its specialists seemed to depend very largely for their information on our work'.¹¹ As a result of the FO embargo on direct intelligence gathering in the Soviet Union, this was certainly the case in Skaife's section. It would become a matter of which organisation would be best suited to the task of interpreting the SPRB Baltic states despatches, the PID or the FRPS. As the PID could offer very little additional 'covert' intelligence, the FRPS Baltic States Section, with its expert knowledge, would emerge as the chief interpreter of intelligence from the Baltic states.

The SPRB sent all its press cuttings and newspapers to Britain by air, from Stockholm (Bromma) to St Andrews (Leuchars) using BOAC aircraft. The 800 mile route proved too dangerous for BOAC's unarmed civilian aircraft with the result that the route could ultimately only be flown at night using ex RAF Mosquito aircraft. Throughout the war over 1200 flights were made, without which the SPRB would not have been able to function.¹²

Parrott declared that as the MoI was the SPRB's coordinating body, he dealt mainly with its Establishment and Finance sections. It was felt that the FO should have maintained its control of the SPRB while the question of microphotography was raised for the first time as a way of reducing the weight of BOAC aircraft transports, which would simultaneously allow a wider distribution of the newspapers. As Toynbee, Ashton-Gwatkin the Chief Clerk of the FO, Kirk of the PID and Mr Smith of the MoI photographic department were all in favour of this idea, specimen photographs would be taken of newspapers and sent to London.¹³

¹⁰ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Introduction to the General Report of the Press Reading Bureau, 9th October 1941, pp.2-3

¹¹ Ibid, p.8

¹² British Airways, History and Heritage http://www.britishairways.com/travel/history-ata/public/en_gb viewed 18/2/10

¹³ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, General Report of the Press Reading Bureau, 9th October 1941, pp.16-18

When Parrott described the relationship between the SPRB and the FRPS, it is possible to detect a condescending tone towards the work of FRPS up to this point. Parrott wrote that 'we obtain a far greater assortment of newspapers and report on them often many weeks earlier than the FRPS can do'. This was probably a sign of Parrott's frustration that the SPRB's own political memoranda were not being used by such organisations as the PID and FRPS who do 'not appear to make use of them'. Both organisations valued the SPRB's ability to supply them with the foreign press and not for its ability to produce political memoranda. Parrott did say, however, that there is a 'one great difference in our activities, we work against the clock and have not time to write surveys on general tendencies in the press or the developments in the different occupied countries. This kind of survey work, as performed by the FRPS, is of great importance'. Parrott had missed the point: there was no conflict of interest for the primary function of the FRPS was to produce detailed memoranda which, by definition, took longer to produce. The primary task of the SPRB was to be a supplier of intelligence.

When Parrott visited the head of the FRPS, Toynbee stressed the great importance of the supply of the newspapers to the FRPS and thanked him for their regular supply. Parrott said 'that while we would do everything possible to guarantee that, in the future, the supply would be on the same level. The PID for instance were very anxious to get newspapers and should really have preference over the FRPS. So far the PID had not received any newspapers at all and they were very anxious to get them. While promising to do what I could for the FRPS I pointed out that the matter was not really in my hands and that I was only acting for Chancery and that they would decide the proportion of papers despatched'. Fortunately for the FRPS, Parrott's concerns over the supply of the newspapers proved to be unfounded, in part due to developments in the field of microphotography. The FRPS continued to be supplied with newspapers from the SPRB throughout the war.

In his October 1941 memorandum Parrott reaffirmed the value of the intelligence gleaned from the foreign press and describes the type of functions performed by the SPRB. Its content clearly indicates how vital the SPRB had become to the British government by October 1941. He stressed:

‘With the greater part of Europe under enemy occupation, and many of the few surviving neutrals isolated from us (Britain) by belts of occupied territory, the problem of obtaining information from Germany and the countries she has occupied becomes more and more difficult to resolve. Hence the almost unprecedented significance of the European press as the only source today which provides regular information daily of conditions and developments in Germany and occupied territory.

It is often objected that the German and occupied press contains nothing of interest, as it is subjected to the strictest possible censorship and would not be exported if it contained anything of any use to the enemy. Experience has proved the opposite. While revelations of great significance are seldom to be found, the sum total of material available, if scientifically read and treated, often provides a remarkably revealing and coherent picture of conditions in occupied territories. Moreover, the press of the few surviving neutral states, especially those whose frontiers are contiguous with Germany, often contains most useful indications of the trend of opinion in Germany itself.

But this picture can only be complete and undistorted if the papers are scientifically read on an adequate scale. It presupposes some kind of coordinated form of press reading, whereby everything of political, social, economic and military interest is extracted’.¹⁴ The FRPS was to perform exactly this role.

Parrott advised the Political Intelligence and territorial departments of the Foreign Office ‘must closely’ follow the general policy of the occupying power, the acts of the various puppet governments, the resistance of all classes of society in the occupied territory - strikes, demonstrations and sabotage. As he stressed ‘much of the information is to be found in the press’.

Parrott declared that certain departments were obtaining a limited number of newspapers by air mail from Lisbon and Stockholm. He lamented the fact that those individuals who received these despatches were not generally press readers. They did not devote their whole time to the scrutiny of the press they received, and consequently they could not claim to read

¹⁴ Ibid, pp.1-7

them exhaustively. 'Certain departments have real press reading sections, such as the War Office and the Ministry of Economic Warfare. But the former is probably so understaffed that it can with difficulty subject the limited number of papers it receives to really adequate scrutiny, while the latter, whether adequately staffed or not, can only obtain a small number of the vast amount of dailies and technical journals which are published. The only press reading bureau which has the staff and leisure to devote to a thorough going study of the press is the FRPS at Chatham House (actually located in Oxford). But this bureau has even greater difficulty in obtaining the papers it wants, and in most cases a far too long time elapses between the date of the paper's publication and its perusal in their press reading bureau'.

Parrott continued to make certain assumptions as to the role of the FRPS. The FRPS would not be required to publish its findings at a fast rate due to the fact that its memoranda were often lengthy and took time to prepare. These memoranda were either prepared by special request for the FO or for inclusion in the Review of the Foreign Press. The government enquiry of February 1941 had highlighted the true nature of the work required of the FRPS by the FO. The organisation was to aid the formation of government policy through its memoranda and press review, as well as to help conduct research in matters of post-hostilities planning. These two aims did not require the rapid submission of reports that Parrott believed the FRPS needed to make. On average the time elapsed between the publication of a newspaper and its content being included in the latest edition of the Ostland supplement to the Review of the Foreign Press was as little as two weeks. Politically, this provided adequate time for government policy to be formulated. Parrott would go on to say that the MoI had its own press reading bureau, and alluded that the SPRB would be better suited to monitoring the foreign press. The MoI's pool of knowledge was, however, not on the same scale as that of the FRPS. The FO would only be interested in the SPRB's ability to supply the FRPS and PID with the foreign and neutral press.

The largest of the MoI press reading bureaux was in Stockholm 'where 270 dailies and periodicals from Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Poland, the Protectorate, Holland, Belgium, Slovakia and the Baltic states are being read'. The SPRB had a staff of only 20 readers and editors, compared to 177 in the FRPS. There were smaller press reading bureaux in Berne, which read the French, Italian and Swiss press, in Istanbul, which read the Balkan

and Turkish press and in Lisbon, which read the Spanish and Portuguese press. There seemed to be a poor supply of south German press, and therefore Parrott recommended that the SPRB should also take over the reading of this region's press.

Parrott described the connections between the various press and reading bureaux and London as follows: Stockholm was viewed as having regular and frequent connections, with the papers being easily and speedily obtainable; although Berne's connections were seen to be unfavourable, it could obtain papers early and speedily; Istanbul's connections were less favourable, but the bureau was viewed as being important as a geographical point for South-East Europe. Lisbon's connections were excellent. Its papers could easily and speedily be obtained.

Parrott declared that a detailed study of the foreign press would enable a daily record to be kept 'of the smallest developments in Germany and the occupied territories. This would be of immense value for government departments, politicians, journalists, authors and research students during the war, and of considerable historical value during the post-war period'. Parrott could not have known this was exactly what would occur. It would be, however, the FRPS that would leave the historical legacy, an organisation that Parrott at the time considered inefficient. He believed that the only possible solution to the problem of press intelligence 'is the establishment of a central Press Intelligence Department to deal with all demands for information from the various government departments'. The FO was, however, quite happy with the present arrangement whereby the SPRB acted mainly as a supplier for the FRPS.

In response to a memorandum from Parrott for press centralisation, a meeting was held at the MoI on 18th November 1941 to discuss Parrott's proposal for a coordinating unit in London to be established.¹⁵ It was agreed that the MoI should be the coordinating unit through its Overseas General Branch, as it already financed the SPRB. All material supplied by the SPRB would pass through the Overseas General Branch but crucially the decision as to who received the newspapers remained with the FO. It was agreed that the question of

¹⁵ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Minutes of a meeting held at the Ministry of Information to discuss the distribution of material received from the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau, 18th November 1941, pp.1-2

microphotography of newspapers in London should, as Parrott had recommended, be further investigated in order to provide a wider distribution of the newspapers available in Stockholm which could not be sent to London in sufficient quantity owing to a lack of air-space.

The MoI also agreed with Parrott that the SPRB should take over the reading of all the German papers from the Berne Press Reading Bureau but that Berne, while ceasing to telegraph German material, should hold themselves in readiness to resume the German service in case the SPRB was forced to close down. This indicated that the British could not rule out the possibility of a German invasion of Sweden. The meeting was closed with the expression of the general feeling of the Committee in congratulating the SPRB on its invaluable work. In fact, without the SPRB's ability to supply the enemy and neutral press, the British government would have been completely ignorant of the German activities in the Baltic states and the German 'East' as a whole.

The SPRB ensured a steady stream of intelligence reached London in BOAC aircraft. This intelligence stream enabled the FRPS Baltic States Section to outperform the other 'Eastern' FRPS geographical sections, particularly from the beginning of the occupation to February 1943 when the Reich halted the export of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* to Sweden. In those areas of occupied Europe where the clandestine SIS and SOE could operate freely, the FRPS geographical sections performed poorly. This was no coincidence. Without the supply of the enemy and neutral press that the SPRB provided, the FRPS Baltic States Section would have been no more successful than any of the other FRPS geographical sections. By supplying overt intelligence the SPRB enabled the FRPS Baltic States Section to gain an accurate account of life in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*.

The British ability to 'scientifically read' overt intelligence from the Baltic states was the SPRB's significant contribution to the war effort. No other occupied region offered the FO a greater yield of overt intelligence as the Baltic states in the years 1941-43. Procured safely from neutral Sweden, there could be no fear of offending Soviet sensibilities. Throughout the occupation the SPRB functioned well, even when faced with loss of the *Zeitung im Ostland* the SPRB was still able glean much information for the FORD from the other remaining enemy and neutral newspapers still accessible in Sweden and Finland. BOAC aircraft played a crucial role in enabling the SPRB's bagged newspapers and microfilms to reach the British

Isles, consequently enabling the FRPS/FORD to undertake its research and analysis work. Quite simply without the SPRB and BOAC the FRPS/FORD would not have been able to function.

Chapter 4

The Foreign Research and Press Service Baltic States Section 1941 – 1942

The positive political pressure that had been exerted on the FRPS' behalf in 1941 by leading figures in the FO, including Anthony Eden and R.A. Butler, would allow the organisation's Baltic States Section to become the British government's key intelligence analysing organisation for the region. This chapter charts this achievement. It is, however, highly doubtful whether this development would have occurred had any figure other than Elisabeth Pares headed the Baltic States Section. Her analytical abilities were the driving force within the section and consequently her work is the focus of this chapter. As we shall see the extent to which this intelligence could be used in practice would be determined by the Anglo-Soviet treaty negotiations of 1942.

As the head of the FRPS Baltic States Section, Elisabeth Pares held a unique position when compared to the other geographical section heads of the FRPS. At the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, she combined her role as head of the Baltic States Section with the leadership of the Enquiries Section which, as Toynbee described, delegated the departmental enquires to the appropriate FRPS section. She was therefore in an excellent position to know what was desired by the various government departments from the FRPS sections in their memoranda and contributions to the Review of the Foreign Press.

Elisabeth Pares came from a distinguished academic family. Her father, Bernard Pares, was the Director of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies and she owed her appointment at Chatham House to his connections as the Secretary of RIIA, Ivison Macadam, knew Bernard Pares well.¹ As a known specialist, Bernard Pares acted as a special advisor to the FO from the outbreak of the war. He was, however, not well received in the FO as he

¹ Robin Humphreys, Elisabeth Humphreys 1904-1990, A Memoir (Ipswich 1992), p.18

consistently argued that the Soviet Union was genuinely neutral and was merely improving its defences against Germany in the Baltic and the Carpathians. His Russophile views were unwanted in the early part of the war. Fitzroy Maclean of the FO minuted: ‘Sir Bernard ought to be subsidised by M. Maisky (the Soviet Ambassador) rather than by HMG... Could not Sir Bernard Pares be got rid of?’ This promptly occurred.² The FO, at the time of the Russo-German pact and the Finnish war in 1939-1940, was ‘understandably irritated’ by Bernard Pares ‘pursing a private foreign policy of his own’, and, in his own words, he was ‘given the bird’ in March 1940.³ Up to this point he had also been the head of the FRPS Russian Section. His removal helped to improve relations between the FO and FRPS.

Elisabeth Pares’ views on the Baltic states were in sharp contrast to those of her father as she held no illusions about the threat posed to the Baltic states from the Soviet Union.⁴ Her areas of special interest included Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe from the Baltic to Albania. Her knowledge of Germany and Eastern Europe would be of great use when studying German occupation policy in the Baltic states and, at some points in the war, Poland and the wider ‘East’. Importantly she was able to hone her skills on pre-war matters in the Baltic states when she wrote in 1938 the greater part of the RIIA handbook on the Baltic states.⁵ The clear, analytical and highly detailed writing style, that would be so familiar in her FRPS Ostland Supplements and specialist memoranda, was already in evidence. The book offers an invaluable piece of evidence of the pre-war Baltic states, political and economic structure as well as their foreign relations. Spanning 194 pages it is an impressive study with numerous tables covering such diverse subjects as, butter and milk production, trade with the United Kingdom and election results 1919-1934. Its detail is remarkable.⁶ During the German occupation this knowledge would help Elisabeth Pares produce the FRPS Baltic States Section’s highly accomplished work that would be of considerable value to the FRPS and FO. When the FRPS was formed in 1939 she must have been the clear candidate to lead the

² Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), p.26

³ Robin Humphreys, Elisabeth Humphreys, pp.22-23

⁴ *Ibid*, p.22

⁵ *Ibid*, p.19

⁶ The Information Department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, The Baltic States, A Survey of the Political and Economic Structure and the Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (London 1938)

FRPS Baltic States Section. She would in fact combine this position with that of the leadership of the FRPS Enquires Section until the autumn of 1942. At this stage her workload with the Baltic States Section had increased so greatly that she had to relinquish her position in the Enquires Section.⁷

After initial fluctuations of supply following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, it became clear that the enemy press could regularly be obtained from the Ostland. This source was the only regular supply of enemy press from the entire German occupied East. This fact, together with the FO decision not to allow covert intelligence gathering from within the Soviet sphere, meant that the FRPS Baltic States Section became, in effect, the British government's window into that part of Europe. A great deal could be learnt about Nazi policies in the entire civilian ruled East from the Ostland press, as many orders and decrees applied to the wider 'East'.

The FRPS Baltic States Section was at its most valuable to the British government after June 1941, following the German occupation of the Baltic states. As the SPRB had been established the previous autumn and the positive findings of the Feb 1941 government enquiry into the FRPS were then known, the Baltic Section avoided the fate which had befallen the FRPS Sections, which had studied the German occupation of Western Europe in the dark days of 1940. By 1941 the poor supply of the enemy press and the departmental suspicions were a thing of the past.⁸ Elisabeth Pares' Section would, due to a combination of these factors, become one of the most prolific of all the FRPS's geographic sections. The British government had many organisations gathering intelligence from Western Europe, although in regards to the 'East', she would soon be forced to rely on the FRPS Baltic States Section as a regular source of intelligence.

Martin H Folly has written that the nature of the FO was such that its experts were usually of fairly junior rank; the senior officials were, by contrast, 'all-rounders'. This was true of even

⁷ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Notes on FO Northern Department minutes by Lord Hood of the FO Economic and Reconstruction Department, 13th March 1943

⁸ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in Journal of Contemporary History, Volume 21:4 (1986), p.548

the heads of departments. Christopher Warner, the head of the Northern Department, (which dealt with the Scandinavian countries, the USSR and the Baltic states) from 1941 to 1946, often prefaced a comment with 'as those who know Russia tell me', a strange admission for someone who was in charge of the department that dealt with the USSR and who should, one would think, have had such specialist knowledge himself.⁹ The lack of specialists on the USSR in the FO raised the importance of junior ranked officials such as Geoffrey Wilson and Armine Dew in the Northern Department. Although these individuals were more comfortable in dealing with Soviet matters, they were not Baltic states specialists. The inevitable consequence was a greater leaning by the FO on 'specialists' such as Elisabeth Pares. Both Dew and Wilson had a history of diplomatic service in Moscow. Dew had served in the Moscow Embassy between 1938 and 1940 before a brief stint in Belgrade was ended by the German occupation. He then moved to the Northern Department in 1941 where he continued to work until his death in an air crash, en route to the Yalta conference in February 1945.¹⁰ Dew was quite prepared to defer to the FRPS questions of research concerning the Baltic states and rarely disagreed with the conclusions of the FRPS. For example on 27th January 1942, after he had read an advanced copy of an FRPS Baltic States Section, Ostland Supplement, Dew stated that he had found the paper to be 'exactly the type of thing we are very pleased to have for reference purposes and it will, I am sure, prove very useful'.¹¹ Geoffrey Wilson would join the Northern Department in early 1942. He had been part of Stafford Cripps embassy staff in Moscow and followed him to London after he was withdrawn from Moscow in 1942.¹² Wilson was more critical of the work of the FRPS than Dew. For example on 1st November 1942 Wilson would describe Elisabeth Pares' Ostland summary, German Policy and Practice in the Ostland, as 'stupendously dull'.¹³

With the addition of Skaife these individuals were the main contacts for Elisabeth Pares and the FRPS Baltic States Section within the British government, with Dew usually the first

⁹ Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945 (Basingstoke 2000), pp.4-5

¹⁰ Graham Ross (ed.), The Foreign Office and the Kremlin (Cambridge 1984), p.283

¹¹ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Pares at the RIIA, 27th January 1942

¹² Graham Ross (ed.), The Foreign Office and the Kremlin, p.284

¹³ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Wilson, 1st November 1942

point of contact. Dew usually, but not exclusively, worked on Baltic matters for the Baltic States Department. Warner as head of the Northern Department would pass on material to those in high office if he thought it necessary. The FO Northern and Baltic States Departments would, as indicated in Toynbee's memoranda, place specialist requests for memoranda with the FRPS Baltic States Section. Meanwhile the Review of the Foreign Press continued to produce, throughout the occupation, Ostland supplements which, as the government enquiry had desired, influenced the formation of government policy.

Monitoring the Ostland

With the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 the FO was faced with gathering intelligence from yet another German occupied region. The FO's Northern Department and its subordinate Baltic States Department were tasked with monitoring the new German civil administrative region, the Ostland, which included the Baltic states. The British government at this time had not recognised the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states in 1940 and therefore had kept the FO Baltic States Department distinct from its Soviet Union Department. This distinction continued throughout the war. On 11th September 1941 the FRPS published, in its Series C *Review of the Foreign Press*, a supplement entitled 'The USSR the Baltic states and the Far East', which contained an article on the Baltic states; this review was sent to the FO Baltic States Department.¹⁴ The Baltic States Department noted on 24th September that the review mentioned a new 'East German' paper, the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*, that had been published in Riga since 5th August 1941. The *de facto* head of the FO Baltic States Department, Armine Dew, wrote that 'no doubt the FRPS will periodically summarise such information (on the Baltic states) from public sources – press, broadcasts etc. But Brigadier Skaife (PID) will presumably get other reports and may be able to add something'. Dew also asked his superiors whether it would be 'worthwhile getting the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau to try and get hold of the new *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*'?¹⁵

¹⁴ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Review of the Foreign Press, Series C, No 102, The USSR the Baltic States and the Far East, Foreign Research and Press Service, 11th September 1941, p.1

¹⁵ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet, 24th September 1941

On 25th September 1941 Dew wrote to Brigadier Skaife highlighting the poor level of intelligence available to the FO concerning the situation in the Baltic states. 'We have been somewhat exercised by the scantiness of our information about recent developments in the Baltic states. We here hardly have the time to collect any material there may be. I wonder whether you can add anything from other sources. If you could produce an occasional report on political developments and conditions in those regions, we should find it most valuable'. Dew also asked Skaife if the Stockholm Press Reading Bureau had obtained the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*.¹⁶

On 19th October 1941 Skaife replied that, in view of Dew's remarks, he would develop his collection of work on the Baltic states to the best of his ability. 'Should a paper be required reviewing the position in the Baltic states exhaustively, I would take care to go to Oxford and consult the authors of the FRPS so that nothing important should be missed'. This was a clear indication that the PID had settled its previous quarrels with the FRPS with regards to the Baltic states and was willing to make the journey to Oxford to consult the FRPS and supply its authors with official documentation, for Skaife had recognised that the FRPS authors were in a better position to write exhaustively on the Baltic states.¹⁷ Dew at the FO Baltic States Department replied on 27th October declaring his department's interest in a FRPS report on the Ostland: 'it would I think be very useful for the Northern Department to have a paper reviewing the position in the Baltic states subsequent to the German invasion. At present we have only a number of isolated reports'.¹⁸ Therefore by late 1941 both the FO Baltic States Department and the PID had independently concluded that the FRPS seemed the most suitable source of detailed information on the German occupation of the Ostland.

The consistent achievement of the SPRB in obtaining the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*, the primary newspaper for the *Reichskommissariat*, would be vital to the forthcoming success of the FRPS Baltic States Section, under the control of Elisabeth Pares, in producing detailed

¹⁶ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Skaife at the PID, 25th September 1941

¹⁷ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Skaife at the PID to Dew at the FO Northern Department, 19th October 1941

¹⁸ PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Skaife at the PID, 27th October 1941

and accurate information for various government departments on German occupation policy and practice in the Baltic states. The combination of Sweden's neutral status, her continuing trade with the Third Reich and location on the Baltic Sea allowed the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* to be procured by the SPRB, either directly or indirectly, throughout the German occupation of the Baltic states. Therefore one of the main problems faced by the FRPS in the study of the German occupation of Europe up to 1941, namely the difficulty in obtaining foreign newspapers, was avoided in regard to the Ostland.¹⁹

Friendly members of the Baltic community employed in the Ostland self-administrations or in exile in Germany also supplied the Allies in Stockholm with vital information. For example the Lithuanian exile, Antanas Valiukenas, after escaping to Germany to avoid the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, played a vital role in intelligence gathering. Reliable Lithuanians who held official positions in the self-administration of Lithuania, and who were therefore free to travel to Germany, supplied Valiukenas in Berlin with official information. Valiukenas sent this information to the former Lithuanian Minister, Vytautas Gylys, in Stockholm via a secure Hungarian courier. Gylys and his staff transmitted to the German legation documentary information from Lithuania concerning the Lithuanian anti-Nazi underground, so therefore were considered trustworthy by the Germans. The Hungarians in Stockholm allowed Gylys' staff to photograph the materials before returning the documents to Berne undelivered. Gylys would then make the documents available to the Allies. Another major supply route of documents to the Allies was by direct transit across the Baltic Sea. For example, Algirdas Vokietaitis, a member of the Lithuanian anti-Nazi resistance, sailed across on two occasions.²⁰ Finally, in the last year of the occupation, the increasing flood of ethnic Swedish refugees from the Baltic states also became a vital source of information for the British. As a result of the new level of cooperation between the PID and the FRPS concerning the Baltic states, Elisabeth Pares was supplied with this information allowing her to work with the latest intelligence.

¹⁹ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 21:4 (1986), p.548

²⁰ Thomas Remeikis (ed.), *Lithuania under German Occupation 1941-1945, Despatches from the US Legation in Stockholm* (Vilnius 2005), pp.5-6

Elisabeth Pares had previously headed the FRPS Enquiries Section; indeed her first papers on the Ostland were produced under this heading. It is interesting to note that the other *Reichskommissariat* in the East, the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine, was not accorded its own FRPS section. In fact the Ukraine, as a long-term member of the Soviet Union, remained part of the USSR Section of the FRPS. Therefore studies relating to the region appeared in Series C of the *Review of the Foreign Press, The Americans, the USSR and the Far East*. Although White Ruthenia (Belorussia) was officially part of the Ostland, it was in practice independent from Riga, and therefore only rarely were studies relating to White Ruthenia written by the Baltic States Section. The region was considered by the Germans' to be populated by 'sub-human' Slavs and as a result of its long-term membership of the Soviet Union, politically unreliable. Therefore White Ruthenia was treated as a separate entity within the Ostland. When studies on the region were written, however, they appeared not in Series C but, along with other reports on the Baltic states, in Series A, *Review of the Foreign Press, Enemy Countries, Axis-Controlled Europe*.²¹ The FO would come to rely heavily on the FRPS, and Elisabeth Pares in particular, for Baltic states intelligence reports. This reliance would lead to calls for the relocation of the FRPS to London and its transformation into a government body.

The FRPS Baltic States Section was able to produce the most accurate and detailed reports available on the German occupation of the East because of the quality and volume of intelligence received on the German occupation of the Ostland. Intelligence was far more difficult to obtain from the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine, where *Reichskommissar* Koch ran the country as his own personal fiefdom and ruled with the utmost brutality. The repressed population, as Slavs, were not entitled to the same political, economic and cultural privileges as the Balts and therefore any press circulation was minimal. There was great difficulty in smuggling out news of the occupation in spite of the widespread repudiation of Bolshevism. As there was no self-administration permitted in the Ukraine, travel was severely restricted and therefore there was little opportunity to smuggle out information. Politically the Ukraine was also far removed from the Allied sphere of influence whereas the Baltic states were still believed to be part of the Western sphere. The relative freedom of the Balts would lend itself to successful intelligence gathering.²²

²¹ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Letter from Warner at the FO Northern Department to Savery at the British Embassy to Poland, 5th November 1943

²² Karel C Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair* (Harvard 2004), p.191

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the FO readily accepted the involvement of the FRPS in monitoring the affairs of the Baltic states. This was very different to its earlier attitude of late 1940 and early 1941. The German invasion of the USSR had finally overwhelmed the FO intelligence capabilities, whereas the ability of the FRPS to step up to the challenge of assuming responsibility for intelligence analysis in the Baltic states was evident to the FO.

On 17th January 1942 an advanced copy of the second Ostland paper, written by Elisabeth Pares, was received by Dew at the FO Baltic States Department from Gillian Counsell in the form of a supplement to the weekly *Series A Review of the Foreign Press*. Counsell would take over the duties of Elisabeth Pares at the FRPS Enquires Section due to the latter's increase in workload at the Baltic States Section.²³ Dew wrote on 27th January 1942 that he found the paper to be 'exactly the type of thing we are very pleased to have for reference purposes and it will, I am sure, prove very useful'. Dew went on to ask Elisabeth Pares if he could have the additional details of losses of population, rolling stock and other materials as a result of the Soviet occupation and the war, that Elisabeth Pares had indicated she could supply.²⁴ This request resulted in Elisabeth Pares embarking upon an expanded programme that produced numerous specialist reports on the German occupation of the Baltic States for government circulation, in addition to her authorship of the Ostland supplement to *Series A of the Review of the Foreign Press*.

The 1942 Anglo-Soviet Treaty Negotiations and their Devastating Consequences for the Baltic States

Although by early 1942 the FRPS was showing signs that it could be of real value to the British government as a source of wartime intelligence regarding the Baltic states, events in

²³ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Letter from Gillian Counsell at the FRPS Enquiries Section to Dew at the FO Baltic States Department, 17th January 1942

²⁴ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Pares at the RIIA, 27th January 1942

London would soon mean that no matter how significant this intelligence proved to be its post-war value would, in all probability, be negligible.

The War Cabinet had waited until 6th February 1942, following Churchill's return from the United States, to meet and discuss their position regarding the Soviet demands for the 1941 frontiers. Beaverbrook, newly appointed Minister for War Production following his trip to Moscow, was determined that the British government should accept the Soviet demands. He argued that recent events had wiped out everything that had passed before the German invasion and that Stalin's requests were modest. Stalin would compromise regarding Poland's frontier, and the Baltic states were entrenched in her security, a subject which was covered in the Atlantic Charter. He recognised that the relationship with the Soviet Union was deteriorating and that the ready acceptance of these frontiers would revive the relationship. Beaverbrook thought it was worth remembering that the USSR had contributed far more to the war effort than the US, to whom Britain made frequent concessions. The British government had dragged her feet with regards to the Soviet Union's requests for military aid and declaring war on Finland, and it would be unwise to do so again.²⁵

Eden also recommended compliance but less forcefully than Beaverbrook. It was important, he said, 'that the Cabinet looked at the matter from the point of view of Anglo-Russian relations in their wider sense. It was of the utmost importance that these relations should be put on a better basis. Stalin wanted to sign treaties with Britain, not merely relating to our alliance in the war, but also to post-war cooperation. Unless we were in a position to sign treaties with him, we should not get any real cooperation'. Eden felt sure that no treaty could be signed except on the basis of Russia's June 1941 frontiers with Finland, the Baltic states and Romania. Eden foresaw three alternative ways of achieving this. One way of doing this would be to accept Stalin's demands although any agreement would of course have to be condoned by the US. Secondly the idea of conceding to the Soviet Union the right to have military bases in the Baltic states. Thirdly, upon the suggestion of Halifax, a proposal to grant the Soviets control over the Baltic states foreign policy and defence. Eden favoured the first option but realised, however, that this may well be unacceptable to the Americans and the

²⁵ PRO CAB 65/24/11, War Cabinet Minutes, Confidential Annexes, Minute 5: USSR, 6th February 1942

possibility of following option two was recorded, but the pursuit of option three was discounted.²⁶

Clement Attlee believed that acceptance of Stalin's demands would set a dangerous precedent and the British government would soon be faced with yet more demands. He was strongly opposed to the idea of strategic frontiers. The Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, on the other hand, was in favour of acceptance. The Secretary of State for Air stressed that at the end of the war the Russians would be fully entrenched in the Baltic states and the British government would be faced with *a fait accompli*, and therefore the government might as well offer recognition now and gain Stalin's favour. Churchill, however, stuck to the principle that all these discussions should wait until the peace conference, and favoured a 'balanced presentation'. Several ministers felt that the Prime Minister was avoiding the issue, while Eden assured Bevin that he believed the Soviets' demands on these countries were final. Despite considerable opposition, Churchill's view won through and a balanced statement was sent to the United States. Eden backed down. Beaverbrook was so infuriated at the War Cabinet's decision that he resigned over the issue on 9th February, while Attlee was also prepared to resign if the Soviet demands were met.²⁷ On 24th February the War Cabinet heard that President Roosevelt continued to believe that the acceptance of these demands would contravene the Atlantic Charter and would lead to greater demands. He considered trying to resolve the matter with Stalin directly but he was alive to the difficulties already faced by Britain in this regard, and was prepared to allow the British to wrestle with the problem.²⁸

The FO also favoured recognition of the Soviet demands, for it saw the Red Army in a different light to the COS. By early 1942 the FO began to consider the possibilities of an early Soviet victory. The FO's Deputy Under-Secretary Orme Sargent, was a realist, and despite his personal views of the dangers of appeasing the Russians, believed that the only way to have a hold on the Soviet Union in the post-war period would be to 'build up a store of goodwill and confidence to be drawn upon when relations with the Soviet Government

²⁶ PRO CAB 65/24/11, War Cabinet Minutes, Confidential Annexes, Minute 5: USSR, 6th February 1942

²⁷ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), p.116

²⁸ PRO CAB 66/22/26, War Cabinet Memoranda, Policy towards Russia, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24th February 1942

become difficult'. He suggested that the Red Army might soon defeat the Germans and that a treaty was needed which would include concessions on the Baltic states and 'other matters'.²⁹

By 7th March Churchill was at least trying to see the rationale behind recognising the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states when he wrote to the President. He stated that, since the Russians had agreed to the Atlantic Charter and as they were already in possession of the Baltic states, this issue should not stand in the way of making a treaty with them. The fact that, at the time of the signing of the Atlantic Charter, both Lithuania and Latvia were not under Soviet control was overlooked by Churchill. However, as Britain could not offer the Soviets a second front or increased supplies, the British felt they had little option but to agree to a Soviet proposal for a treaty between the two countries. Stalin told Churchill that Molotov would visit London to 'dispose of all matters which stood in the way of signing an agreement'.³⁰

On 1st April Roosevelt had indicated that he was willing to acquiesce to the British recognition of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states, stating that it would be helpful from the point of view of the Atlantic Charter and public opinion in the United States if Britain could insert a stipulation that, when the Soviet Union reoccupied these countries, Stalin should agree that any people who wanted to emigrate would be entitled to do so with their property. This stipulation should also apply to the parts of Finland and East Prussia that might be occupied. When the matter was to be made public the President would say that he had been informed but would say no more, and certainly would not indicate approval. Nevertheless with this admission the British hoped the concession of the 1941 frontiers of the Baltic states, Finland and Bessarabia would be enough to placate the Soviets. It soon became obvious that they were mistaken.³¹

It was in the initial meeting between Eden and Maisky in early May that the British first learnt of the Soviet proposals for the treaty. The British had four main objections. They contained no provision for the emigration of the inhabitants of the Baltic states and the

²⁹ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.117

³⁰ Ibid, pp.120-21

³¹ PRO CAB 66/23/24, War Cabinet Memoranda, Proposed Anglo-Soviet Treaty, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 5th April 1942

conquered parts of Finland and Romania, without which the British knew the United States would not condone the Soviet conquests. The Soviets demanded a clear-cut and definite statement by the British on the question of the Baltic states, which the British, mindful of American opinion, were not prepared to give. The British would only agree to a private recognition. There was also no allowance for the British to be involved in the settlement of Poland's eastern frontier, and finally there was no mention of the Allies' proposal for the formation of the United Nations.

News of a possible British capitulation on the issue of Baltic independence quickly began to circulate among MPs and there was even talk of any possible agreement being regarded as a 'Second Munich'.³² Influential MPs Duff Cooper and Harold Nicolson both intimated that they would find the British recognition of Soviet aggression difficult to reconcile.³³ Even the former leading 'appeaser' Sir John Simon suggested that as the Soviet Union would occupy the Baltic states anyway if victorious there was no need to sign a treaty which would only antagonise the United States.³⁴ Therefore before the talks with Molotov had even begun Churchill was under severe pressure from leading MPs not to recognise the Soviets claims to the Baltic states. As a result he decided that the leading ministers should be individually briefed on the treaty's importance prior to any signing being made public.³⁵ As Churchill told Eden he did not want to face 'a bunch of resignations' over the issue.³⁶

Talks with Molotov began on 21st May, and both Churchill and Eden were in attendance. It soon became apparent that the main stumbling blocks were the Soviet demands for a second front and their insistence that the Soviet-Poland frontier should be settled directly by those

³² FO 954/25A/9423, Soviet Union: Private Secretary, No 10 to Private Secretary weekly report on Parliamentary business. Growing opposition to Baltic Agreement, 27th April 1942

³³ FO 954/25A/9410, Soviet Union: From Mr. Duff Cooper. Protest against alleged British recognition of Russian occupation of Baltic States, 22nd April 1942; and FO 954/25A/9419, Soviet Union: From Mr. Harold Nicolson, MP Opposition to Baltic Agreement, 24th April 1942

³⁴ FO 954/25A/9441, Soviet Union: From Lord Simon (Lord Chancellor) to Prime Minister Expresses alarm about proposed Baltic Agreement, 8th May 1942

³⁵ FO 954/25A/9446, Soviet Union: Private Secretary No 10 to Private Secretary Foreign Office, Prime Minister's comment, 11th May 1942

³⁶ FO 954/25A/9448, Soviet Union: Prime Minister minute to Secretary of State, 13th May 1942

two countries. Therefore on the next day Eden presented Molotov with a new treaty in order to break the deadlock. The British proposed a twenty year mutual-assistance pact which would leave aside the difficult questions of frontiers and affirm Britain's desire that 'Russia, as our ally be strong and secure'. Molotov realised that this was the best deal on offer as his political proposals were completely unacceptable to the British and he therefore agreed to the proposal. The treaty, after approval from Moscow, was signed on 26th May 1942.³⁷

The treaty was a coup for Eden as he had managed to obtain a compromise from Molotov, who was a notoriously tough negotiator. The treaty committed the two powers to mutual help and assistance during and after the war. Both countries agreed not to enter into any negotiations with Nazi Germany, without consulting the other. No mention was made of frontiers or the post-war territorial settlement. Although it fell far short of Soviet expectations, there can be little doubt that it provided a much needed improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations, at a time when the British were unable to offer adequate military support to the Soviets in her life and death struggle. Regarding the Baltic states, as the British were willing to recognise Soviet hegemony over the region in the original treaty negotiations, they were in effect tied to this position for the rest of the war.

As a consequence of the decision to drop any mention of the Baltic states, the treaty was met with great approval by the British newspapers. For example on 13th June the *Manchester Guardian* ran an extensive article under the headline *THE NEW PACT, An Enthusiastic Reception* which stated 'the extreme importance attached universally to the Anglo-Russian Treaty... is reflected in incoming messages from all over the world'. The article then proceeded to highlight how the treaty was met positively around the globe. 'Even the hostility expressed by the enemies of the United Nations does not conceal its importance in their eyes' so the paper declared.³⁸

Following on from this partial recognition of the Soviets claim to the Baltic states, Eden brought before the cabinet a motion to remove the three Baltic Ministers from the Diplomatic List. Maisky had first requested this action in February, but Eden had stalled on the issue while the Soviets' claim for recognition of their 1941 was under discussion with the United

³⁷ Martin Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union*, pp.121-22

³⁸ The *Manchester Guardian* (1901-1959), 13th June 1942

States. Yet in June 1942, following the signing of the twenty year mutual-assistance treaty, Eden saw no reason not to take this action due to the expected admission of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union. Despite the British declaring their position to the Soviets, Maisky was still pushing for the removal of the Baltic Ministers from the Diplomatic List, though he did not demand that the Ministers should be deprived of their personal privileges. Eden thought the best way to resolve the issue would be to include the names of the Baltic Ministers in a separate annex under the heading 'list of persons no longer included in the foregoing list but still accepted by His Majesty's Government as possessing a diplomatic character'.³⁹ Eden hoped this would satisfy the Soviets, yet dispel the United States suspicions that the British government had, after all, reached some arrangement with the Soviets in regards to the Baltic states in connection with the treaty negotiations. The War Cabinet agreed with Eden's proposal on 29th June.⁴⁰

With the successful opening of the German summer offensive towards Stalingrad in July 1942, the Soviet Union once again increased the pressure for a second front to relieve the pressure on the eastern front, as she appeared to be entering her death throes. At the same time the Soviets also renewed their attempts to obtain official British recognition of their annexation of the Baltic states. Clark Kerr thought that, as there was no way of getting the Soviets out of the Baltic states once they were there, recognition might as well be given. Churchill again felt that such a plan would confront him with 'a bunch of resignations'.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, the question of a second front dominated Anglo-Soviet relations. This could not realistically be considered until 1943, as the lack of landing craft was a serious limiting factor. Churchill, on the suggestion of Kerr agreed to travel to Moscow on 12th August 1942 where he would tell Stalin that there could not be a second front in 1943.⁴²

³⁹ PRO CAB 66/25/49, War Cabinet Memoranda, Representatives of the Baltic States, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 27th June 1942

⁴⁰ PRO CAB 65/26/44, War Cabinet Minutes, Cabinet Conclusions, 5. The Baltic States, Status of Representatives in this country, 29th June 1942

⁴¹ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.127

⁴² Ibid, pp.132-33

Monitoring continues regardless

By 25th August 1942 the FRPS had become the FO's most prolific and detailed source of information on the German occupation of the Baltic states. Since November 1941 Elisabeth Pares had produced seven Ostland supplements to the *Review of the Foreign Press*.⁴³ She had also written six specialised reports on the German administration in the Ostland, covering such topics as personalities, control of the press, transport and communications, German industrial groups and firms, repatriation of Germans and the requested losses as a result of the Russo-German war. Many of these reports were particularly lengthy.⁴⁴ The openness and cooperation between Pares, Dew and Skaife would endure and was no doubt a major factor in the achievement of Elisabeth Pares in writing with such proficiency and detail over a broad range of subjects. As a result of the quantity of detailed specialised reports flooding into the FO from Elisabeth Pares in 1942, Wilson felt compelled to write to G. Birkett at the FRPS. On 26th August he asked for a summary of the reports received by the FO on the German administration of the Ostland, as 'they have covered a very wide variety of subjects in some detail and we are anxious to have a short analysis of the information'. The summary was to be 2,000 words in length.⁴⁵ Within a year the FRPS Baltic States Section had eased the FO Baltic States Department's concerns regarding its lack of intelligence on the German occupation of the Ostland and had now arrived at a position where the FO Northern Department was forced to ask the FRPS for a summary of the information as a result of the abundance of reports received by the FO.

By 1st September 1942 Elisabeth Pares had completed this summary, entitled 'German Policy and Practice in the Ostland'. Elisabeth Pares sent Wilson four copies of her work; one was to be sent to Miss Harvey at the newly formed Economics and Reconstruction Department of the FO which would become closely involved with the FRPS from 1943 as part of its post war planning interests. Importantly Pares, when sending a copy to Dew at the FO Baltic

⁴³ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, List of Supplements to the Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, 1st March 1943, p.3

⁴⁴ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Wilson, 25th August 1942

⁴⁵ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Letter from Wilson at the FO Northern Department to Birkett at the FRPS, 26th August 1942

States Department, declared: 'I always send him a copy of anything that I write on the Ostland'.⁴⁶

Despite the key role the FRPS Baltic States Section played in supplying the FO with intelligence, there was still a lack of appreciation of the work of Elisabeth Pares from G.M. Wilson. On 6th October 1942 he was asked by the FO Central Department whether he thought the information used in Elisabeth Pares' Ostland Supplement of 28th September 'is as good, as compared with our sources on the Ukraine'. Wilson replied: 'The sources for this paper as far as I can make out are entirely German publications. It is not really comparable with the paper on the Ukraine which was to a great extent united as well as factual. This is purely an analysis from German sources, of what the Germans are doing'. Nevertheless, Wilson grudgingly admitted that 'I see no reason not to believe that it is fairly accurate'.⁴⁷ As stated earlier, on 1st November Wilson would also describe Elisabeth Pares' Ostland summary, German Policy and Practice in the Ostland, as 'stupendously dull' but again he was forced to admit that it was full of facts and figures and therefore worth printing. The Central Department and the Economic and Reconstruction Department agreed with Wilson that the summary was worth printing. It is evident that Wilson only reluctantly accepted the value of the FRPS work on the Baltic states.⁴⁸ Other parties, however, were only too pleased to receive the highly regarded supplement on the Ostland. On 18th November Elisabeth Pares wrote to Dew at the FO Baltic States Department stating that 'the Quarter-master Commanding the HQ of the United States Army in this country asked in September if he could be placed on the circulation list for Series A of our *Review of the Foreign Press* including all supplements and particularly those dealing with the Ostland'.⁴⁹ On 27th

⁴⁶ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Letter from Pares at the FRPS Enquiries Section to Wilson at the FO Northern Department, 1st September 1942

⁴⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by FO Central Department and Wilson, 6th and 8th October 1942

⁴⁸ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Wilson, 1st November 1942

⁴⁹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Letter from Pares at the FRPS Baltic States Section to Dew at the FO Baltic States Department, 18th November 1942

November both the Northern and Economic and Reconstruction Departments agreed to this request.⁵⁰

Throughout the rest of 1942, in addition to the summary of German Policy and Practice in the Ostland, three Ostland supplements to the *Review of the Foreign Press* were produced by Elisabeth Pares, two standard four page supplements and one five page edition covering German economic trusteeships in the Ostland. Elisabeth Pares also wrote two specialised reports entitled 'Area and Population' and 'Administration in the Ostland'.⁵¹

The abundance of material gathered from Stockholm, together with Elisabeth Pares' analytical prowess, enabled the FRPS Baltic States Section to become, in 1942, one of the most prolific producers of specialist memoranda and supplements in the entire FRPS. It far out produced the other 'Eastern' sections of the FRPS. From its first Ostland Supplement on 17th November 1941 to the end of 1942 ten supplements were produced by the FRPS Baltic States Section, compared to just one (17th February 1941) concerning Poland's General Government, and two for the Ukraine (October 1942).⁵² This also compares well with other countries over the same period. After 1940 one supplement was produced for Czechoslovakia, three for Denmark and Norway and four for the Low Countries. Even the number of Ostland supplements that were produced compared favourably with the largest producer of supplements, the Germany section. Supplements covering Germany were split into three categories, Germany (Economic), Germany (Home Front) and Germany (Miscellaneous). In total 28 supplements were produced by the FRPS Germany Section to February 1943.⁵³

⁵⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Pares at the FRPS, 27th November 1942

⁵¹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, pp.1-5

⁵² FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, List of Supplements to the Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, 1st March 1943, p.3 and Ibid, A year of German-Occupied Ukraine-I, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series C, No 157, 8th October 1942 and Ibid, Series C, A year of German-Occupied Ukraine-II, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series C, No 158, 15th October 1942

⁵³ Ibid, Series A, List of Supplements to the Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, 1st March 1943, pp.1-3

The standard of work produced by Elisabeth Pares was soon being recognised across the FO Departments and FRPS Sections. Towards the end of 1942 she was asked to write a supplement for the Germany Economic Supplement 'The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe' which was printed on 18th January 1943 to widespread inter-departmental approval.⁵⁴ Such a work would have been of great use in the construction of the FO handbook on Eastern Europe. The paper would also have been invaluable to the Reconstruction Problems Committee who had requested a paper covering German economic reorganisation, to gauge its possible effects on post-war policy.⁵⁵ Elisabeth Pares' analytical skill and fiscal knowledge would ensure that the FO and PHPS were fully aware of the precise events in the region. Elisabeth Pares was adept at producing these studies, which covered not only the Baltic states, but other areas such as Poland. This was due in part to her membership of the FRPS Poland Research Section but also because of her personal interest in the region. She produced two more extensive memoranda, covering the East, one on 27th April 1943 entitled 'The Administration of Justice in the General Government and Occupied Eastern Territories', the other on 15th June 1943 entitled 'Colonization of the German East'.⁵⁶

The FRPS reports concerning the German economic exploitation of the Baltic states are typical examples of the FRPS Baltic States Section's ability to supply high calibre intelligence to the British government. In particular the lengthy reports on Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, German Economic Trusteeship and The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe were extremely detailed. These reports precisely met the requirements of the Reconstruction Committee for information regarding the German re-organisation of the European economy and the legacy that it would leave behind.

⁵⁴ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Dew at the FO to Elisabeth Pares at the FRPS Baltic States Section, 3rd March 1943

⁵⁵ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Sir George Crystal Secretary of the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems to Sir Leith-Ross at MEW, 1st April 1941

⁵⁶ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, Chronological List of Memoranda Nos. 1-339, 26th June 1945, p.1

For example the FRPS was able to report that, in order to comply with the 19th August 1941 decree for a trusteeship to oversee the control of all landed property, a single giant trustee company was formed on 10th December 1941, the *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft Ostland mbH* (LO) with its headquarters in Riga and branches in Reval, Kaunas, Minsk and Pskov. The LO was not only responsible for the actual management of state farms and auxiliary plants, of all machine tractors stations, and of collective farms which have not yet been broken up, but also administered in trust, at any rate nominally, the entire landed property of the Ostland. In practice, however, the LO activities were restricted to the confiscated properties of Jews and Communists and to farms which had become ownerless as a result of war or Soviet deportation in June 1941 as well the properties of Germans repatriated to the Reich. Most of the farms were handed over to Baltic farmers for management.⁵⁷ The FRPS report covering German Economic Trusteeship declared that the regional branches and subordinate offices of the LO were very closely related with the Commissarial administration. For example, the manager of the LO branch in Latvia was attached as ‘Referent’ to the General Commissariat’s Department of Food and Agriculture and, in matters relating to production and purchase, took orders from its chief.⁵⁸

In the banking sector the FRPS observed that there were 15 ‘Reich Credit Banks’ *Reichskreditkassen* in the Ostland, six in Latvia, four in Estonia, four in Lithuania and there was also a branch in Pskov which had been administratively attached to Estonia. The introduction of a new bank of issue and the *Ostlandmark* was to be delayed for the duration of the war. The intention to bring a proposed *Ostlandmark* at the same exchange rate as the *Reichsmark* as well as the installation of a new *Notenbank*, authorised to deal in gold and foreign exchange at the prevailing *Reichsbank* prices, were clear indicators to the FRPS that the Ostland’s economic place in the New Order was secure.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd July 1942, p.5

⁵⁸ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.2

⁵⁹ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe, Supplement to Review of the

It has been argued by Martin H. Folly that the FRPS political analysis, which fed into Northern Department political discussions ‘was not particularly influential’, except from those contributions that were made by Skaife on reconstruction.⁶⁰ However, the British government actually relied upon the FRPS for information on developments in the German occupied Baltic states, and Skaife deferred matters concerning the Baltic states to Elisabeth Pares. The majority of FO memoranda written by the FO officials concerning the Baltic states were based on information gleaned from the FRPS Review of the Foreign Press or specialist memoranda. The FRPS material can therefore be regarded as highly influential, just as the 1941 government enquiry had envisaged. As Eden had championed the cause of the FRPS in 1941 in the House of Commons, endorsed the findings of the government enquiry and recommended the organisation to the Committee on Post-War Reconstruction Problems, it can therefore be assumed that he would have valued its work and made use of its findings.

All told, wartime memoranda produced by the FRPS make it abundantly clear that the FRPS Baltic States Section could produce high quality work on a large scale; had the overt intelligence at hand to do so; and, given the ban on secret intelligence gathering along with the guidelines laid out in the government enquiry of February 1941, was encouraged by the FO. Indeed, the FO’s numerous requests to Elisabeth Pares for specialist memoranda are clear evidence of such encouragement. The FRPS Baltic States Section produced reports that were significant, influential and in great demand within the Foreign Office at a time when press intelligence was the only window into the ‘Ostland’.

It is clear that the FRPS influenced decisions made at the FO during the critical years when Germany occupied much of Eastern Europe. The FRPS Baltic States Section and Russian Research Section made important contributions to the formation of British government policy. Elisabeth Pares, in her capacity as head of both the Baltic States Section and the Enquiries Section at FRPS, out-produced the other ‘Eastern’ sections within that organisation, and her timely reports reinforced the view that a post-war return to

Foreign Press, Series A, No 171, Foreign Research and Press Service, 18th January 1943, pp.4-5

⁶⁰ Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945 (Basingstoke 2000), p.44

democratically-elected governments in the Baltic states and Poland was an unrealistic aim. As a consequence of the British government's weak performance during the Anglo-Soviet treaty negotiations of May 1942, many in Whitehall would need little persuading that the FRPS Baltic States Section forecasts were correct.

Chapter 5

The Foreign Office Research Department Baltic States Section 1943 – 1944

By 1943 the dissenting voices in the FO had well and truly been silenced. Over the coming years Elisabeth Pares would be asked to write not just on the Baltic states under German occupation but also on other nations in eastern Europe that had been occupied by the Germans. This alone is a clear sign that her work was deemed useful. With the incorporation of the FRPS into the FO to form the FORD her personal reputation grew still further, while ultimately she would play a key role in post-hostilities planning in the years 1943 - 1944.

It would need the Soviet victory at Stalingrad in early 1943 to improve Anglo-Soviet relations. The British victory at El Alamein in November 1942 had not impressed the Soviets, largely because the Soviets viewed the war in the desert as a sideshow to the war in the East. The Soviets were also bitterly disappointed over the postponement of an Allied landing in France.¹ The promised resumption of the Arctic supply convoys, following the tremendous losses in the summer of 1942, had failed to materialise and also caused a great deal of resentment in the Kremlin.² At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed that, following the defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa, an invasion of Sicily should be undertaken prior to an invasion of France. Churchill informed Stalin of this decision, who correctly understood this to mean that no invasion of France would occur until 1944 at the earliest.³

¹ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), p.145

² Ibid, p.151

³ Ibid, p.148

1942 had been a pivotal year in the establishment of the FRPS in government circles. Its work was now seen as of vital importance in providing those ministries involved with the prosecution of the war with up to date information on German-occupied Europe, particularly in the Ostland where, as we have seen, many factors aided its intelligence gathering. The PID and FRPS cooperation in obtaining the German press from neutral Sweden as well as other documents, via friendly Baltic sources, was the key ingredient in FRPS Baltic Section's success. As a result of the success of the FRPS in 1942 it was recognised at the beginning of 1943 that it was now necessary to remove one of the last obstacles that had earlier hindered the relationship between the FRPS and the FO, namely the remote location of the FRPS in Oxford. It was agreed by Toynbee and Eden that the FRPS should be moved to London and amalgamated with the FO's PID to form the Foreign Office Research Department (FORD) in April 1943. This allowed the FO, which had realised that it was losing control of post-war planning issues to the FRPS, to remove the impression that its policies were being determined by 'long haired academics'.⁴ The PID name continued to be used as cover for FORD.

On 3rd March 1943 Eden declared that the work of the FRPS was now of 'increasing value', no doubt due to the favourable change in the war situation as a result of the German defeat at Stalingrad and the Western Allies' impending victory in North Africa.⁵ There was the possibility that the post-war planning being undertaken by the FRPS might be needed in the near future if these devastating defeats were followed by an internal political collapse in the Reich. For this reason Eden was keen to bring the FRPS into the FO structure as soon as possible in order to produce the best results from the post-war planning role of the FRPS. Eden stated to the House of Commons on 14th April 1943 that the FRPS 'research and reference work has been highly valued, and I have judged it advisable to associate this organisation still more closely with my Department by transferring the administrative control and the entire cost from the Royal Institute of International Affairs to the Foreign Office and by removing the organisation to London, where it will henceforth be known as the Foreign

⁴ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 21:4 (1986), p.549

⁵ Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> FRPS, HC Deb 03 March 1943 vol 387 cc518-9

Office Research Department'.⁶ Whereas the FRPS had been viewed by the FO as a poor relation in early 1941 by 1943, after its union with the PID to form the FORD, it had become the main political research body of the FO. All FRPS personnel were temporarily given Civil Service status for the duration of the war.

The FO Baltic States Department took a positive view of this move as it would see greater amounts of intelligence generated from the Ostland. The difficulties experienced by other departments in working with the FRPS had always been avoided at the Baltic States Section level. This was due to Skaife's determination at the PID to supply intelligence to Elisabeth Pares. Their close working relationship was complemented by Dew's ready acceptance, at the FO Baltic States Department, of all the work undertaken by Elisabeth Pares and this boded well for the work of the FORD. In terms of post-war planning the pre-war annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union would always be the main obstacle to the usefulness of the reports of the FRPS and FORD in planning for any reconstitution of the independence of the Baltic states.

In early 1943 it was suggested that the FRPS would best be employed alongside the FO Economic and Reconstruction Department as the latter's chief function was post-war planning.⁷ By 12th March 1943 FRPS staff were assisting the Economic and Reconstruction Department staff and vice versa. For example, all correspondence from the United States Legation in Stockholm was handled by the head of the FRPS Enquiries Section Gillian Counsell on behalf of Lord Hood, the chief of the Economic and Reconstruction Department. This correspondence included important documents such as the twenty-five page report on the German colonization of Lithuania.⁸ Lord Hood was already describing the FRPS-PID as a single entity when he was determining the value of the document. Hood also indicated that

⁶ Hansard 1803-2005 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> Research Department, HC Deb 14 April 1943 vol 388 cc1183-4

⁷ John D. Cantwell, The Second World War, A guide to Documents in the Public Record Office (Kew 1998), p.99

⁸ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Ministry of Information cover sheet, 12th March 1943 and PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Notes on Ministry of Economic Warfare letter to Dew at the FO, 1st July 1943

the MEW and the PWE would also be interested in the document.⁹ The arrival of the FRPS in London and its official amalgamation with the PID in April 1943 meant that no intelligence would be missed by the Baltic States Section of the FORD. Elisabeth Pares, as a leading member of FORD, was privy to British intelligence as soon as it arrived in the country and the time-consuming transfer of information to Oxford by the PID was therefore avoided.

By the beginning of 1943 the FRPS Baltic States Section had gained a reputation for an extremely high standard of work and it was deemed that other departments outside of the Northern Department might find its work useful. Wilson suggested 'that it might be useful to compare German administration in the USSR with German administration elsewhere'.¹⁰ This resulted in a paper prepared by Elisabeth Pares on 18th January 1943 entitled 'The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe'.¹¹ Allen of the FO Central Department agreed that 'as our information on this subject was not very extensive it might be useful to have such a study, particularly as it might help us to assess the extent of and success of German penetration in this area and to compare German methods in the East with those followed elsewhere'. Allen went on to say that 'in spite of being unnecessarily detailed for our purposes it contains a good deal of information which is new to me and which might be found valuable by other departments'.¹² On 1st February Hood, at the Economic and Reconstruction Department, wrote to the PWE and MEW to ascertain whether they would find these broad studies useful as he recognised that a good deal of work and time had gone

⁹ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Notes on FO Northern Department minutes by Lord Hood of the FO Economic and Reconstruction Department, 13th March 1943

¹⁰ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Wilson at the FO Northern Department, 22nd January 1943

¹¹ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 171, Foreign Research and Press Service, 18th January 1943, pp.1-6

¹² PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Allen at the FO Central Department, 23rd January 1943

into their production and wanted to know their opinions on whether the results justified the effort.¹³

On 15th February Mr Turner of the MEW replied to Hood saying that, although there was a good deal of overlap, in this case ‘as far as the more general aspects of German administration in Eastern territories are concerned we ourselves are preparing a paper... which will include a chapter on German administrative methods in all the occupied territories. Although the Eastern territories will be covered in this chapter they will not be dealt with in the same degree of detail as they would if treated as a separate study. It may be, therefore, that the study should be undertaken by FRPS’. The MEW went on to describe the fundamental flaw of the FRPS, prior to its relocation to London: ‘As long they remain in Oxford it is not easy to make our records available to them. I understand that authority has now been given for FRPS to move to London, and when this materialises we should be able to overcome the present difficulties. If they do not, or until they do, the only solution would seem to be for them to keep in close touch with us on economic studies so that we can compare notes’.¹⁴

On 3rd March 1943 Dew notified Elisabeth Pares that ‘PWE find your paper on the Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe a comprehensive and valuable piece of work, and they would like to see more of the same type. They suggest, however, that you should give them advance notice of your programme so that they could suggest alterations and adjustments in their own programme accordingly. This would also give them an opportunity of passing on to you relevant information which they may possess’.¹⁵ The FRPS Baltic States Section was evidently now being asked to branch out and provide studies of the entire occupied East. Elisabeth Pares was asked to liaise with the PWE’s H.E. Bowman

¹³ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Hood at the FO Economic and Reconstruction Department to Balfour at the Political Warfare Executive and to Turner at the Ministry of Economic Warfare, 1st February 1943

¹⁴ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Turner at the Ministry of Economic Warfare to Hood at the FO Economic and Reconstruction Department, 15th February 1943

¹⁵ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Pares at the FRPS Baltic States Section, 3rd March 1943

or M. Balfour at Bush House, while the concerns of the MEW regarding overlapping were handled by the FRPS German Section head, Mr Marshall.¹⁶ As previously stated Elisabeth Pares would produce two more extensive memoranda, covering the East, one on 27th April 1943 entitled 'The Administration of Justice in the General Government and Occupied Eastern Territories', the other on 15th June 1943 entitled 'Colonisation of the German East'.¹⁷

The fourth member region of *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, *Generalbezirk White Ruthenia* (White Russia), would only receive very occasional references in the Ostland Supplement/Memoranda, due to the difficulties in obtaining information. Part of the 31st August 1942, 6th July 1943 and 18th April 1944 issues were devoted to its administration. The FORD Baltic States Section did, however, produce one memorandum on 26th October 1943 that was devoted to White Russia. In March 1943 two more memoranda covering the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* were also produced by the FRPS.¹⁸ By comparison ten more Ostland Memoranda would be produced by Elisabeth Pares for the Review of the Foreign Press, continuing until the end of the German Occupation of the Ostland in September 1944.¹⁹ As the following chapters will show, their level of detail was impressive, particularly considering that the majority of intelligence was obtained from the German press. If the Germans had known of the success of the FRPS in gathering intelligence from the Ostland, they would have probably taken steps to restrict the export of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* to Sweden a long time before they finally did so in February 1943. The *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* could now only be irregularly smuggled out of the Ostland.²⁰ This only occurred as a measure of 'total war', following the Stalingrad catastrophe, and not as a result of any real knowledge of the level of detail obtained, from their own press, of occupational

¹⁶ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Dew at the FO Baltic States Department to Pares at the FRPS Baltic States Section, 12th March 1943 and PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, Letter from Pares at the FRPS Baltic States Section to Dew at the FO Baltic States Department, 8th March 1943

¹⁷ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, Chronological List of Memoranda Nos. 1-339, 26th June 1945, p.1

¹⁸ Ibid, Series A, List of Supplements to the Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, 1st March 1943, p.3 and Ibid, Series A, Chronological List of Memoranda Nos. 1-339, 26th June 1945, p.6

¹⁹ Ibid, Series A, Chronological List of Memoranda Nos. 1-339, 26th June 1945, p.1

²⁰ Gerhard P. Bassler, Alfred Valdmanis and the Politics of Survival (Toronto 2000), p.164

policies in the Ostland and the wider 'East'. As a result from February 1943 the *Revaler Zeitung*, grew significantly in importance to the FRPS and later FORD as the SPRB was still able to obtain the paper regularly via Finland. This continuing success allowed the FRPS/FORD to establish a continuous flow of German press from the Ostland until the last month of the German occupation of Estonia.²¹

By 1943 the structure of German civilian rule in the Ostland had been exhaustively covered by the FRPS Baltic States Section's specialist reports for the FO with the last of these specialist reports issued on the 2nd January 1943 covering the German press. In addition to the extensive memoranda on banking, justice and colonisation in Eastern Europe there were only four Ostland supplements produced for the rest of 1943. The last FRPS Ostland supplement from Oxford was printed on the 1st March 1943 and the three other Ostland supplements were issued by the FORD from Whitehall.²²

Following the Red Army's victory at Stalingrad the Soviets once again made demands regarding its 1941 frontiers, this time concerning Poland. This was a sign that the Soviets considered the question of the Baltic states as successfully closed. In April 1943 Roosevelt finally became reconciled to the loss of the Baltic states after the war as a result of a Soviet *fait accompli* and he could not see who could remove them. Unrealistically the President was keen on plebiscites as a conscience clause, something the Soviets would, no doubt, have argued had already occurred in 1940.²³ One party elections had occurred in July 1940 following the Soviet Occupation of the Baltic states, these elections were of course rigged and despite a general boycott; the Soviets achieved their desired majorities. Following the elections the three Baltic states formally 'asked' to be annexed to the Soviet Union. This duly occurred in August 1940.²⁴

²¹ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.44 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 6th July 1943, p.1

²² PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.3, Issued with Review A, No. 177, Foreign Research and Press Service, 1st March 1943, pp.1-6

²³ PRO CAB 65/38/2, War Cabinet Minutes, Foreign Secretary's visit to the United States, Cabinet Meeting Minute, 13th April 1943

²⁴ Romuald J Misiunas, The Baltic States, Years of Dependence (London 1983), p.40

From April 1943 the FORD Baltic States Section could read the reviews of the situation in Lithuania produced by the Lithuanian legation in Washington. These reviews were, however, found to be of limited value. Elisabeth Pares was also privy to news from the SPRB, the Washington State Department and all the documents that Skaife, formerly of the PID, could obtain relating to the Baltic states. Other important material that Elisabeth Pares viewed included a translated copy of an appeal for mobilisation in the autumn of 1943 by the head of the self-administration in Lithuania, Councillor General Kubiliunas, and an appeal to the Germans in March 1942 by Professor M. Birzsika, the Rector of Vilnius University, not to close his institution. These documents were not received by the FO Northern Department until 1944 proving that intelligence gathering sources, outside of the foreign press, were not always the quickest form of intelligence. The Northern Department received these documents from the British Ambassador to Poland, Frank Savery, who in turn had obtained them from Westfal, the Lithuanian expert in the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.²⁵ It is known that Elisabeth Pares also viewed these documents as the FO cover sheets bear her initials.²⁶

The transfer of the FRPS to London did not, however, solve all the past problems for, despite the amalgamation of the combined personnel of the FRPS and PID in 1943, the FORD had to declare to the British Ambassador to Poland that it could only accept translations of Lithuanian documents as it had no one able to read Lithuanian. In exceptional circumstances an employee of the BBC was used.²⁷

Meanwhile in August 1943 Churchill and Roosevelt met in Quebec to discuss future Allied strategy. Churchill managed to dissuade the American from the idea of launching a swift cross-Channel invasion in 1943, and instead Italy was agreed as the next invasion area to be followed by an invasion of northern France in May 1944. Churchill was now prepared to

²⁵ PRO FO 371/43051, Situation in Lithuania 1944, Appeal by Councillor General Kubiliunas of the Lithuanian Self-administration for Labour Mobilisation, 18th September 1943, received by FO Baltic States Department by 11th February 1944 and Memorandum by Professor Birzsika Rector of Vilnius University to German Plenipotentiary of the Reich for Higher Schools in *Generalbezirk* Lithuania, 16th March 1942, received by FO Baltic States Department by 4th January 1944

²⁶ PRO FO 371/43051, Situation in Lithuania 1944, FO Baltic States Department cover sheet initialled by Pares of the FORD, 10th March 1944

²⁷ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Northern Department, 28th October 1943

participate in a 'Big Three' meeting with Stalin and Roosevelt. Stalin gave his consent and it was finally decided that Teheran would be the best meeting place as Stalin did not want to travel too far from the Eastern front.²⁸ To save time it was decided that there should be a Foreign Ministers' conference in Moscow in October to precede the main conference so that the key questions for the forthcoming conference could be determined.²⁹

The Effect of Allied Diplomacy on Ostland Monitoring

In his notes for the Moscow meeting, Eden wrote that there was little prospect of independence for the Baltic states after the war. In any event Britain had indicated her complicity to the Soviets during the 1942 Anglo-Soviet treaty negotiations.³⁰ On 5th October Churchill argued in front of the War Cabinet that Germany should be built up as a bulwark against Russia. Eden suspected that this was an attempt by Churchill to wriggle out of his commitment to launch a second front in 1944, and he was prepared to resign if this was the case.³¹ Churchill once again was determined not to make any commitments to the Soviets regarding Poland's eastern frontiers. Despite the fears of Eden, the Moscow conference was a success and the Soviets were satisfied with the British reasons for the delays in launching the second front.³²

Eden was particularly pleased that the question of the Polish frontier had been avoided and he encouraged the Poles to come to terms with the Soviets over the frontier issue as they would otherwise face a *fait accompli*. The Poles, however, steadfastly refused to accept the Curzon Line, either with or without Lvov, with compensation in the form Danzig, East Prussia and Silesia as Poland's post-war Eastern border. Instead the Poles told Eden that they placed their hopes on an uprising that would coincide with the arrival of Soviet troops on Polish soil.³³

²⁸ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), pp.161-62

²⁹ Ibid, p.164

³⁰ PRO CAB 66/41/38, War Cabinet Memoranda, Western Frontiers of the USSR, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 5th October 1943

³¹ PRO CAB 65/40/1, War Cabinet Minutes, Minute 3: Anglo-Soviet American Conference, 5th October 1943

³² Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.168

³³ Ibid, p.173

As with the reporting of the signing of the Anglo-Soviet treaty the reaction of the press following the Moscow conference was overwhelmingly positive. However the *Manchester Guardian* noted on 14th October that *Pravda* had stated in regards to the Soviet Union's borders and the status of the Baltic states that 'everyone ought to know that the Soviet Union's borders can no more be a question for discussion than those of the United States or the status of California'.³⁴ While the same paper declared on 3rd November that apart from a few isolationists in the US Senate who had concerns for the future of the Baltic states. Most senators expressed strong pleasure at the news from Moscow.³⁵ The attitude of the British press is perhaps best highlighted by the *Guardian's* article of 12th November which commented on the reaction of both houses of parliament to Eden's speech in the Commons following his return from Moscow. The article stated that 'Mr Eden was deservedly praised by both Houses for his success in Moscow, but this is, in fact, only part of his achievement. He was largely responsible also for the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of June 1942. That treaty and the Moscow Declarations spring from the same policy. Mr Eden has steadily held that the highest interests of this country demand that it should work with Russia, and he has firmly believed that this was also a practicable policy. So far his wisdom and tenacity are richly justified'.³⁶

As the potential for a German disintegration of power in the Ostland increased from the autumn of 1943, the SPRB was asked to prepare to embark on a new source of intelligence gathering. On 21st October 1943 W. F. King of the MoI replied to a memo from Henry Hope of the PID stating that, as Hope had requested, he had taken up the matter of interviewing escapees from the Baltic states. This was a request that had been made via the PID by the PWE.³⁷ On 4th November 1943 an aide-memoire highlighted the reasoning behind this request and described the type of information desired by the PWE. 'During the interim period, i.e. between the abandonment of Baltic territory by the Germans and its effective occupation and control by the Russians, there will probably be a certain flow of Balt refugees into Sweden. These refugees, many of whom will probably find their way to Stockholm, should be able to provide a good deal of information of considerable value from a counter-

³⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* (1901-1959), 14th October 1943

³⁵ *Ibid*, 3rd November 1943

³⁶ *Ibid*, 12th November 1943

³⁷ PRO FO 898/253, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Organisation and Staff 1942-1943, Letter from King at the MoI to Hope at the PID, 21st October 1943

propaganda point of view. The kind of information that PWE want is (a) not so much what the Balts think of the Russians but what they think of the Germans, (b) how the Germans have behaved towards them, (c) what the Germans themselves have been feeling and thinking, and (d) generally, any facts about conditions during the German occupation'.³⁸

As King declared to Hope, Parrott would have little difficulty in establishing the necessary contacts or obtaining the information that the PWE desired. A major obstacle, however, stood in his way. 'Parrott and other members of the Legation are under strict injunction from the FO to avoid all contact with persons from Baltic states and Finland' for fear of angering the Soviets. King discussed this issue with Pollock at the Chancery, who in turn wrote to Loxley urging 'that some relaxation of FO restrictions should be made in Parrott's favour, which will permit him to make the desired contacts'. King went on to declare that another obstacle was the attitude of the SIS in Sweden, who feared that their contacts might be disturbed by the SPRB interrogations of Balt refugees. King believed that Parrott could be relied upon to act intelligently and with complete discretion. Nevertheless, despite a close personal relationship between Carr, the head of the SIS in Stockholm, and Parrott, Carr would not sanction the operation. King concluded that 'unless Carr and the FO, particularly the FO, can be induced to modify their attitudes, at least temporarily, there is nothing Parrott can do and the opportunity to obtain the information you want will be lost'.³⁹ On 5th November 1943 the FO did, however, grant a provisional agreement. Parrott could have a free hand in interviewing refugees on the condition that this did not inconvenience any SIS contacts.⁴⁰ The relaxation of the FO ban shows that the FO was desperate for information on the German occupation of the Baltic states, despite the risk of the Soviets becoming aware of the interviews. This is quite remarkable considering that any intelligence scandal, however minor, could only jeopardise Anglo-Soviet relations.

During the Teheran conference, held between 28th November and 1st December 1943, the decision to launch the cross-Channel invasion in 1944 was reaffirmed and the latest

³⁸ PRO FO 898/253, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Organisation and Staff 1942-1943, Interviewing of Escapees from Baltic States, Aide-memoire, 4th November 1943

³⁹ PRO FO 898/253, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Organisation and Staff 1942-1943, Letter from King at the MoI to Hope at the PID, 21st October 1943

⁴⁰ PRO FO 898/253, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Organisation and Staff 1942-1943, Interviewing of Escapees from Baltic States, Provisional Agreement, 5th November 1943

postponement date was set as June that year. Stalin was pleased that a firm commitment had finally been made on the second front. Agreement was reached that the Curzon Line, with or without Lvov, should be the Soviet-Polish frontier, though the Western Allies knew the Poles would never agree to this.⁴¹ Regarding the Baltic states, Stalin stated unequivocally that the Baltic question was no longer a matter for discussion since the Baltic peoples had opted for membership of the Soviet Union in national referenda. Stalin therefore definitively ended the question of Baltic independence.⁴² For the remaining part of the war Anglo-Soviet relations focused on the future of Poland and the post-war settlement. Indeed the Soviets believed that the Western Allies had recognised their right to establish 'friendly governments' in Eastern Europe. Stalin was correct in thinking he had secured a major victory at Teheran.⁴³

The growing threat of Soviet conquest undoubtedly had an effect on British policy towards the Baltic states. The geographic location of the Baltic states would be instrumental in determining whether the FORD considered the region to be a realistic area for post-war planning. Following the Moscow and Teheran Conferences late in 1943, the British were left in no doubt by the Soviets that they would not be relinquishing the Baltic states and a British *de facto* recognition of the Soviet annexation of the States followed.⁴⁴ Perhaps this played a part in the reduction in the number of Ostland supplements written by Elisabeth Pares. It is also possible that, due to the disintegration of German rule in 1944, up to date intelligence may have become harder to acquire. A combination of the two is the most likely. During the eight months of German occupation of the Baltic states in 1944 only four Ostland supplements, were produced; the final supplement in August charted the beginning of the collapse of German rule in the Ostland.⁴⁵

The looming threat of Soviet domination of the Baltic states also affected FORD intelligence gathering in an entirely different way. Although FORD was delighted to receive information from Westfal, the Lithuanian expert at the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the disastrous

⁴¹ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.175

⁴² Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States, The Years of Independence (London 1974), pp.233-34

⁴³ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, p.176

⁴⁴ Georg von Rauch, The Baltic States, The Years of Independence, pp.233-34

⁴⁵ PRO FO 371/43060, Disintegration of the Ostland 1944, No.220 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 29th August 1944, pp.1-3

relationship between the Poles and the Soviets presented a major problem.⁴⁶ The situation worsened after April 1943 following the German discovery and publication of the site of the massacre at Katyn where the NKVD had executed thousands of Polish officers.⁴⁷ In July 1943, for example, the FO Northern Department received from Westfal, via the British Embassy to Poland, German anti-Semitic and anti-Soviet propaganda from Lithuania. It was thought that, in view of the relationship between the Soviets and the Poles, 'to obtain information of this nature through Polish channels is not a very good idea'. Brigadier Skaife and Elisabeth Pares, who were now working together at the FORD, both viewed the Northern Department's response, and would therefore have been aware of the dangers of producing anti-Soviet information for circulation. The FO was solely interested in the 'present conditions' in the Baltic states.⁴⁸

Westfal's information was, on the whole, deemed useful and it allowed, for example, Elisabeth Pares on 1st November 1943 to consult another source of 'secret information' concerning the mobilisation of a Lithuanian Defence Force to take up arms against the Soviets. Westfal indirectly supplied Elisabeth Pares with underground Lithuanian press extracts which allowed her to conclude that 'they bring out the potential friendlessness of the Lithuanians towards Germany'. As Miss Pares would have known through her studies, the attitude of the Lithuanians was quite astonishing, given the hardships and racial discrimination they had endured under the Germans. This attitude, Pares continued 'would have had practical effect if they were permitted to engage their manpower for strictly defensive purposes against the Russians. This is of particular interest at the moment, since, according to secret information, the Germans are now permitting the formation of a native defence force officered by Lithuanians and to be placed at the disposal of the native authorities'.⁴⁹ The FORD was now clearly at the forefront of Allied intelligence ensuring that the Ostland supplement to the *Review of the Foreign Press* was a highly accurate and important work.

⁴⁶ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Letter from Savery at the British Embassy to Poland to Allen at the FO, 27th August 1943

⁴⁷ Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire* (London 2008), p.100

⁴⁸ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Northern Department, 23rd July 1943

⁴⁹ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by Pares at the FORD, 1st November 1943

On 16th January 1944 Churchill tried to justify to himself his change of position regarding the Soviet annexations of the Baltic states. Writing to Eden he said he had taken a very strong line against committing ourselves to the abolition of the Baltic states in 1942:

‘I ask myself, how do all these matters stand now? Undoubtedly my own feelings have changed in the two years that have passed since the topic was first raised during your first visit to Moscow. The tremendous victories of the Russian armies, the deep-seated changes which have taken place in the character of the Russian state and government, the new confidence which has grown in our hearts towards Stalin - these have all had their effect. Most of all is the fact that the Russians may very soon be in physical possession of these territories, and it is absolutely certain that we should never attempt to turn them out. Moreover, at Teheran when Stalin talked about keeping East Prussia up to Königsberg we did not say anything about the Baltic states, which clearly would be considered in the Russian dominions in any such solution.

We are now about to attempt the settlement of the eastern frontiers of Poland, and we cannot be unconscious of the fact that the Baltic states, and the questions of Bukovina and Bessarabia, have very largely settled themselves through the victories of the Russian armies. At the same time any pronouncement on the topic might have disastrous effects in the United States in the election year, and there is no doubt that we should ourselves be subject to embarrassing attack in the House of Commons if we decided the fate of these countries’.⁵⁰

Although Churchill had now resigned himself to the absorption of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union after the war, he maintained his position that any public knowledge of this would be severely damaging to the government in the House of Commons and in the United States. He therefore publicly took the line that all territorial matters would be decided at the peace conference. On 25th January Churchill informed the War Cabinet of his change of heart on the matter regarding the Soviet claims to the Baltic states.⁵¹

⁵⁰ PRO FO 371/43052, Political Northern, Baltic States, Future of the Baltic States 1944, Letter from Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, 16th January 1944

⁵¹ PRO CAB 65/45/7, War Cabinet Minutes, Minute 1: Poland: Frontier question with Soviet Union, 25th January 1944

Following the Normandy landings Anglo-Soviet relations, triggered by continuing disagreement over the fate of Poland, took a downward path that would eventually lead to the Cold War, yet crucially the alliance was maintained for the duration of the war. The fundamental purpose of the alliance, the defeat of Germany, was achieved. In the event neither Britain nor the United States ever granted the post-war Baltic Soviet Socialist Republics' *de jure* recognition, although the British did give *de facto* recognition. Despite the protests of the exiled Baltic ministers and Baltic groups, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other leading figures in Britain, the British government did nothing more to champion the case for independence for the former Baltic states.⁵² The Yalta conference of February 1945 would only reaffirm the Soviets' dominance over Eastern Europe.⁵³

After the German retreat from the Baltic states between July and October 1944, the British government's stance, to defer all matters relating to the Baltic states, which might result in a split in the alliance with the Soviet Union, became very difficult to maintain. This position would also test the individual consciences of the staff in the FORD and FO. Warner at the FO wrote: 'In July Mr Balutis of the Lithuanian Legation wrote a letter to the Secretary of State (Eden) asking HMG to grant a minimum measure of safety to the Lithuanian people by sending an appropriate British representation to Lithuania, if the country should be temporarily occupied by Soviet forces. The letter was not acknowledged as the Lithuania Minister is not recognised by us as having any official capacity'.⁵⁴ This document shows that by mid-1944 the Balts had been completely frozen out by the British government. The FO were even willing to send a copy to Moscow of a Lithuanian protest against the Soviet occupation, written by a member of the Lithuanian Legation in Washington that had appeared in the New York Times on 3rd November 1944.⁵⁵

The FO's stance that the Baltic question was no longer their concern was severely tested on 2nd December 1944 when the Lithuanian Legation wrote to the FO regarding a massacre by

⁵² Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States, The Years of Independence*, p.234

⁵³ Martin Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union*, p.248

⁵⁴ PRO FO 371/43051, Situation in Lithuania 1944, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by FO Northern Department, 2nd November 1944

⁵⁵ PRO FO 371/43051, Situation in Lithuania 1944, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by FO Northern Department, 19th November 1944

the Germans on 5th June 1944. This massacre had occurred in the Lithuanian village of Pirčiupis, just prior to the German withdrawal and had resulted in the execution, by burning, of 120 villagers. The Legation supplied the age and name of every individual killed but the FO maintained their position of ignoring the Lithuanians as a reply ‘wrongly or rightly would be regarded as greatly insulting by our allies (the Soviets) and we can do nothing about it’. Matters concerning the Baltic states were now clearly a matter for the Soviets alone. The FO did not want the document to become public knowledge, ‘we should very soon hear of it if it does’ stated a FO official, as it would be only too evident that by late 1944 the British Government was powerless over the affairs of the Baltic states.⁵⁶

Regardless of the ‘unofficial’ position of the FO towards the Baltic states, the FORD Baltic States Section had to continue to produce its Ostland supplements to the *Review of the Foreign Press*. The last supplement, produced in late August 1944, was aptly entitled ‘The Disintegration of the Ostland’.⁵⁷ Research had to be continued even though there was little likelihood of British involvement in the post-war peace settlement in the Baltic region. The British government could not be left in the position of being without recent intelligence concerning the German occupation, if a post war western style democracy for the Baltic states was tolerated by the Soviet government. After all, until the Finnish armistice with the USSR in September 1944 and the former’s successful maintenance of its independence, it would have been logical to conclude that Finland and the Baltic states, as former members of the Russian Empire, would share the same fate of being annexed by the Soviet Union.⁵⁸

It is perhaps fortunate that the Baltic States Section of the FRPS was created in 1941, later than the majority of the other FRPS research sections, for it avoided the worst of the hostility and mistrust that had previously existed between itself, the FO and the PID. As a result of the guidelines laid down by the government enquiry of February 1941 and the cooperation of Dew at the FO Baltic States Department and Skaife at PID, the Baltic States Section of the FRPS under the leadership of Elisabeth Pares, was, from the start, privy to a great deal of

⁵⁶ PRO FO 371/43051, Situation in Lithuania 1944, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by FO Northern Department, 8th December 1944

⁵⁷ PRO FO 371/43060, Disintegration of the Ostland 1944, No.220 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 29th August 1944, pp.1-3

⁵⁸ Brian Taylor, *Barbarossa to Berlin Vol II* (Staplehurst 2004), p.220

secret information which other FRPS sections had previously found hard to obtain. From November 1941 Elisabeth Pares' section was able to produce highly detailed reports on the German administration of the Ostland for the British government. The 1943 amalgamation of the FRPS and PID and relocation to Whitehall to form the FORD only strengthened this relationship and gave Elisabeth Pares regular access to highly confidential information. The Baltic States Section of the FRPS/FORD contribution to the British intelligence analysis of the Ostland was considerable. It was unfortunate that, as result of the Soviet hegemony over the Baltic states, the reports produced by Elisabeth Pares could not be utilised to help facilitate any post-war reconstitution of the independence of the Baltic states.

The rise of overt intelligence from the Baltic states from a derided sideshow in 1941 to its zenith in the year 1944 was spectacular. This occurred against a background of political despair for those campaigning for the Baltic states' independence; this was the irony of overt intelligence from the Baltic states. Despite the vast amount of overt intelligence gathered from the Baltic states during the war, fundamentally a Soviet victory was just as unlikely to bring about a return to Baltic independence as a German victory. No amount of intelligence overt or otherwise could change that fact. A new source of intelligence became available to the FORD from late 1943, that of refugees from the Baltic states. However, this offered little extra information outside of overt intelligence. When the FRPS was moved from Oxford to London and re-established as the FORD, it exerted even more influence over post-hostilities planning, notably the FO's important paper on Soviet post-war policy. All the indicators are that the FRPS/FORD made an important contribution to the formulation of wartime policy and post-war planning, particularly in regards to Eastern Europe, regardless of the fact that the pending Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe made this an inevitably defensive and introspective policy.

PART III

Case Studies of the FRPS/FORD Baltic States Section's Intelligence

Introduction to the Case Studies

The following two chapters are designed to highlight how the specific intelligence reports of the FRPS/FORD were useful to the British government and will describe how the organisation achieved its goals as laid out by its guidelines on the type of intelligence that was to be gathered across occupied Europe. The economics chapter provides extensive evidence of the FRPS/FORD success in meeting the MOI request for intelligence associated with the German reorganisation of the European economy. This would be of fundamental importance to the British desire to restructure the post-war economic system. While the population policy case study focuses on how the British government become aware of the repressive policies being dealt out to certain sectors of the indigenous population. In both case studies specific information is highlighted which fits the above remit. As has already been intimated the FRPS/FORD was able to provide the British government with highly detailed economic and political intelligence. This intelligence was not able to be sourced elsewhere due to the FO ban on covert intelligence gathering in the Soviet sphere of influence, but its value is beyond dispute due to the fact that the FO consistently requested intelligence reports from the FRPS/FORD throughout the German occupation of the Baltic states.

Therefore the intelligence falls into two categories; economic, which was intended to be accumulated during the war but was to be of real value after the conflict had ended, and secondly, intelligence relating to population policy which was to have had a more immediate impact on British policy. Both sources of subject matter served to create a pool of useful intelligence that could be delved into by wartime decision makers and post war planners at a time of their choosing. In both cases, as the head of the SPRB Cecil Parrot declared, the intelligence gathered would be of real historical significance as a source of reference. As the high frequency of reported and distributed intelligence will indicate overt intelligence was a very reliable form of intelligence. By contrast this is very rare in the field of covert intelligence. As the FRPS/FORD specialist studies were directed by the FO this further emphasises the importance of the intelligence contribution made by the FRPS/FORD. The

case studies highlight that overt intelligence when scientifically read could meet government requirements on almost any subject.

Chapter 6

Economic Conditions in the Ostland

Planning Economic Control

The economic plight of the Ostland and the Ukraine under German occupation would be indelibly linked, for the Ukraine was at the centre of Hitler's decision to invade the Soviet Union. The 'breadbasket of Europe', as the Ukraine was known to the Nazi hierarchy, played a vital role in the Reich's economic planning for Barbarossa. The victory in the West in the summer of 1940 had, in fact, further burdened Germany with substantial net grain deficits. The military and political leadership believed that unless Germany acquired new territories, capable of supplying massive quantities of grain, Germany's population would be brought to the point of starvation, as occurred in the First World War. In the same way as the Ukraine saved the *Kaiserreich* from starvation in 1918, she would do the same for the Third Reich.¹

There was one major difference from the situation in the Ukraine in 1941 to that in 1918. Since Stalin's ascent to power, he had embarked on a rapid industrialisation of the Soviet Union. New metropolises had sprung up with a combined population of over 30 million and the Ukraine primarily fed this industrial army.² At the time of the First World War Russia had regularly produced a grain surplus of more than eleven million tons. After the Stalinist urbanisation this figure fell to two million.³ *Staatssekretär* Herbert Backe, the leading figure in the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture, devised a radical solution to this dilemma. He proposed what became known as the 'Hunger Plan', a large-scale starvation policy. The Soviet territories would be divided into surplus and deficit zones. The population of the

¹ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction* (London 2007), p.477

² *Ibid*, p.478

³ Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation Resettlement Mass Murder* (New York 2006), p.61

deficit zones was to be starved to death or forced into Siberia, in order to supply continental Europe and the *Wehrmacht* with grain. The Surplus or 'Black Earth' territories lay in the Ukraine and Don region in the south and south-east. The deficit or 'Wooded Zone' comprised White Russia and Greater Russia including Moscow and Leningrad. The Caucasus was the only 'deficit' region which, for political reasons, was allowed to receive shipments of grain. The Baltic states would be allowed to feed themselves due to their racial standing.⁴

Even though the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine fell into the surplus zone, its urban population was not exempt from the starvation policy as only farm workers were to be catered for. In a presentation to Hitler in January 1941 Backe assured the *Führer* that 'the occupation of the Ukraine would liberate us from every economic worry'.⁵ Like Stuckart in the Interior Ministry, Backe was an ardent National Socialist yet, unlike Stuckart, he did not play lip service to his SS membership. Backe and his nominal superior, Walter Darré, were both racial fanatics. Backe was also a close friend of Heydrich and, as a member of both the General Council of the Four Year Plan and the SS, he was close to both Göring and Himmler. He therefore had excellent credentials for high office in the East.

Acting on orders received from Göring on the 26th February 1941, General Georg Thomas of the War Economy and Armaments Office (Wi Rü Amt) in the OKW made preparations for the establishment of a military-economic organisation which became known as the Economic Staff East (Wi Stab Ost). It was charged with maximising the exploitation of the conquered Eastern territories, both in the civilian and army zones of occupation and was designed to serve only German economic interests. Wi Stab Ost was to ease 'the German food situation through the comprehensive provisioning of the troops from the land and evacuation of all surpluses to the Reich for the sustenance of the German population (grain, meat, oil crops)'. Wi Stab Ost was directly subordinate to the Economic Command Staff East (Wi Fü Stab Ost) which was headed by Göring as Reich Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan but it was directed, on his behalf, by *Staatssekretär* Paul Körner of the same organisation. Its members included Göring, Thomas and Körner as well as Backe, Hermann von Hanneken (Reich Economics Ministry) and Friedrich Alpers (Reich Forestry Office). Initially the agricultural sector was distinct but Thomas obtained Backe's approval for its inclusion in the Wi Stab

⁴ Ibid, p.134

⁵ Ibid, p.142

Ost. These men would wield immense power and effectively ran the entire Eastern economy. All of them, except Hanneken, sat on the General Council for the Four Year Plan. Economic inspectors oversaw twenty-three economic commands throughout the Soviet Union.⁶

On 2nd May 1941 Backe obtained the necessary approval for his starvation policy at a meeting of *Staatssekretäre*. The official economic manual issued on 16th June and known as the ‘Green Folder’, due to the colour of its binding, described Moscow and Leningrad as a ‘deficit problem’.⁷ Hitler demanded their total destruction. The capitals were to be encircled, laid siege to and annihilated by air and artillery. Kiev was soon to be added to this list of targeted cities for destruction. Hitler wanted a ‘national catastrophe which deprives not only Bolshevism, but also Muscovy, of its centres.’⁸

Hitler wrote to Mussolini on 21st June to inform the *Duce* of the impending invasion, regarding the Ukraine. He said: ‘I hope above all that it is then possible for us to secure in the long term a common food-supply basis in the Ukraine which will provide us with those surpluses which we will perhaps need in the future’. Himmler announced to his assembled *Gruppenführer* that in the coming war ‘through military actions and the food problems, 20 to 30 million Slavs and Jews will die’. In September the *Reichsmarschall* boasted to the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano that the starvation of 20-30 million Soviet citizens was an essential element of German occupation policy.⁹ Of all the regions of the Soviet Union the Nazi leadership (a) desired the Ukraine above all else and (b) assented to the death of millions of Soviet citizens in order to make the East’s agricultural yield profitable. The Ukraine may have been the main economic target for Operation Barbarossa; however, the Ostland would contribute significantly to the expansion of the Reich’s economy.

⁶ Ibid, pp.59-60

⁷ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1944* (Basingstoke 1981), p.377

⁸ Alex J. Kay, *Mass Murder*, p.185

⁹ Adam Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, p.479

Establishing German Economic Control, the Conflict between Exploitation and Reform

The Reich's primary economic concern in the Ostland was that the economic exploitation be coordinated in the most favourable way to German interests, and therefore the supply of food to the troops was the priority in the agricultural sector. The economic needs of the Balts were considered secondary, even though they had a privileged status. In terms of industry and trade, total exploitation of the economic resources of the Baltic states was demanded for the war effort.

On 19th August 1941 *Reichskommissar* Lohse decreed that the Reich 'intended to restore property rights completely'. This was, of course, pure propaganda as such a policy was against the beliefs of the power hungry Lohse and would have been the last concession he would like to have given to the Baltic people. Lohse viewed the Ostland as his personal fiefdom and any potential loss of power or control was countered with bitter resistance. Lohse's, and indeed the Reich's, true intentions for the Baltic states are clearly illustrated in the very same decree when Lohse declared that all property belonging to the Soviet Union was to be taken over by the German government, with former owners losing legal claim to these properties.¹⁰ This measure was presented purely as a wartime expedient, yet the Germans' general occupational policy clearly indicated to the Balts that their place in the New Order, although higher than that of Slavs, was by no means equal to their 'liberators'. The Reich would justify (to itself) the policy of confiscation by pointing to the fact that, as the Baltic states had been annexed to the Soviet Union (an annexation that Germany had recognised and, due to the non-aggression pact, helped to arrange), the States were regarded as mere provinces of the USSR. Therefore it was at the Reich's discretion to grant any preferential treatment to the Balts, either politically or economically, for she felt no obligation by law to do so.

The Baltic states did receive some preferential economic treatment when compared to the majority of the occupied parts of the Soviet Union. This was due to the Nazi state's racialist

¹⁰ Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims V/II (London 1974), p.367

precepts and the supposedly racial characteristics of the indigenous population. On 13th September Lohse reluctantly decreed the restoration of all agricultural property confiscated by the Soviets, including livestock and all other inventory, to their former owners.¹¹ Of course this decree excluded those former agricultural owners who were Communists, Jews and all enemies of the state; their land, along with all the abandoned property of those who had fled or been deported, was to be administered by trustees who would be appointed by the Germans.¹² This decree neither reversed the Soviets' policy of nationalisation nor affected the Germans' long term economic policy in the Baltic. By making no binding agreements on the return of private ownership in the Baltic region, the Germans therefore left themselves with as much room for manoeuvre as possible, both economically and politically. The Baltic landowners were only given usufructuary rights, not private ownership.¹³ The long-term goal of Germanisation had been made much easier for the Germans by the Soviet introduction of nationalisation. The Reich saw no reason at this stage to reverse this policy with final victory, expected in 1941. The situation regarding the reprivatization issue contributed greatly to the deteriorating relationship between the Balts and the Germans. The decision to withhold reprivatization also gave the Germans an invaluable method of coercion, allowing them to exact, if necessary, greater exertions from the Balts, be those militarily, economically or politically. The carrot of increased reprivatization would be used for some years to come by the occupiers. Lohse justified this in February 1942 when he wrote 'that it mattered not whether the economic system in the Ostland was Bolshevik or capitalist; the best system was the one that produced most for the war effort'.¹⁴ Equally the Baltic self-administrations would later offer to provide the Germans with increased military collaboration, in exchange for increased autonomy and economic concessions.

The *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* had revealed on 11th October 1941 the German reaction to the Balts' understandable disappointment over the continuation of the Bolshevik economic system: 'The confiscation obviously does not signify the perpetuation of the Bolshevik

¹¹ Ibid, p.367

¹² Hans Umbreit, "Towards Continental Dominion," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Germany and the Second World War V/I* (Oxford 2000), p.290

¹³ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Germany and the Second World War V/II* (Oxford 2003), p.221

¹⁴ Valdis O Lumans, *Latvia in World War Two* (New York 2006), p.190

expropriation... time was needed, a general inventory must first be made (before denationalisation can occur)'.¹⁵ On 19th October the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* press chief Dr. Walter Zimmerman had insisted in the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* that 'the peasant has confidence once more in himself and in his farm, the denationalisation... will be undertaken in measurable space of time. However, the process of denationalisation will involve the need of funds for repairs and re-equipment, and that the peasant must therefore start saving immediately'.¹⁶ Dr. Zimmerman went on to say that 'the German Reich has invested much capital in the liberation of the Baltic states. Therefore, it cannot be expected that former owners will receive their property free', and that 'as there was no private property no-one has a legal claim for reinstatement'.¹⁷ Clearly liberation of the Baltic people had come at a cost to the Reich and now it would be up to the Baltic people to repay this debt. The position of the Baltic farmer had altered little from the period of Soviet occupation. Without private ownership the individual farmer was fully aware that he was still very much at the mercy of the occupiers. He was unable to prevent his farm from being requisitioned by the Germans for their Germanisation projects, as frequently occurred in central and western Lithuania. On 30th January 1942 the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* suggested that it was for the native farmer to show, by his ready acceptance of instruction, that he too could hold his ground, even in wartime conditions, in the campaign for production, and thereby earn the right to have his interests considered when private ownership is eventually restored.¹⁸

On 17th October 1941 the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* issued an order to return the private property rights for Baltic commercial, handicraft and small industrial firms, with up to twenty employees, in order 'to liberate handicrafts, small business and retail trade from the fetters of

¹⁵ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 120, Foreign Research and Press Service, 19th January 1942, p.3

¹⁶ Ibid, p.3

¹⁷ PRO FO 371/29273, German activities 1941, German Rule in Latvia, Study of German-Latvian Press by the Latvian Minister in Geneva, 28th November 1941, p.7

¹⁸ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 127, Foreign Research and Press Service, 9th March 1942, p.3

Bolshevism'.¹⁹ As the FRPS report of 7th December 1942 made clear, the Soviets had nationalised and incorporated this sphere of the economy in regional trusts and combines or organised them in artels (producer co-operatives societies).²⁰ The Germans would however only return property to private ownership when it was in their interest, and therefore they would keep any enterprises that were considered profitable, in their quest for economic exploitation. There could be no question, of course, of the heavy industry in the Baltic states returning to private ownership.

The same FRPS report also stated that, in regards to handicraft enterprises, the transfer to private hands would only take place if the firm was economically sound. All artels whose continued existence was not economically justifiable would be dissolved and liquidated and their constituent parts restored to private ownership. The remaining artels would be converted into co-operatives. The former owners would have restored to them, their machines, tools etc. It was planned that other members of the artel would receive a cash indemnity. Small industries would also be detached from the trusts and combines, and restored to private hands. All fishing and wood working concerns were exempt from the decree and remained in German trusts.²¹

The FRPS report went on to discuss nationalised retail establishments, which, with the exception of the larger enterprises, would also be placed in private hands, where this was in the public (i.e. German) interest. Existing stocks could be purchased by the new owner at the current market rate. Machines, tools etc would be handed over to their former owners free of charge, and to new owners in return for payment of the estimated value. The buildings and lands necessary for carrying on the concern would be leased or hired and credit would be granted.²² The above represented only the right of the firm to be in private ownership with attached property rights. Private property ownership remained elusive and in German hands.

¹⁹ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Second World War V/II, p.221 and Norman Rich, War Aims V/II, p.367

²⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.3

²¹ Ibid, p.3

²² Ibid, p.3

The partial resumption of a private economy in the Ostland caused much dissent among the hardliners in Berlin and Riga. German business leaders had high hopes of gaining a foothold in the Baltic economy and accused pro-Baltic elements, including the Ostland's Peter Kleist, of 'giving away' the region after it had been 'conquered by the German soldier with his blood'. Kleist, one of the Ostland's more moderate pro-reformers, confessed 'this line of argument for a moment silenced me. The thought that the German soldier was spilling his blood to deprive the Lithuanian of his farm, the Latvian of his tailor shop, or the Estonian of his drug store, was news to me'.²³ The FRPS reported that initially the decree was only applicable to Lithuania and Latvia; this was purely due to the situation at the front. The agreement between Army Group North and the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (RMO) in December 1941 to allow SA *Obergruppenführer* and *Generalkommissar* Karl Litzmann to form *Generalbezirk* Estonia within Army Group North's Rear Area, allowed the decree to be extended to (include) Estonia.²⁴

In the *Reichskommissar* order of 15th December 1941 for the Administration of Urban House Property, the district commissars for the three *Generalbezirke* were assigned, 'without prejudice to the final regulation of matters relating to property' (thereby freeing the Germans from any future obligations), to hand over for the management and use of their former owners (or, in the case of their disappearance, to their near relatives) urban dwelling houses, with adjoining land, which had been placed under public administration as a result of the Soviet nationalisation measures. As usual the transfer was made conditional on the trustworthiness of the claimant and on his proven ability to keep the house in proper order and repair.²⁵ On 16th February 1943 the Estonian legation in London informed the FO that the former owners had to submit accounts of their income and expenditure on the property to the Germans. Only a small percentage of the income went to the proprietors. As with all property the final settlement of the rights of ownership was postponed until after the war.²⁶ The FRPS stated that in regards to the administration of house property and real estate in the towns and

²³ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1944* (Basingstoke 1981), p.190

²⁴ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.3

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.2

²⁶ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, Conditions in Estonia, Estonian Legation in London, 16th February 1943, p.2

communes, a German *Grundstückgesellschaft mbH* with an annual capital of 20,000 Rm was set up in each of the *Generalbezirke* in the course of 1942. The company oversaw the repair, the process of 'reprivatisation' and the subsequent maintenance of nationalised houses, besides collecting rents from their former owners, the cost of the companies' administration being charged to the revenue from the properties.²⁷ On 16th February 1942 the Lithuanian Legation in Washington added that the administrators had to make the necessary repairs on their own houses and pay all taxes.²⁸

On 1st September 1942 the FRPS produced a report entitled German Policy and Practice in the Ostland which declared that the reprivatisation of small industry, handicrafts and retail establishments had progressed quite rapidly but that the usufructuary status of the 'owners' was unacceptable to the Balts who had only briefly experienced nationalisation and were strongly in favour of free enterprise.²⁹ The volume of administrative procedure had caused stagnation and lowered morale as well as economic output. Commissarial sanctions were required for the establishment, expansion, purchase or closing down of any economic undertaking. The strict control decreased production and there were cases of German confiscation of all raw materials, stocks and purchases.³⁰

The German defeat before Moscow in early December 1941 caused a necessary rethink of the brutal methods of occupation imposed on the population of the Soviet Union. Many of the Army and RMO officials, who had watched uncomfortably the callousness of German rule, began to raise their concerns and campaign for a change in policy. The political issues could no longer be ignored as the war was clearly far from its conclusion and therefore a more measured approach was required to deal with the population. The reformers in the RMO,

²⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.2

²⁸ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, No. 2 (14) The Lithuanian Situation, The Lithuanian Legation, Washington D.C., 16th February 1942, p.8

²⁹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, German Policy and Practice in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 1st September 1942, p.3 and Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/II*, p.221

³⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, German Policy and Practice in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 1st September 1942, p.3

such as Leibbrandt, Braütigam and Riecke, pressurised the timid Rosenberg into proposing the abolition of the *Kolkhoz* collective farms system. The Eastern Minister was anxious not to incur the wrath of the *Führer* over such a contentious issue. Rosenberg surprisingly received the support of the *Wirtschaftsstab Ost* and its leader Körner. Körner was more interested in confronting his personal adversary Backe than any real belief in reform. Unsurprisingly Backe, along with the other hard-liners such as Göring and Erich Koch (the powerful *Oberpräsident* and *Gauleiter* of East Prussia), was opposed to reform.³¹ The reforms, formulated by professor Otto Schiller, that came to be known as the ‘New Agrarian Order’, were hardly radical as they called for the gradual dismemberment of the *Kolkhoz* whilst still ‘leaving all possibilities open’ for the Germans.³² On this occasion Backe and the hardliners were defeated as Hitler approved the draft for reform in mid-December 1941. The Army called for its rapid acceptance to enable prompt propaganda exploitation. Lohse still remained in opposition and insisted that the reform was a political, not an economic, matter as the official view was that the East was a colonial area and any agrarian reform ran counter to German objectives. Lohse also argued that the proposed changes were too minor to endear the Germans to the local population; at least in this matter he proved to be correct.³³

To the surprise of many of the participants at the *Führerhauptquartier* conference on 15th February 1942, Hitler signed the decree for the New Agrarian Order over a counterproposal made by Koch. Hitler was more interested in the propaganda value of the decree rather than allowing any real increase in private rights in the occupied eastern territories. Himmler, with Hitler’s approval, introduced an amendment to the New Agrarian Order, which resulted in the land being given to the peasants for their own use rather than as their private property.³⁴ The New Agrarian Order changed the name of the *Kolkhoz* to ‘common husbandries’ and there was an increase in the size of private plots.³⁵ Later, provided that the peasants had earned it by high deliveries and if the technical prerequisites existed, they would be transformed into *Landbau-Genossenschaften* (agricultural co-operatives). Upon successful application the peasants could receive more land for private cultivation and be exempted from mandatory

³¹ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule*, p.332

³² *Ibid*, p.334

³³ *Ibid*, p.333

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.333-34

³⁵ Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/II*, p.219

deliveries. The permission to form individual farms was never seriously intended for ‘old Russia’ at this time; instead it was pursued mainly for propaganda purposes. As the New Agrarian Order was decreed only for ‘old Russia’, i.e. inside the 1938 USSR borders, it therefore excluded the Baltic states. The Baltic region had already received agricultural property in usufructuary form. On this matter Lohse believed that the abandonment of the industrial management of the land by large estates was only justifiable, if anywhere, in the Baltic region. Nevertheless Lohse was forced to introduce the New Agrarian Order in the *Generalbezirk* White Ruthenia on a wide scale.³⁶

Although not directly introduced in the Baltic states, the impact of the New Agrarian Order was still felt in the Baltic region. In reality the policy represented only a minor change in agrarian policy but for Hitler it was a major shift in policy as, before the implementation of the decree, he was loath to implement any general reforms. This indicated to the Baltic people a future change in German policy regarding the reprivatisation issue, as well as the politically charged autonomy debate. On 7th December 1942 the FRPS declared that the few *Kolkhozy* that existed in the Baltic states were also included and would be dismembered and the land given to their former owners. Meanwhile, all holdings over 30 hectares were reduced and numerous small and dwarf holdings created out of the surplus.³⁷

The same FRPS report also highlighted that the 13th September 1941 *Reichskommissar* decree effectively restored the land to their former owners but there were two reservations. Firstly, if the *Jung-Landwirt* (i.e. a peasant who had received one of the newly created dwarf-holdings) could prove that he had the equipment necessary for the efficient working of his holding, he might be authorised by his District Commissar to retain it, provided, of course, that he was not a Communist. Secondly, smallholders who had received additional land, adjacent to their own, could continue to work it, in cases where the agricultural productivity of the holding was increased. In case of farms without owners the District Commissar

³⁶ Hans Umbreit, “Towards Continental Dominion,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/I*, p.292

³⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.2

appointed a suitable manager. Most of the smaller *Sovkhozy* State farms remained in German control.³⁸

In order to comply with the 19th August decree for a trusteeship to oversee the control of all landed property, a single giant trustee company was formed on 10th December 1941, the *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft Ostland mbH* (LO) with its headquarters in Riga and branches in Reval, Kaunas, Minsk and Pskov. The LO was not only responsible for the actual management of state farms and auxiliary plants, of all machine tractor stations, and of collective farms which have not yet been broken up, but also administered in trust, at any rate nominally, the entire landed property of the Ostland. In practice, however, the LO's activities were restricted to the confiscated properties of Jews, Communists, etc and to farms which had become ownerless as a result of war or Soviet deportation in June 1941 as well the properties of Germans repatriated to the Reich. Most of the farms were handed over to Baltic farmers for management.³⁹ The FRPS report covering German Economic Trusteeship declared that the regional branches and subordinate offices of the LO were very closely related with the Commissarial administration. For example, the manager of the LO branch in Latvia was attached as 'Referent' to the General Commissariat's Department of Food and Agriculture and, in matters relating to production and purchase, took orders from its chief.⁴⁰ At the lower level the Special Agricultural Leaders (*Landwirtschafts-Sonderführer*) played an important part; there were approximately 14,000 across the entire occupied eastern territories.⁴¹

The governing council of the LO met on 29th January 1942 under the chairmanship of KVR Matthiessen. Other members included Dr Vogt, as a trustee of the Four Year Plan in Berlin, Dr Labs, a representative of the RMO, Georg Krallt, who had been appointed the company's business manager in Riga and Dr Becker who was his deputy. It was decided that the primary purpose of the LO was to ensure increased agricultural production for the needs of the

³⁸ Ibid, p.2

³⁹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd July 1942, p.5

⁴⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.2

⁴¹ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/II*, p.218

German armed forces. The needs of the local population were considered to be of secondary importance. The farms which were administered by the LO were to serve as models of intensive cultivation and centres of instruction for the native farmers.⁴²

Dr. Braütigam, one of the leading campaigners for reform in the RMO, was quoted in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on 28th May 1942 as saying that ‘the occupying power possesses the right to dispose of property belonging to the enemy state. The Soviet Government’s expropriations without indemnity are, however, contrary to the German conception of private property. The question therefore arises whether Germany can reconcile it with her principles to declare herself the legal successor of the Soviet Union, or whether owing to her rejection of Bolshevik measures of nationalisation, she must accept the consequences of such rejection’. This was a fairly outspoken remark designed to bring the issue into the public domain and encourage reform. Braütigam, however, protected himself from criticism by stating, in regards to the ‘old Russian’ territories, that in ‘practice a restoration of the former ownership rights would be possible only after decades of work with a colossal administrative apparatus’. The former Baltic states on the other hand were in a different position. ‘The German Reich began the war against the Soviet Union under the motto “Crush-Bolshevism”’, wrote Braütigam. ‘This means that we cannot maintain in the former Baltic states, so lately incorporated into the Soviet Union, one of the most drastic Bolshevik measures, namely the expropriation of private property without indemnity’. Again this was a thinly veiled attack on German policy. Braütigam went on to add a modicum of conservative theorem saying that the reprivatization would nonetheless have to be carried out gradually and with regard for the requirements of the war, and in view of the existing difficulties, management by trustees would doubtless have to be maintained for a long period.⁴³

⁴² PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 127, Foreign Research and Press Service, 9th March 1942, p.2

⁴³ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 143, Foreign Research and Press Service, 29th June 1942, pp.3-4

The Day of the Hardliners, Göring and Backe Halt Agrarian Reform

The reforms in the agrarian sector that were initiated early in 1942 were of deep concern to the hardliners such as Göring and Backe. Although in the Ostland there was a clear move towards privatisation, the LO still set quotas for the entire farming communities. The pace of reprivatisation was deeply unsatisfactory for the Baltic population; nevertheless the move towards privatisation had been made. Göring and Backe were determined to regain total control of the direction of policy in the Ostland and reinstitute the ideals of the ‘Hunger Plan’ in the region. As General Thomas had recorded before the invasion, the ‘*Baltenland* must feed itself’.⁴⁴ Army Group North took precedence over the indigenous population, the sole concession being that, unlike the rest of the occupied eastern territories, the Baltic Region was not expected to help supply the Reich with agricultural produce. Rations were set at similar levels to those in the Reich in order to show the Balts that their place in the New Order was assured. This policy was, however, purely theoretical as the problems of supply made these ration levels impossible to maintain.⁴⁵ Of all the eastern territories it was only in the Baltic Region that definite quotas were imposed although even here farmers struggled to reach their targets throughout the occupation. This was partly due to Göring’s 6th October 1941 order to the troops ‘to live off the land entirely’ and this constant threat of requisition lowered productivity.⁴⁶

The Baltic states had experienced a deterioration of agricultural output during the transition to the Soviet agricultural model.⁴⁷ For example the FRPS reported on 28th September 1942 that in Estonia the annual yield of fodder crops fell from 219 million kg produced before the Soviet occupation to 109 million kg in 1940. Agricultural output again suffered in the summer months of 1941, due to the German invasion. There was also a poor fruit crop in Estonia and Latvia in 1942 as a result of the particularly severe frosts in the winter of 1941-

⁴⁴ Alex J. Kay, Exploitation Resettlement Mass Murder (New York 2006), p.127

⁴⁵ Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Germany and the Second World War V/II, (Oxford 2003), p.247

⁴⁶ Hans Umbreit, “Towards Continental Dominion,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Germany and the Second World War V/I, (Oxford 2000), p.289

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.382

1942 when 75 per cent of trees perished.⁴⁸ The 1942 harvest was again poor due to the late spring sowing and the abnormal weather conditions with the result that, by the time of the FRPS report, grain stocks of the 1941 harvest had been exhausted. The Germans transported from the Reich large quantities of agricultural machinery, farm animals, ploughs, threshing machines, scythes and animals for stock breeding in an effort to produce better results in 1943. Fertilisers and all other chemicals were unobtainable and in Estonia there was a campaign to collect wood ashes as a substitute. Due to the lack of fuel in Estonia and Latvia, the machinery that had not been evacuated by the Soviets or brought in by the Germans was often rendered immobile. As a result of the acute shortage of fuel, some tractors were fitted with gas generators. There was also an acute labour shortage in the agricultural sector, especially after the introduction of mobilisation in Estonia and Latvia and Fritz Sauckel's labour drives in Lithuania. In the later years of the occupation many of Sauckel's potential labourers in Lithuania, and to a lesser extent in Latvia, chose to join the partisans upon receiving their labour drafts. Due to this labour shortage large areas of farm land remained uncultivated and only a modest increase in cultivation could be achieved. In Estonia the area under winter corn for 1943 was increased from 170,000 to 200,000 ha and the area under potatoes from 89,000 to 120,000 ha. The acreage of flax was increased by 35 per cent from 30,000 ha whereas in Latvia it was increased from 56,000 to 70,000 ha and that of sugar beet from 14,000 to 20,000 ha.⁴⁹

Although the Germans intended to provide the Balts with a taste of the future New Order, the supply difficulties soon persuaded the Germans to replace their good intentions with exploitation in order to maintain supplies to the armies in the field. In 1942 the ration levels in the Baltic were 'officially' only slightly lower than those in the Reich, whilst in 1943 they were supposed to be aligned at 1 to 1, whereas the Russians and Ukrainians were receiving starvation rations.⁵⁰ As a result in March 1944 the Lithuanian Legation in Washington declared that a strong black market had emerged in the Baltic region and commodities such

⁴⁸ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 156, Foreign Research and Press Service, 28th September 1942, p.4

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.4

⁵⁰ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Second World War V/II, p.247

as meat, butter and cereals were rarely obtainable on the open market.⁵¹ The Balts were ‘officially’ entitled to 250 grams of meat a week in 1943, the second highest amount in German occupied Europe. In 1943 the German Reich was rationed at 2000 grams of bread, 300g meat and 206g fats while the Balts were rationed at 1,700 grams bread, 250g meat and 180g fats. Appallingly, the rest of the occupied eastern territories received just 200-300g of bread with no allocation of meat or fats.⁵²

Surprisingly it would be a crisis on the home front which would allow Göring and Backe to once again stamp their authority on the Ostland’s agricultural sector. In April 1942 rations in the Reich had to be cut for the first time in the war from 1,990 calories per day in 1941 to 1,750 calories per day in order to feed the growing number of *Ostarbeiter* arriving in the Reich as cheap labour.⁵³ To the Nazis, ever fearful of the merest sign of popular disquiet, this presented a major crisis. An SD report of 23rd March 1942 painted a picture of popular discontent with the forthcoming cuts in rations being described as ‘devastating’ and like ‘virtually no other event during the war’.⁵⁴ To the ever paranoid Hitler this was unacceptable. Somebody had to be held accountable and this was Walter Darré, Backe’s nominal superior in the Food and Agricultural Ministry. Backe was promoted to acting Minister and tasked with the recovery of the Reich’s agricultural supply. Backe had little alternative in April 1942 other than to lower the ration levels in order to feed the *Ostarbeiter*, who numbered just over a million at the time of the reduction. Further ‘threats’ to civilian morale could not be tolerated and a return to the principles of the Hunger Plan was demanded, with the aim of revoking the work of the eastern reformers.⁵⁵

⁵¹ PRO FO 371/43051, Situation in Lithuania 1944, Vol. III, 2 (29) The Lithuanian Situation, The Lithuanian Legation, Washington D.C., March 1944, p.13

⁵² Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Second World War V/II, p.248

⁵³ Adam Tooze, The Wages of Destruction (London 2007), p.541 and Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Second World War V/II, p.244

⁵⁴ Adam Tooze, Wages of Destruction, p.541

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp.541-43

Infrastructure and Transport

Following closely behind the *Wehrmacht* advance into the Soviet Union was Organisation Todt (OT), the construction juggernaut which was charged with reconstructing the Ostland's communication and transportation network. It was vital for the steady flow of supplies that the Russian railways' broad gauge be converted to the European standard gauge as quickly as possible to avoid the time consuming transfer between the two gauges. In the East the OT was split into three groups, one for each of three Army Groups. Alongside the reconstruction of the rail network OT Russia North was primarily concerned with the swiftest possible resumption of large-scale production of the vital shale oil industry.⁵⁶ The FRPS reported that, by mid-November 1941, the Germans had converted all Lithuanian and Latvian lines to standard gauge as well as the line from the Latvian border to Tapa in Estonia. By the end of November all of Estonia had been converted and even beyond Narva to a point not far from Leningrad. The need for conversion was even greater in Estonia due to the extensive level of Soviet evacuation of locomotives and rolling stock. 78 out of 111 engines, 2,711 out of 3,476 trucks and 316 out of 352 coaches were evacuated, in all 70 percent of the Estonian rail network. The extensive Estonian narrow gauge network suffered heavily at the hands of the Soviets as 56 out of 93 locos and 1,364 out of 2,072 trucks and 142 out of 174 carriages were lost. Latvia's relative losses of 126 locos and 576 coaches were smaller due to the Germans' rapid advance.⁵⁷

On 11th August 1942 the FRPS declared that use of the railways in the Ostland was reserved primarily for the German military and civilian authorities, travel was only permitted by civilians at certain times and only internally within each *Generalbezirk*. In Latvia, from the summer of 1942, travel permits were not required between Riga and bathing resorts along the Latvian coast. From 22nd May 1942 there was a daily express service between Memel and Riga via Mitau and Libau. The *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* published an advertisement on

⁵⁶ Rolf-Dieter Müller, "Albert Speer and Armaments Policy in Total War," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Germany and the Second World War V/II*, (Oxford 2003), p.485

⁵⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on Transport and Communications in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 11th August 1942, p.2

23rd May 1942 by the *Haupt Eisenbahndirektion Nord* offering employment to former Russian railway engineers, technicians and fitters.⁵⁸

Hitler's own dreams of autobahn expansion into the eastern territories were interlinked with his plans for colonial settlement. The strongpoints of the General Plan East were to be situated along the autobahns' axis; together they were to be the cement that would hold the East permanently in German hands. The autobahns were to link the Reich to the three settlement *Marken*, 'Ingermanland' south of Leningrad, the southern Baltic zone, and 'Gotengau' in the Crimea and southern Ukraine.⁵⁹ The autobahns were also seen as essential for the long term control and supply of the East which made their construction another vital concern for OT Russia North. The relatively good road network in the Baltic states, compared to the rest of the Soviet Union, meant that for the time being the emphasis was on planning rather than construction in the Ostland. Repairing the existing network was OT Russia North's main concern. On 23rd January 1942 the *Frankfurter Zeitung* had reported that the Inspector General of Roads in the German Reich had set up a Planning Group North East in Riga, to draft plans for the construction of a network of roads on the model of the German autobahn.⁶⁰ It was envisaged that the following autobahns would transect the Ostland: Ingermanland (Leningrad)-Mogilev-Kiev, Königsberg-Ingermanland and Vilnius-Ingermanland.⁶¹ The survey of Transport and Communications in the Ostland also reported that, since 17th November 1941, Latvians were liable to labour service with OT for the maintenance of highways and byways. From 26th January 1942 this decree was extended by the *Reichskommissar* to the whole of the Ostland.⁶²

The FRPS emphasised that in the Ostland there were transportation restrictions due to fuel shortages. In Estonia the local transportation board tried to compensate with the extensive use of wood gas generators on motor vehicles. Following the German occupation bus services

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.2

⁵⁹ Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire* (London 2008), p.210

⁶⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on Transport and Communications in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 11th August 1942, p.3

⁶¹ Czesław Madajczyk, 'Generalplan Ost' in *Polish Western Affairs* Volume III No 2 (1962), p.395. see also Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims V/II* (London 1974), p.356

⁶² PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on Transport and Communications in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 11th August 1942, p.3

were resumed daily between Riga and Tilsit and weekly between Reval and Narva. A service from Windau to Goldingen and Trauenburg and multiple services to Dorpat were also introduced.⁶³

General Thomas had recognised that the shipyards of the Ostland would also offer a vital form of supply for Army Group North and the entire Ostland.⁶⁴ In January 1942 Lohse outlined an extensive programme for the reconstruction of the ports of Riga, Libau and Windau. It was also proposed that hydroelectric power be harnessed from the rivers Memel, Düna and Narva.⁶⁵ By November 1941 the ports of Riga, Windau and Libau had been reopened for civil shipping, with Tallinn opening in the following spring.⁶⁶

The FRPS revealed that on 5th November 1941, in cooperation with the Finnish air transport company, the German *Lufthansa* had started a daily air service along the pre-war route Berlin–Danzig–Königsberg–Riga–Reval–Helsinki. The schedule provided for an overnight break in Königsberg in each direction, the onward journey being continued the following day. On 13th November 1941 the service changed its days of operation. The service between Riga and Berlin was retimed to three days a week, (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) with the service from Riga to Helsinki running the three alternate week days (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays).⁶⁷

The FRPS study of Transport and Communications in the Ostland went into great detail on the subject of shipping. From 1st June 1942 a new weekly shipping service was introduced by the *Seedienst Ostpreussen* between Swinemünde and Riga. According to 31st May 1942 issue of the *Revaler Zeitung* the first timetable ran from 16th June to 19th September with interval stops at Danzig, Pillau, Memel and Libau. On 20th May the *Ostland-Linen-Dienst* announced the opening of a regular weekly shipping service between Riga and Königsberg, with ports of call at Windau, Libau and Memel. The service would be run by Ivers and Arlt (Königsberg), Johannes Ick (Hamburg) and Sasrtori and Berger (Kiel and Hamburg). On 17th May 1942 the

⁶³ Ibid, p.3

⁶⁴ Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation Resettlement Mass Murder* (New York 2006), p.127

⁶⁵ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1944* (Basingstoke 1981), p.400

⁶⁶ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on Transport and Communications in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 11th August 1942, p.3

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.5

Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland reported that the *Hamburg-Ostland-Linie* had started a regular service between Riga and Hamburg/Bremen. With the extensive mine laying provided by the *Kriegsmarine*, which effectively isolated the Soviet Baltic Fleet in its Kronstadt base, the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* declared on 9th February 1942 that insurance would be granted for passenger transit across the gulf of Finland on the Helsinki-Reval route.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp.4-5

Industry

It was the Wi Stab Ost's role, as in the agricultural sector, to exploit the East's industrial resources and return the plundered material to the Reich. Göring's authority, as head of the Eastern economy, was total. The function of Göring's Wi Stab Ost was to re-establish the flow of vital raw materials to the Reich from the East as speedily as possible, whilst simultaneously raising productivity.

Prior to the invasion General Thomas noted that the 'Baltenland' was to experience 'economic exploitation of its aluminium capacities and oil deposits'.⁶⁹ All large industries were, in fact, to be taken over by the state and fully exploited in the German interest. In January 1942 Lohse assumed the right to declare certain industries in the Ostland as monopolies, which were to be administered by a special monopolies department in the office of the *Reichskommissar*. The income from these monopolies (in a similar way to income received from the properties under trusteeship) became part of the *Reichskommissariat* budget.⁷⁰ None of the reforms proposed by the RMO and the Ostland included heavy industry and large enterprises. The Germans were particularly keen on retaining the valuable phosphate and shale oil industries in Estonia. It was clear that the Reich had no intention of relinquishing these assets regardless of the pressure for reform.⁷¹

The FRPS reported in its 7th December 1942 study of German Economic Trusteeships that, of the great monopoly companies set up for the exploitation of the East, perhaps the most important was the *Zentral-Handelsgesellschaft Ost für landwirtschaftlichen Absatz und Bedarf mbH* (ZO) which was founded in July 1941. The company, with its seat in Berlin, operated throughout almost the entire occupied eastern territories. Its divisions ran, in trust, all trade in agricultural products, all agricultural finishing undertakings (sugar, wheat, margarine and canning factories, corn mills, breweries, dairies and mills etc) and the supply to the *Wehrmacht* or Reich of all but the minimum of agricultural produce for the local populations. In the Ukraine and White Ruthenia, where the conditions of economic life were more

⁶⁹ Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation Resettlement Mass Murder* (New York 2006), p.127

⁷⁰ Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims V/II* (London 1974), p.369

⁷¹ Timothy P Mulligan, *The Politics of Illusion and Empire* (New York 1988), p.83

primitive, the ZO also supplied the local population with a modicum of consumer goods. The ZO had three head offices, one in Riga, one in White Ruthenia and another in the Ukraine.⁷²

The 2nd July 1942 FRPS survey of the Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland indicated that the ZO had adopted a supervisory role in the Baltic states which allowed the company to concentrate its resources and expert personnel in White Ruthenia and the Ukraine. In the Ostland the ZO delegated responsibility for purchasing farmers' products, handling their subsequent treatment in mills, dairies, etc., importing and exporting goods of all kinds and supplying the local population with manufactured articles and production goods, to a number of organisations which worked directly under the office of the *Reichskommissar*.⁷³ On 7th December 1942 the FRPS stated that the ZO made extensive use of the Baltic region's highly developed co-operative organisations.⁷⁴ In the agricultural sector the ZO oversaw over 250 German food and agricultural businesses that were involved in the East. The Eastern Farm Programme delivered over 172 million Rm worth of tractors, ploughs, generators, machines, seed, fodder and hand tools to the eastern territories. The ZO also supplied the agricultural sector with equipment to the value of 510 million Rm, including 70,000 tractors.⁷⁵

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* had, in an article on 5th December 1941, listed the details of another monopoly company operating in the Ostland. The *Ostland Öl-Vertriebs-GmbH*, was a subsidiary of the *Kontinentale Öl AG*, which processed German mineral oil interests in the eastern territories. This company, with its HQ in Riga and branches in Kaunas, Minsk and Reval, was established in September 1941 to manage the exclusive control of the mineral oil

⁷² PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.4

⁷³ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd July 1942, p.1

⁷⁴ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.4

⁷⁵ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Germany and the Second World War V/II (Oxford 2003), p.209

industry.⁷⁶ The FRPS survey of the Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland showed that, from November 1941, the company was responsible for military supplies in Lithuania and Latvia. The branches of the company were formed after taking over the following organisations: the *Industrie AG Degviela* in Riga, the *Naphta Abteilung der 'Lietukis'* in Kaunas, the '*Glavnestetbyt*' in Minsk and the '*Estnischer Zentralkonsum Verein*' in Reval.⁷⁷

The Reich's Commissarial decree of 7th October 1941 established the monopoly *Ostland-Faser Gesellschaft mbH*, with its HQ in Riga and a branch in Kaunas, for the exclusive control over production, manufacture, marketing, import and export of textiles and cellulose and their by-products. The company administered in trust the *Hauptabteilung für Textilindustrie* in Riga, the *Zweigstellen der Seiden- und Trikotagenindustrie, der Baumwolle- und Leinenindustrie, Wollindustrie, and Papier- und Zellstoffindustrie*, all in Riga, the *Flachs- und Hanfmonopolunternehmen* also in Riga, and the *Verband der Flachsgenossenschaften Litauens 'Linus'* in Kaunas. The president of the governing body was Hans Kehrl and the manager in chief, Dr Friedrich Dorn.⁷⁸

The FRPS study stated that the *Energieversorgung Ostland GmbH* was set up early in 1942 with a nominal capital of 68,000,000 Rm for the exclusive control of supply and development of electrical power. The company took over all existing power stations and similar enterprises in the Ostland. Of the 68,000,000 Rm nominal capital provided to the company, the maintenance of these enterprises accounted for 51,000,000 Rm. The company's HQ was in Riga and was headed by Heinz Bohrens, whilst its Flensburg office in Schleswig-Holstein was managed by Karl Rohwedder. The *Tabakindustrie Ostland GmbH* was set up in May 1942 for the exclusive control of production, supply, import and export of tobacco with detachments in Riga and Kaunas.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 120, Foreign Research and Press Service, 19th January 1942, p.4

⁷⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd July 1942, p.3

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.3

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.3

A law passed on 5th June 1942 required that all economic enterprises, not already included in monopoly or trustee organisations, were to be brought into economic associations under the direction of the *Reichskommissar* for the purpose of increasing productivity and controlling production and distribution.⁸⁰

By 1942 Hitler had become disappointed with the progress of reconstruction in the East. He was particularly unimpressed by the RMO's handling of this vital Reich concern. Hitler was therefore casting doubt over both the *Reichsmarschall* and Eastern Minister's suitability as respective heads of the Eastern economy and RMO. The death of construction supremo Fritz Todt in an aeroplane accident in February 1942 resulted in Albert Speer being selected as Todt's successor as Armaments Minister and head of the construction juggernaut, Organisation Todt. Hitler's favourite architect was not unfamiliar with the East as he already headed a construction staff for repairing the southern Russian railways. In stark contrast to Todt, Speer enjoyed Hitler's complete trust. To Göring, Speer was a far more dangerous adversary. Speer, unlike Todt, was a great organiser and gave scant consideration to reputations. Speer was determined to topple Göring's monopolistic rule of the Eastern economy and he ignored Göring's warning not to interfere which was given at Todt's funeral on 13th February.⁸¹

The FRPS reported on 7th December 1942 that the conglomerate I.G. Farben had capitalised on its previous chemical interests to pronounce trusteeship of the Estonian phosphate industry, whilst the *Ostland-Kautschukverarbeitungs-GmbH* had recently been founded for the manufacture of rubber.⁸² On 24th March 1942 the industrial juggernaut Krupp joined in the exploitation of the Ostland by establishing the *Krupp Eisenbandol Riga Gesellschaft mbH*, which dealt in steel construction. The company was managed by Dr. Hermann Vaillant in Berlin and Bruno Dreibröt and Fritz Minuth in Königsberg. The *Ostlandgesellschaft mbH*, which was established on 3rd September 1941 with a nominal capital of 250,000 Rm, was to

⁸⁰ Norman Rich, *War Aims V/II*, p.369

⁸¹ Rolf-Dieter Müller, "The Mobilization of the German Economy for Hitler's War Aims," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Germany and the Second World War V/I* (Oxford 2000), pp.773-75

⁸² PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.4

acquire the temporary running of industrial undertakings in the Ostland. The company was authorised to fund subsidiary companies and to acquire interests in other undertakings and was managed by Dr Heinz Bohrens in Riga and Dr. Harald Scehusen in Kiel.⁸³

The large scale industry in the Ostland was heavily affected by the Soviet withdrawal in 1941; this was particularly the case in Estonia where much of the country was not ‘liberated’ until September. This gave the Soviets greater time to remove industrial machinery to the Soviet interior as part of their scorched earth policy. As a result by November 1941 the vital shale oil industry could only manage an output of 20,000 tonnes per month; by mid-1942 machinery had been imported from Sweden to help recover output. Production had risen to nearly an average of 125,000 tonnes per month between July and September 1943 and peaked in December 1943 at 140,000 tonnes.⁸⁴ On 22nd June 1943 the Commercial Counsellor to H.M. Legation in Stockholm reported that 80,000 workers were employed at the various plants in Estonia, many thousands of whom had been transplanted from Belgium and Holland in the second half of 1943 to work at the plants as part of Fritz Sauckel’s labour drives.⁸⁵ The large textiles mills in Estonia recovered quickly despite sustaining heavy damage. The FRPS revealed that, by November 1941, Latvia’s sugar factories were already operating at 60 per cent as they had escaped relatively unscathed from the initial fighting, as had the grain mills of Estonia.⁸⁶

⁸³ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd July 1942, p.6, The *Krupp Eisenbandol Riga Gesellschaft mbH*, also dealt in steel construction (including bridges), including working of iron and metals of every kind, trading in iron, iron wares, building materials, cement, coal, the acquisition of, or production in, similar undertakings.

⁸⁴ Timothy P Mulligan, *The Politics of Illusion*, p.110 and PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Political Memorandum, Press Reading Bureau, Stockholm, Estonia No.12, 19th June 1942, p.2

⁸⁵ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, Economic Intelligence Estonia, Commercial Counsellor to H.M. Legation, Stockholm, 22nd June 1943, p.1 and Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/II*, p.238

⁸⁶ PRO FO 371/32741, Damage to Baltic States by German and Soviet Regimes 1942, Notes on The Alleged Damage and Loss Sustained by the Former Baltic Republics Through the Soviet Occupation and the Russo-German War, Foreign Research and Press Service, 16th March 1942, pp.2-3

Industrial Trade

On 29th November 1941 a decree for ‘the self-government of manufacturing industries in the Ostland’ eliminated the last areas of economic freedom in the Ostland by compelling all industries, whatever their legal status, to enrol in an Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer*) for the Ostland. This organisation’s headquarters was in Riga, with branches in other provincial administrative centres and was to be directly under the control of the *Reichskommissar* and was commissioned to carry out tasks assigned by him and his deputies.⁸⁷ The 7th December 1942 FRPS survey of German Economic Trusteeship’s reported that the *Wirtschaftskammer* for the Ostland had a branch Economic Association (*Wirtschaftsvereinigung*) in each of the three Baltic *Generalbezirke*. Their names were subsequently changed on 28th May 1942; the *Wirtschaftskammer* was in future to be called *Hauptwirtschaftskammer für das Ostland*, while the *Wirtschaftsvereinigungen* were to be raised to the status of *Wirtschaftskammern*. Both the central and regional chambers were under direct commissarial control and supervision. In the case of the former the head and deputy head were appointed and recallable by the *Reichskommissar* and in the case of the regional chambers by the *Generalkommissar*, with the consent of the *Reichskommissar*. In August 1942 a Reich Commissarial order was issued; henceforth the *Hauptwirtschaftskammer* received the exclusive control of all public and private commercial advertising and publicity.⁸⁸

The Reich Commissarial decree of 15th June 1942 was supplemented by a further decree on 19th August 1942 stating that the *Reichskommissar* would, for administrative purposes, join together or merge undertakings, firms and economic organisations in unions having a legal personality for the purpose of increasing productivity, directing production and regulating markets. Simultaneously it was announced that six ‘Economic Unions’ (*Wirtschaftsverbände*) were soon to be established for the following branches of industry and trade, iron and metal, leather, peat, ceramics, building materials and glass. Other Unions would soon follow for

⁸⁷ Norman Rich, *Hitler’s War Aims V/II* (London 1974), p.369

⁸⁸ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.5

textiles, clothing paper and cellulose, for wood-working and manufacture and for building (including handicraft as well as industrial concerns). The Economic Unions were purely technical organs and would fulfil a variety of functions which in the Reich were distributed among diverse organisations.⁸⁹

An article published by the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* on 4th September 1942 commented on the specific relationship between the Economic Unions and Chambers in the Ostland. In order to bring the Economic Unions into an organic relationship with the regionally orientated Economic Chambers, and to avoid overlapping, the Economic Unions had been built into the framework of the Chambers, to the extent that their managers were also attached as rapporteurs (*Referenten*) to the *Hauptwirtschaftskammer*, and their District Office Managers to the Economic Chambers of the General Districts in which they were operating. Moreover, the *Hauptwirtschaftskammer* had assumed certain definite functions, such as control of the finances of the Unions, collection of members' subscriptions and the settlement of questions concerning the membership of individual firms.⁹⁰

The same issue of the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* reported that it been decreed that the functions of the Unions should be the enactment of measures to increase productivity, the promotion of the exchange of information between members, the planning regulation and supervision of every process in the production, manufacture, sale, direction, and utilisation of the relevant commodities. The decree also stated that the Unions should maintain the supply of manufacturing, tools raw materials etc, as well as the presentations of proposals for the closing-down, amalgamation, continuance, establishment etc of enterprises or parts of enterprises proposals to the trust administration. The Unions would also be responsible for the appointment or dismissal of trustees for individual concerns or groups of concerns and the supervision of the execution of any regulations concerning reprivatisation. The '*Leiter*' of each Union was appointed by the *Reichskommissar* and the *Geschäftsführer* by the *Leiter* with the consent of the *Hauptwirtschaftskammer*.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.5

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.5

⁹¹ Ibid, p.5

The Reich also exploited its powers over imports and exports in the Ostland. Although the region was brought under German customs authority, the Ostland was not brought into a customs union with Germany because the Germans wished to ship their products into the Ostland duty free whilst simultaneously wanting to collect the customs and excise taxes on exports to Germany.⁹² The decree of 7th November 1941, for the direction of the Ostland's import and export trade, stated that the 'disposition of commodities of all kinds' was entrusted to the Trade Department of the *Reichskommissariat* and its administrative organs (*Warenverkehrsstellen, Verteilungs- und Versorgungsstellen*), which received very wide powers, including the issue of import and export licences, the control of sales, freight, storage, manufacture and the inspection of books.⁹³

The FRPS revealed on 31st August 1942 that the German firms that were permitted to operate in the Eastern territories were, except when they specialised in a particular line of goods, mostly selected from firms trading abroad whose previous experience in opening up trade in undeveloped areas was likely to be useful. Firms that had lost their former overseas connections as a result of the war were given priority.⁹⁴ The actions of these firms were coordinated and controlled by one organisation situated in Berlin, the *Ein- und Verkaufskontor Deutscher Handelsunternehmen Ostland GmbH*, established in the spring of 1942. Together with its sister company in White Ruthenia, it dealt with German trade in the Ostland. The two organisations were merged in November 1942 into a single *Förderungsgesellschaft deutscher Handelsunternehmen Ostland GmbH* which, as its name suggests, looked back to the region's past Hanseatic traditions, for the Nazis dreamed of forming a new trading empire in the Hansa tradition in the Ostland.⁹⁵ In Rosenberg's initial instructions to the *Reichskommissar* for the Baltic region, the Eastern Minister demanded that the Ostland should be ruled with 'a Hanseatic Stamp'; the *Förderungsgesellschaft* was the

⁹² Norman Rich, *War Aims V/II*, p.370

⁹³ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 120, Foreign Research and Press Service, 19th January 1942, p.4

⁹⁴ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 152, Foreign Research and Press Service, 31st August 1942, p.4

⁹⁵ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.4

manifestation of this ideal.⁹⁶ Of course the company had little to do with the Hanseatic tradition of trade, for the company was constructed as a framework for the economic exploitation of the Ostland. As the 2nd July 1942 FRPS survey of Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland states, the aim of the company was to assist its members to undertake business (import and export) in their respective spheres, by financing their transactions, forwarding goods and storing them in warehouses. The company selected and worked with a small number of large companies which had a long experience in manufacturing and trading in a variety of individual goods and in producing agricultural products. Each member was allocated a fixed area in which to build up trading settlements and warehouses on the traditional Hansa model.⁹⁷

The FRPS reported in its study of German Economic Trusteeship that in the Ostland all German trading firms were members of the Trade Sections of the regional Economic Chambers and general questions affecting their interests were handled by the Chief Economic Chamber for the Ostland. In October 1942 a conference of German wholesale firms was held in Riga, which was attended by high commissarial officials from each General District. Several items were discussed including the planning of wholesale trade with regard to the eventual participation of Germans then on active service (war veterans), the transfer of State undertakings into the hands of independent merchants, the representation of wholesale trade in the Economic Unions which were in process of organisation, co-operation with the *Förderungsgesellschaften* and questions of price fixing, the allocation of quotas, import licences, and labour recruitment. The meeting defined the future German exploitation of the Ostland.⁹⁸ As the FRPS explained on 31st August 1942 it was only the wartime restrictions placed on the German firms that hindered their exploitation of wholesale trade, as priority was given to the supply of the armed forces during wartime.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1944* (Basingstoke 1981), p.184

⁹⁷ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Economic and Industrial Groups and Firms in the Ostland, Foreign Research and Press Service, 2nd July 1942, p.7

⁹⁸ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.4

⁹⁹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 152, Foreign Research and Press Service, 31st August 1942, p.4

Fiscal and Banking Policy

In the Ostland the Germans used, whenever possible, Reich Credit Bank notes as currency which they brought with them from the Reich. They also generated currency from tax revenues and profits from state monopolies. Within a short period of time the Reich Credit Bank notes had largely replaced the rouble in the Ostland. Rosenberg and Lohse wanted to see the *Reichsmark* introduced in the Ostland, but in the autumn of 1941 Göring rejected the idea. Although Göring was prepared to grant the Ostland its own bank of issue, with a new ‘crown’ currency, he did not for the time being regard regular finances as possible or indeed desirable. It was planned to introduce an *Ostlandmark* note, valued at 1 to 1 with the *Reichsmark*, in 1942, but this did not occur. The task of reorganising the currency system was assigned to an indigenous central bank in the Ostland, with the valuation of 10 roubles to the mark.¹⁰⁰ The *Revaler Zeitung* had revealed on 28th July 1942 the number of roubles which had been exchanged for *Reichskreditkassen* notes in Estonia up to that date was 154 million out of a total of 235 million roubles. In Latvia the figure was 280 million out of 367 million whilst in Lithuania 212 million out of 300 million roubles had been exchanged. It was cited at the time that the *Ostlandmark* had not been introduced as the Ostland was a homogenous region and had lacked a pre-war concurrent currency.¹⁰¹

On 18th January 1943 the FRPS produced a highly detailed study on the ‘Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe’. There were sixteen *Reichskreditkassen* in the Ostland, six in Latvia, four in Estonia, four in Lithuania, two in White Ruthenia and a branch in Pskov which had been administratively attached to Estonia. The intention to bring a proposed *Ostlandmark* at the same exchange rate as the *Reichsmark* as well as the installation of a new *Notenbank*, authorised to deal in gold and foreign exchange at the prevailing *Reichsbank* prices, are clear indicators that the Ostland’s economic place in the New Order was secure. The new bank, when instituted, was to have its president and vice president

¹⁰⁰ Hans Umbreit, “Towards Continental Dominion,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Germany and the Second World War V/I* (Oxford 2000), pp.303-304

¹⁰¹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 152, Foreign Research and Press Service, 31st August 1942, p.3

appointed by Rosenberg on Lohse's recommendations.¹⁰² On 4th November 1942 Rosenberg decreed that the *Notenbank im Ostland* be established and empowered to issue local currency and engage in a variety of transactions from the issue of short term loans to the purchase of gold.¹⁰³ In reality the decree altered little and an independent Ostland bank of issue remained elusive.

The same FRPS study also revealed that the credit system in the Ostland was gradually reconstructed on the basis of co-operatives, saving and private credit banks. In the first eight months of civil administration, subsidiaries of the *Dresdner Bank (Handels- und Kreditbank AG)*, the *Bank der Deutschen Arbeit* and the *Commerzbank (Hansabank AG)* were established in the Baltic states, while some of the local banks, which had been nationalised by the Soviets, began to function under German trustees. In March 1942 a series of banking reforms began with the creation of the *Gemeinschaftsbank Ostland*, a new type of credit institution combining the functions of a provincial bank, a clearing house, and a central co-operatives' bank. The regional substructure of this central organisation was called into being simultaneously, by a decree providing for the establishment of savings banks at the seat of each District Commissar in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and for the organisation of a Saving Bank and Clearing Union (*Sparkassen- und Giroverband für das Ostland*). The *Gemeinschaftsbank* in Riga established branches in Tallinn and Kaunas.¹⁰⁴ On 28th June 1942 the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* reported that there were 96 agricultural level co-operative associations in Estonia. Credits granted amounted to 2 million Rm on 30th March 1942, an increase from 16,000 Rm on 30th September 1941. These included long-term credits for

¹⁰² PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 171, Foreign Research and Press Service, 18th January 1943, pp.4-5

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.4 and Alexander Dallin, German Rule in Russia 1941-1944 (Basingstoke 1981), p.403

¹⁰⁴ PRO FO 371/36771, German Administration of the Occupied Eastern Territories 1943, The Framework of Banking in German Occupied Eastern Europe, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 171, Foreign Research and Press Service, 18th January 1943, p.6

building and repairs to damaged farms, and short credits for converting tractors to gas, purchasing livestock and equipment.¹⁰⁵

The Germans hoped to extract significant funds from the Ostland in order to cover the full cost of local security, administration and economic development, as well as contribute to the upkeep of the *Wehrmacht* and feed money back into the general budget of the Reich. They were only partially successful and, shortfalls had to be made good by contracting Reich loans and issuing Reich bills of credit. By 31st March 1944 the Ostland had incurred a balance debt of 336 million Rm.¹⁰⁶ One consequence of this was an attempt to keep wages in the occupied eastern territories well below those in the Reich. As a concession to the Baltic peoples, pay was set at 60 per cent of the East Prussian pay scale compared with 50 per cent ‘coolie wages’ in the Ukraine. Prices were fixed accordingly but a thriving black market soon developed in the Baltic states.¹⁰⁷ In July 1942 the Reich Price Commissar Dr. Fischböck visited Riga in order to discuss price problems in the Ostland with the appropriate commissarial authorities. The talks emphasised on the necessity for maintaining an absolutely stable price level. It was also pointed out that, while wages were lower in the Ostland than in Germany, the cost of production in many branches of industry was higher because of the absence of a rationalised industrial economy, a lower average of labour productivity, obsolescent machinery and the heavy freight charges on coal, iron, and other materials imported from the Reich. The possibility of industrial rationalisation was pursued insofar as was compatible with a wartime economy. The problem of black market trade and price speculation was also considered and stiffer measures to combat them were envisaged.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately of course, the German authorities were not interested in creating the conditions for an efficient economy; during wartime exploitation was paramount, with the result that

¹⁰⁵ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 152, Foreign Research and Press Service, 31st August 1942, p.4

¹⁰⁶ Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Germany and the Second World War V/II (Oxford 2003), pp.227-228

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.249

¹⁰⁸ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 156, Foreign Research and Press Service, 28th September 1942, p.3

industrial production suffered, due to the difficulties of obtaining a steady supply of raw materials from the Reich.

It was in the economic sphere that the FRPS/FORD arguably made its most important contribution to the British understating of the developments in German occupied Baltic states. This was largely due to two reasons; firstly economic issues appeared with great frequency in the German press and secondly it was economic intelligence that was deemed most useful by the British government. The chapter clearly illustrates that the FRPS was highly successful in extracting valuable economic information from the German press. This intelligence was simply unavailable elsewhere. The FRPS were able to observe the large scale economic exploitation of the Baltic States that occurred following the German invasion and the subsequent implementation of economic reform in the form of gradual privatisation. In addition the transport, industrial and banking sectors were all described in great detail giving the British government a broad understanding of the economic conditions in the Ostland. To many in the FO the high quality of intelligence that the FRPS/FORD was able to routinely supply would have seemed impossible to imagine in 1940. The chapter indicates that overt intelligence successfully filled the breach left by the FO ban on covert intelligence gathering in the Soviet sphere of influence and that the FRPS/FORD achieved its economic mission, first given to it in 1941 by the Reconstruction Problems Committee.

Chapter 7

German Population Policy in the Ostland

The intention of this chapter is to highlight the level of understanding that was obtained by the FRPS/FORD in regards to Nazi population policies in the Baltic states. The chapter first examines how the Nazis racially categorised the Ostland's population, in order to determine if they had a future in the proposed Greater Germanic Reich. The systematic annihilation of the Baltic states Jews by the *Einsatzgruppen*, police units and Baltic collaborators is analysed in order to set the chapter in context. The Baltic states, in particular Lithuania, were one of the few regions in the German-occupied Soviet Union where the Germans actually attempted to pursue their long-term plans for colonisation during the war. The German occupation of Lithuania would see the mass expulsion of Lithuanians into the eastern portion of the county followed by the settlement of Germans in the vacated regions in the west of the country. Finally the focus shifts to the various ways the Baltic states gave military collaboration to the Germans, and indicates that hatred for USSR was so great that even under a repressive Nazi rule, Balts flocked to defend their homelands against the Red Army. As the chapter will prove the FRPS/FORD had detailed knowledge of all these events and as a result would prove to be an excellent source of knowledge for the British government on subject of German population policies in the Baltic states.

The General Plan Ost and the Ostland

On 7th October 1939 Himmler was officially given the task of ‘strengthening ethnic Germanism’ and became the *Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutschen Volkstums* (RKFDV). The RKFDV would expand into the umbrella organisation for Germanic consolidation and expansion in Europe, and was placed under the administrative leadership of Ulrich Greifelt. Greifelt would coordinate the actions of the Ethnic German Liaison Office (VoMi), which became a subordinate organisation. The VoMi had been established in January 1937, under the leadership of SS *Obergruppenführer* Werner Lorenz, in an attempt to gain control for the SS of all the organisations concerned with ethnic German issues.¹ The RKFDV, due to Himmler’s patronage, would also dominate the Race and Resettlement Main Office (RuSHA) even though, from 1941, the two organisations were nominally equal as SS Main Offices. The RKFDV, as the ‘Controlling Office for Immigrants and Repatriates’, was the planning centre for the Germanisation of Europe. This rise in status of the RKFDV did not change the role or scope of the VoMi but the VoMi did lose its ability to act unilaterally. Himmler’s policy of divide and rule in order to restrict the power of his subordinates was clearly visible in the field of colonisation.²

The VoMi had run the general organisation and transportation of *Volksdeutsche* during the 1939-41 resettlement actions from the Baltic states and operated *Volksdeutsche* ‘transit camps’ whilst the RuSHA, under Otto Hoffman, would assume the responsibility for the racial evaluations of the racial groups under German control.³ Finally a tick by the Labour or Agricultural Ministry members would lead to a final categorisation of A, O or S.⁴ The first (A) implied employment in the *Altreich* (1937 Reich borders), with no independent existence; ownership of a farm or shop was prohibited, Reich bonds was received as recompense for all property left behind. (O) indicated settlement in the East (Ost) and eventually an independent existence and property compensation acre for acre, building for building, tool for tool. (S)

¹ Robert L Koehl, RKFDV German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939-1945 (Cambridge 1957), p.144

² Michael Burleigh, Germany Turns Eastwards (Cambridge 1988), p.145

³ Valdis O Lumans, Himmler’s Auxiliaries (Chapel Hill 1993), p.189

⁴ *Ibid*, pp.105-6

indicated *Sonderfall* (special case), a person or family about whom doubts existed with regard to their loyalty, race or nationality. These people were destined for further camp life (occasionally concentration camps), delays and, finally, either return to their country of origin, or employment in the *Altreich*.⁵ A fourth grouping was formed in 1941, as a result of the large number of ‘real’ Lithuanians that arrived in the Reich in February and March 1941. Their identification cards were lettered (Li) *Litauer* for Lithuanian, for those who persisted in maintaining their status as Lithuanians. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 these Lithuanians were not permitted to return to their former homeland unless they renounced their claims to former property in Lithuania. Most were retained by the Reich as a labour commodity.⁶

The General Plan Ost, the name given to the Nazi blueprint for the colonisation of the East, was prepared for Himmler by *SS Obergruppenführer* Professor Konrad Meyer-Hetling, Head of Planning Office, of the RKFDV. Meyer-Hetling was also a colleague of Backe in the department of Agrarian Studies at the University of Berlin. On 24th June 1941 Himmler asked the then *SS Standartenführer* to draw up some proposals for resettlement in the East. This was to be the first plan dealing with resettlement in Russia. When the plans were presented to Himmler, he believed that the plans were too limited, writing across the draft ‘superseded’. The Reich Security Head Office (RSHA) then attempted to satisfy the *Reichsführer’s* appetite for colonisation, but the RSHA’s plan also did not live up to Himmler’s expectations. The plan did not even include Hitler’s cherished dream of a German Crimea. At the end of 1941 Himmler again turned to Meyer-Hetling and by May 1942 the ‘General Plan Ost - Legal, Economic and Spatial Foundations for the Restructuring of the East’ was submitted and finally met with Himmler’s approval.⁷

Meyer estimated the implementation of the Plan would cost the Reich around 66.6 billion RM. Meyer was informed by Greifelt, however, that the plan still did not entirely satisfy Himmler. The *Reichsführer* asked Meyer-Hetling to include the cost of resettlement in the Protectorate, Alsace Lorraine and the Slovenia Marches ‘in order to submit a rounded plan to

⁵ Ibid, p.107

⁶ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.11

⁷ Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation Resettlement Mass Murder* (New York 2006), pp.100-01

the *Führer*'.⁸ The *Gesamtsiedlungsplan*, as the all-inclusive plan would be known, proved nothing more than a further burden on Meyer and was never completed.⁹ Himmler also believed that he had been misunderstood and demanded that the General Government, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia ought to be Germanised in their entirety: 'I personally am convinced that it can be done', he argued.¹⁰ In the case of the General Government and Lithuania, the resettlement of all of the indigenous population was called for. The Crimea was to be Germanised in twenty years in order that the *Führer* should live to see its completion. Within this time-scale the Baltic states, General Government and the Crimea were to be annexed to the Reich.¹¹

⁸ Robert L Koehl, *RKFDV*, p.151

⁹ Czesław Madajczyk, 'Generalplan Ost' in *Polish Western Affairs* Volume III No 2 (1962), pp.396-97

¹⁰ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1944* (Basingstoke 1981), p.287

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.280

Structural Planning for a Baltic March

Whilst the General Plan Ost of May 1942 was not definitive, Himmler was in broad agreement with its structure, although he remained dissatisfied with certain aspects of the plan. The Memel-Narew march of settlement, which covered much of Latvia and all of Lithuania, was only to be fifty per cent settled by Germans and those natives deemed Germanisable.¹² Konrad Meyer estimated that around 750,000 Estonians and Letts could be assimilated.¹³ On 12th June Himmler transmitted his views on the General Plan Ost to Greifelt. The notion of marches and strongpoints appealed to Himmler but, as we have seen, the *Reichsführer* was not satisfied with a partial Germanisation of the Baltic states over the next 25 years as he felt he had been ‘misunderstood’. Himmler believed that the General Government, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia ought to be totally Germanised, in the first two instances by a total resettlement of the population.¹⁴ Obviously this was in contrast with the racial surveys conducted thus far which at least saw some ‘desirable elements’ capable of Germanisation in Lithuania. It would have been abundantly clear to Konrad Meyer and the planners at the RKFDV Planning Office that Himmler had a clear idea how the Baltic states were to be resettled, and it was up to the planners to fall into line. It was also clear from June 1942 onwards that the fate of the Lithuanians in the New Order would be no better than the Ukrainians or the Poles; they would face deportation, serfdom, or death. The privileges bestowed upon the Lithuanians were just a war-time expedient, for purposes of propaganda and security. It would take little defiance from the Lithuanians for the Nazis to show their true attitude and remove the Lithuanians’ privileges.

The Nazi *Drang nach Osten* would take on a very different form from that of its predecessors as Himmler proclaimed in 1942, ‘our duty in the East is not Germanisation in its former sense of the term, that is imposing of German language and laws upon the population, but to ensure that only people of pure German blood inhabit the East’.¹⁵ Of course Hitler’s own vision for

¹² Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, Architects of Annihilation (London 2002), p.257

¹³ Ibid, p.262

¹⁴ Robert L Koehl, RKFDV German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939-1945 (Cambridge 1957), p.151

¹⁵ Vejas G Liulevicius, War Land on the Eastern Front (Cambridge 2000), p268

the former Baltic states was in broad alignment with Himmler's for the *Führer* would approve the General Plan Ost in 1942. Whilst referring to the Baltic region on 5th April 1942 Hitler mused that 'in the future the Neva will have to serve as the frontier between Finland and ourselves. May the ports and naval docks of Leningrad decay in their turn! As a matter of fact, there can be only one master of the Baltic which must be an inland sea of Germany's'.¹⁶ Nevertheless the General Plan Ost was not binding and as RKFDV Himmler could operate with considerable freedom of action, regardless of the misgivings and opinions of officials in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* and the RMO.

Long before the release of the General Plan Ost, the RKFDV Human Department had already suggested on 10th September 1941 that the Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche*, who had been resettled to the Reich some seven months previously, be transported 'back to their old farms', provided they were suitability categorised as *ostwürdig* ('East worthy').¹⁷ Both the 'real' Lithuanians and the Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* were still residing in VoMi camps, pending a decision on their final destination. According to statistics from the Lithuanian Legation in Washington, of the 53,000 alleged Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* as many as 35,000 were 'real' Lithuanians while as few as 18,000 were German *Volksdeutsche*.¹⁸ The RKFDV Human Department recommended that East Prussia should be expanded to accommodate the *Volksdeutsche*. In early 1943 the American Legation in Stockholm passed to the British a report concerning the German colonisation of Lithuania which contained a memorandum by the nationalist, Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF). The memorandum revealed that the 'real' Lithuanians' return to Lithuania had been prevented by an order from the *Reichskommissar* of the Ostland, Hinrich Lohse, on 25th September 1941, which stated that those who had illegally crossed the border to reach the Reich in order to escape Bolshevism should be prevented from returning to Lithuania.¹⁹

¹⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper (ed.), *Hitler's Table Talk* (London 2008), p.302, entry for 5th April 1942

¹⁷ Götz Aly, *Final Solution* (London 1999), p.212n

¹⁸ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, No. 8 (17) The Lithuanian Situation, The Lithuanian Legation, Washington D.C., 20th May 1942, p.2

¹⁹ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.16

As part of the Memel-Narew March a ‘settlement belt’ was planned and indeed began to be constructed, stretching from the East Prussian border through Kaunas and on to the Latvian border in the direction of Riga. As a result the settlement belt was known as the ‘Riga Bridge’ and was to be the first stage of the colonisation of Lithuania.²⁰ It is clear that the SS had made the decision to colonise Lithuania in full, regardless of the small percentage of the population that the German racial specialists deemed desirable and capable of being absorbed into the Reich at a later date. On 1st October 1943 the Swedish journalist Nilis Borman had written in the *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* that the German settlement in Lithuania was initiated in September 1942 prior to the German conscription drive in the spring of 1943.²¹ The Lithuanian's avoidance of the conscription drive can be viewed as a direct protest against the German policy of colonisation.

It is probable that, due to the Latvians’ willingness to collaborate in the crusade against Bolshevism, the Letts would have been Germanised *en masse* regardless of the SS racial specialists’ relatively low opinion of their racial desirability. The Latvians would have been deemed racially acceptable via the ‘achievement principle’. The Estonians too would be welcomed into the New Order as they were highly thought of as ‘kindred peoples’. Contemporary German newspaper articles tried to persuade their readers that the Baltic natives belonged to the Nordic race. The *Danziger Vorposten* on 4th September 1941 stated that ‘the Estonians must be regarded as of strongly Nordic character. Moreover they have no small admixture of Germanic blood’.²² Indeed, there were no forced evictions of indigenous peoples on purely racial grounds in the two northern Baltic states, other than in the diluted Latvian province of Latgale. The SS Germanisers, though of course still brutally racist, would prove flexible in recognising as Germanic those peoples they considered as being on the cusp of the Nordic race. The Nazis’ racist ideology naturally limited the number of peoples eligible for Himmler’s Germanisation projects and quite simply there were not enough pure Germanics to fulfil the dreams of Himmler and his *Führer*. Therefore the few border-line

²⁰ Hans Umbreit, “German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945,” in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Germany and the Second World War V/II (Oxford 2003), p.259

²¹ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, p.2

²² PRO FO 371/29273, German Activities 1941, Polish Ministry of Information, Polish Fortnightly Review 15th October 1941, p.3

cases that existed, such as the Estonians and the Letts, would find a place in the *Volk*. As the war years passed and the chance of a German final victory receded, the likelihood of Estonia and Latvia taking their place in the Germanic 'New Order' in Europe actually increased due to their relatively substantial military collaboration. Eventually, of course, the impending German defeat made this wholly academic.

The SS creation of a land bridge, or settlement belt as it was otherwise known, was not a new concept created specifically for Lithuania's particularities. In the Protectorate, for example, the idea found strong favour and fitted perfectly with the Nazis' Social Darwinist beliefs. In the Protectorate, as in other areas, 'alien' races were to be encircled as German settlements expanded through resettlement and birth rates. A settlement belt was to stretch northwards to the German border from Prague and crucially another belt was to follow the Moravian-Slovak border, isolating the Protectorate Slavs from the Slovakian Slavs.²³ The Slav pockets in the Protectorate would then be gradually reduced in the unequal racial struggle with the ever-expanding German settlements. In 1942 the eleventh issue of the illegal circular of the Association of Fighters for the Freedom of Lithuania indicated that the same procedure was to be followed in Lithuania. The Riga Bridge would isolate the Lithuanians, to the west against the sea, to the east against the settlement belt running through Kaunas, to the north against the assimilable Letts and to the south against the East Prussians.²⁴ The surrounded Lithuanians would be expelled or would face extinction through birth control. Similarly, the Reich surrounded the Protectorate on three sides whilst the Slovak border settlement belt isolated Czechdom. Through economic factors and historical connections it was deemed that fifty per cent of the Czechs could be Germanised.

Of the estimated 20,000 'real Lithuanians' who had been allowed to be 'repatriated' to the Reich with the Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* very few were permitted to return to their homeland. The only way they could do this was by renouncing their property and receiving special permission from the Germans. In reality this seldom occurred as the vast majority of 'real' Lithuanians were retained in the *Altreich* as a source of labour, due to a decree issued by the RSHA on 23rd July 1941 which enabled alien blood to remain in the *Altreich* for

²³ Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims V/II* (London 1974), p.46

²⁴ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.23

labour commitment.²⁵ A ‘well informed’ source in the Americans’ report on the German colonisation of Lithuania indicated to the British that the Germans took a dim view of those Lithuanians who tried to renounce their claim as ‘repatriates’ and become immigrants. The Rev. V. Pikturka refused a ‘repatriate’s certificate’ and was sent to Dachau. The former Lithuanian Vice Minister for Education, Mr Masiliunas, wrote to the German authorities thanking them for allowing him to flee from the Bolsheviks. Masiliunas wanted to remain as an émigré rather than a ‘repatriate’. Nevertheless he spent the next year in a VoMi camp. In the spring of 1942 he was allowed to put his case and present evidence that he was a Lithuanian. He was only allowed to finally return after he had signed a statement renouncing all his claims to real estate in Lithuania. Similar cases forced the Germans to create the (Li) category for ‘real’ Lithuanians, but this did not improve the ‘real’ Lithuanians’ position.²⁶

²⁵ Robert L Koehl, RKFDV, p.138

²⁶ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, pp.10-11

Creating the New Order, Population Transfers in the Ostland

The 'Evacuation' of the Jews

The elimination of the Jews of the East was the first stage of the Germanisation of the Ostland. The General Plan Ost called for the Jews of the Soviet Union to be evacuated, yet by mid-1942 most had already been euphemistically 'resettled' in other words murdered.²⁷ The plan outlined the Nazis' blueprint for the annexation of the East for which the elimination of the Jews was a prerequisite to the resettlement of the East by Reich Germans, *Volksdeutsche* and Germanics from Western Europe. Only a minority of the indigenous Slavs would be allowed to remain, in a state of serfdom. In 1939 Lithuania (including Vilnius) had over 225,000 Jews, Latvia 93,000 while Estonia had a small Jewish community of 5,000.²⁸

Germany sent four *Einsatzgruppen* into the Soviet Union, whose primary role in Operation Barbarossa was to undertake all arrests and executions deemed necessary for the political pacification of the Soviet Union. There were explicit orders for the following personnel to be executed: 'all functionaries of the Comintern and all communist career politicians; the higher, middle, and lower echelon functionaries of the party and its various committees; Jews in party and state positions'.²⁹ This would be interpreted as an authorisation to murder all of the Jews in the Soviet Union. On 2nd July 1941, in the second week of the invasion, Heydrich informed his three HSSPFs (Higher SS Police Leaders) in Russia that all anti-Jewish and anti-communist 'self-cleansing efforts' were to be 'secretly encouraged'.³⁰ Unfortunately there were many Balts, Ukrainians and Poles who would need very little encouragement to participate, so high was the level of anti-Semitism amongst these populations.

Einsatzgruppe A operated in the Baltic states and north-west Russia under *SS Brigadeführer* Stahlecker. Although it was the largest *Einsatzgruppe*, it still only comprised around a thousand men and had to rely heavily on auxiliaries, Order Police and *Waffen SS* to reach its

²⁷ Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims V/II* (London 1974), pp.354-56

²⁸ Romuald J Misiunas, *The Baltic States, Years of Dependence* (London 1983), p.61

²⁹ Christopher R Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Jerusalem 2004), p.228

³⁰ Jermery Noakes, Geoffrey Pridham (ed.), *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 3* (Exeter 1998), p.489

target of making the Ostland 'Judenfrei'. It would be this small body of personnel who would lead the crusade against the Baltic Jews. When Stahlecker arrived in Riga on 1st July he met Viktors Arajs, an opportunist with police experience. The next day Stahlecker asked Arajs to organise and command an auxiliary police force. Former Latvian police officers and soldiers were recruited and grouped into a *Sonderkommando* of around 300 men and placed under the direct supervision of *SS Sturmbannführer* Rudolf Lang, who would later become Commander of the Security Police and SD (KdS) Latvia. In Riga Arajas' troops staged executions twice a week throughout the summer and autumn of 1941 and around 4,000 Jews and 10,000 Communists met their fate in this way.³¹

On 19th January 1942 the FRPS reported that, so far as Lithuania and Latvia were concerned, the bulk of the civil administration's anti-Semitic legislation appeared to have been introduced during the month of October. On 13th October 1941 a *Reichskommissar* order called for all Jewish property within the areas administered by the *Reichskommissar* to be confiscated and placed under commissariat administration. The only items allowed to be retained were household furniture that was necessary for bare existence and money and securities to the value of 100 RM. The District Commissar's order of 23rd October 1941, which constituted a ghetto in Riga, stated that all Jews not living in the ghetto were to move within it by 25th October. Of the 8,000 Jews who resided in Riga approximately 2,000 had already been settled within the prescribed area. A council of elders was to act as the administrative authority within the ghetto, and its word was to be law for the community. The other ghettos in the Ostland were subjected to the same restrictions. The Jews were issued with food cards, valid for half the Baltic level of rations. The FRPS learned via the Swedish Press (*Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* on 15th December and *Aftonbladet* on 17th December 1941) that due to an alleged spotted typhus epidemic, Jewish ghettos in Lithuania were being disinfected.³²

The FO first received definitive information on the exact fate of the Baltic Jews from a mid-1942 LAF memorandum passed to them by the American Legation in Stockholm. The LAF

³¹ Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death* (Oxford 2002), p.119

³² PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 120, Foreign Research and Press Service, 19th January 1942, p.3

were in a position to know the details for they had played an important part in the instigation of pogroms in Lithuania, prior to their fall from grace in August 1941. Many LAF sympathisers served in the Lithuanian auxiliary units which assisted units of *Einsatzgruppe A* in conducting mass shootings. As the FRPS was already aware that the Jews had disappeared from public life, there was no reason to doubt the validity of the LAF statistics. The LAF memorandum gave the FRPS very accurate figures on the German annihilation of Lithuania's Jews, stating that 'at the outbreak of war there were 220,000 Jews in Lithuania. Of these about 20,000 left Lithuania with the Bolsheviks. After nine months of German occupation, only about 30,000 of the remainder are still in Lithuania. This means that about 170,000 Jews have been murdered in Lithuania during that time'.³³ The Germans viewed the slaughter of the Jews as a necessary prerequisite to the Germanisation of Lithuania.

We know from the post-war capture of documents that on 1st December 1941 Karl Jäger reported to the RSHA that his *Einsatzkommando 3* of *Einsatzgruppe A* had, with the help of Lithuanian auxiliaries, slain 137,346 Jews. Jäger gleefully summarised: 'I can state today that the goal of solving the Jewish problem in Lithuania has been reached by *Einsatzkommando 3*. There are no more Jews in Lithuania anymore except the work Jews and their families'. The remaining Jews were located in Schaulen: 4,500, Kaunas 15,000 and Vilnius 15,000.³⁴

The British were by this time already aware that mass killings of Jews were taking place in the Soviet Union. Although the GC and CS at Bletchley Park did not manage to crack the Gestapo/SD enigma code, it did succeed in cracking the German Order Police cipher code which brought to the British attention the mass shootings being perpetuated by the Germans in the East. Between 18th July and 30th August 1941 police decrypts, on at least seven occasions, gave details of mass shootings in the sector of HSSPF Russia-Centre, under the command of *SS Obergruppenführer* Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski. Victims were variously described as 'Jews', 'Jewish plunderers', 'Jewish Bolsheviks' or 'Russian soldiers' in numbers varying from less than a hundred to several thousand. On 7th August Bach-Zelewski reported that 30,000 executions had been carried out since the police arrived in Russia.³⁵

³³ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.15

³⁴ Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death*, p.215

³⁵ Frank Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War V/II*, (Bath 1981), pp.669-673

Verified knowledge of the slaughter would have further persuaded the British that the LAF's claims were accurate.

By the time of the infamous Wannsee conference of *Staatssekretäre* on 20th January 1942 the pogroms, *Einsatzgruppen* and the opening of the 'second sweep' organised by the HSSPF leadership (involving the Order Police, *Waffen SS*, *Schuma* native auxiliaries and *Wehrmacht* troops) had already devastated the Jewish population in the countryside of the Baltic states. A census had been conducted prior to the sweep so that every Jew could be traced. The killing in the provinces began in late July and was completed by the end of September. In Latvia during this period more than 23,000 Jews were slaughtered in the countryside.³⁶ In Estonia only a small number of Jews did not flee with the Soviets. Of the original community of 5,000 Jews, those who remained in the country were imprisoned and ultimately executed. 963 Jews met their death on the orders of *SS Standartenführer* Martin Sandberger, the commander of *Sonderkommando* 1a and subsequently KdS Estonia.³⁷

At the Wannsee Conference it was announced that the pre-war Jewish population in Estonia had been 5,000, Latvia 93,000 and Lithuania 225,000 and was now reduced to 0, 3,500 and 34,000 respectively.³⁸ The industrial process of gassing the Jews in designated extermination centres was also discussed at Wannsee but, for obvious reasons, would not be required for the Jews of the Baltic states.

The Americans were confused over the conflicting reports as to why the Lithuanian Jews were being murdered, as they believed the acquisition of Jewish commerce was the Germans' main concern.³⁹ On 7th December 1942 the FRPS came to a different conclusion when commenting on the connection between the measures to liquidate Jewish property and the Germanisation of Lithuania: 'The recent speeding up of measures to liquidate Jewish property may be linked with a corresponding acceleration in German plans to bring back to Lithuania the 50,000 persons who were 'resettled' in the Reich in the spring of 1941'. This

³⁶ Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death*, pp.120-21

³⁷ Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder Without Hatred* (New York 2009) p.131

³⁸ Jermery Noakes, Geoffrey Pridham (ed.), *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 3*, p.537

³⁹ Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder Without Hatred*, p.219

view would surely have hardened when, in early 1943, the FRPS received the definitive news of the murder of Jews from the LAF.⁴⁰

On 21st June 1943 the *Reichsführer SS* ordered the four remaining ghettos in the Ostland, Riga, Kaunas, Vilnius and Schaulen, to be liquidated.⁴¹ In June 1943 the Ostland's ghettos housed 72,000 Jews, those unfit for work were killed, whilst those 'fortunate enough' to be deemed eligible for work were sent to newly constructed concentration camps. Of its 12,000 inhabitants, 5000 Jews from the Vilnius ghetto were sent to Sobibor extermination camp on 23rd -24th September 1943.⁴²

Anti-Semitism was rife throughout Eastern Europe; pogroms and collaboration in the holocaust played a major part in assisting the Nazis in their quest to remove 'partisans'. The fog of war allowed the Germans to solve the Jewish question in the Soviet Union; euphemisms politicised and militarised the Jews making them state targets. The fact that the Jews of the East were far away from the unwelcome gaze of the international press also presented the Nazis with an opportunity for the implementation of radical policies. The Jews of the East were invariably labelled as partisans and were neither citizens nor soldiers, which meant that they were not entitled to any legal protection from either the military or civil courts.

The mass executions of 1941 in the Ostland would not have been so successful were it not for the *Schuma* comprising mainly of Byelorussians, Latvians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians. Amongst these peoples nationalist feelings ran high and anti-Semitism was strong. Without these men, the 'ghettoisation', *Einsatzgruppen* shootings and 'second wave' of mass killing perpetrated under the leadership of the HSSPF would have proved impossible to achieve for the inadequately resourced Germans. As an example in October 1942 HSSPF Russia-North Jeckeln had just 4,428 German troops compared to 55,562 *Schutzmannschaften*, of whom

⁴⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, pp.1-2

⁴¹ Yitzhaz Arad, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka (Indianapolis 1987), p.135

⁴² Ibid, p.137

23,758 were serving in the *Schuma* battalions.⁴³ Once they had completed their murderous work the *Schuma* provided a manpower reserve for anti-partisan operations in 1943 and 1944.

Naturally the German press published little information referring to the plight of the Jews. It was clear, however, to the British that the majority of Jews in the Baltic states had been exterminated by the middle of 1942. By 1943 the British had detailed information on the fate of the Jews in Lithuania and the German plans to colonise in their place. Interestingly, the FRPS/FORD reports remained equally silent on the subject of the murder of Jews in the Baltic states and it can only be assumed that it was requested to do so. Perhaps this was due to the uncertain nature of the level of Baltic collaboration in the massacres that may have proved damaging to any hopes of a post-war return to independence for the Baltic states.

Colonisation Actions

The British receipt of the report by the American Legation in Stockholm entitled ‘The German Colonization of Lithuania’ was of immeasurable importance to the FRPS for its twenty-five pages revealed for the first time in detail the German colonisation activities in Lithuania. The report consisted of seven sections including a short introduction which stated that the material had stemmed from Lithuania and had not passed through the hands of the German censor; a memorandum dated July 1942 prepared by the exiled Dr. Grinius, former Lithuanian President, and Reverend Krupavicius, former Minister of Agriculture, for the Lithuanian Councillors General; a communication from the Lithuanian Councillors General to *Generalkommissar* von Renteln, which was undated but apparently written about the same time.; a report prepared in September 1942, on conditions in Lithuania, which was obviously written by a ‘well-informed’ person; a memorandum prepared in the middle of 1942 by the LAF, which was also a significant indication of the changing sentiment in Lithuania towards the Germans; a few copies of two illegal Lithuanian publications, the *Neprikla Sonoji Lietuva* (‘Independent Lithuania’); and Circulars nos. 10 and 11 issued by the ‘Association for the Freedom of Lithuania’.

⁴³ Philip W. Blood, *Hitler’s Bandit Hunters* (Dulles 2006), p.131

The memorandum by Dr Kazys Grinius and Mykolas Krupavicius was written prior to the start of colonisation activities in August 1942 and its information provided the FRPS/FORD with a remarkably accurate account of future German intentions in Lithuania.⁴⁴ As early as July 1942 a resettlement staff headquarters (*Anseidlungstab*) had been established in Kaunas under the leadership of *SS Standartenführer* Dr. Duckart to direct colonisation activities throughout *Generalbezirk Litauen*.⁴⁵ The *Anseidlungstab* was to coordinate all the Reich agencies involved in the colonisation of the region, including the Board of Agriculture, which selected native farms to be taken over by German settlers, as well as directing the indigenous police to carry out evictions. The German trustee organisation, the *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft OST*, administered all confiscated properties pending German settlement. The *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft* would also procure all vacant farms which had belonged to murdered Jews and those deported by the Soviets.⁴⁶ The overall direction of colonisation policy in the Ostland came from the chief *Anseidlungstab* HQ in Riga which in turn received its orders from Himmler's RKFDV. The Kaunas *Anseidlungstab* coordinated the action of some ten district staff headquarters throughout Lithuania.⁴⁷ Wherever possible, orders for evictions were given and carried out via the local administration. By involving local district chiefs the Germans hoped to present the colonisation effort as a Lithuanian undertaking, however implausible that may have seemed.⁴⁸

Grinius and Krupavicius, who were both being held in Germany having fled from the Soviets, were clearly aware of German intentions for Lithuania by July 1942. They outlined their concerns to the Lithuanian Councillors General regarding the proposed Germanisation of Lithuania.⁴⁹ They declared that 'certain officials have been travelling round the country inspecting farms and informing the owners that they are soon to be removed from those

⁴⁴ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, p.2

⁴⁵ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.4

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.3-4

⁴⁷ Czesław Madajczyk, 'Generalplan Ost' in Polish Western Affairs Volume III No 2 (1962), p.399

⁴⁸ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.4

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.2

farms'. The exiles were aware that Petras Kubiliunas, the First Councillor General of Lithuania, had given his consent to the commencement of colonisation, with 'large numbers' of settlers earmarked for western Lithuania. The German Board of Agriculture gave the order that any returning Lithuanians from the Reich were only to be settled in the Eastern areas of Lithuania that formerly belonged to Poles and Russians.⁵⁰ The memorandum was also a sign that the Lithuanians now viewed their 'liberators' with a growing sense of suspicion and unease. The 'well informed' author of the September 1942 report on conditions in Lithuania declared, that the Germans were fully intending to evict not just Poles and Russians from the Eastern districts of Lithuania but also 'Poles' and 'Russians' from central and western Lithuania. In fact there were few Polish inhabitants in western Lithuania so, in other words, Lithuanians were to be evicted from these areas as well.⁵¹

The FRPS declared on 7th December 1942 that news of German 'resettlement' plans had first been reported in the Scandinavian press in the spring of 1942, but they were not officially announced to the Lithuanian population until the end of August, when the *Kauener Zeitung* declared that the return of Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* would soon take place. It also was at pains to contradict rumours that Lithuanians would be ejected from their original property to make room for the returning Germans. Preparations for the transfer, it was stated, would be made by a Commission appointed by the General Councils for the Interior and for Agriculture.⁵²

The September 1942 report of conditions in Lithuania by a 'well informed' individual was written during the first phase of German colonisation in Lithuania. The author was in a position to describe the Nazi colonisation activities in detail: 'The Germans state that they are not infringing on old Lithuanian property rights but are only exploiting Jewish, Polish and Russian farms and those Lithuanian farms whose owners have been deported by the Soviets. If in any case some Lithuanian farms are thus taken over, declare the Germans, those Lithuanian farmers will be compensated with twice as large farms in the Eastern areas'. This

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.4

⁵¹ Ibid, p.11

⁵² PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.2

was merely a cover for mass expulsions and, as the author went on to acknowledge, Lithuanian farmers were being evicted in large numbers. In the district of Raseiniai, at the East Prussian base of the Riga settlement belt, colonisation was pursued on a major scale. Seventy-seven alleged Polish farms were repossessed by the Germans, yet Raseiniai had virtually no Poles or Russians. The brother of the prominent Lithuanian, Professor Gorodeckis, was shot on the spot for resisting eviction.⁵³

According to the undated illegal publications of the *Nepriklausomoji Lietuva* and the eleventh circular issued by the Association of Fighters for the Freedom of Lithuania, the Germans focused their attention on the most fertile areas of Lithuania in the pre-war districts of Vilkaviskis, Sakiai, Mariampole, Raseiniai, Kaunas, Kedainiai, Penevezys, Birzai, Siauliai, Taurage and Telsiai in central and western Lithuania.⁵⁴ These districts would form the ‘Riga Bridge’ whilst eastern Lithuania, including Vilnius, was left to the Lithuanians (for the time being at least) as the region’s soil was sandy and infertile.⁵⁵ In August 1942 480 Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* repatriates arrived on farms in the Sakiai district and soon afterwards 500 *Volksdeutsche* families arrived in both the Taurage and Telsiai districts. Initially these repatriates were only given the role of farm ‘supervisors’.⁵⁶ In September 1942 the ‘well informed’ individual observed that the Germans were not returned to their original farms but instead were given larger farms so that they would not desire to return to their former properties. The Germans were concerned that the *Volksdeutsche* would lose their ‘German resistance’ to alien influences if they were not given land worth fighting for. ‘Resettlers’ rejecting their new land and desiring to return to their former property faced severe punishment.⁵⁷

The September 1942 report also highlighted that the Germans’ discriminatory policies incurred the wrath of the Lithuanians. For example, on 7th September 1942 a German settler named Tiurk, who had been given a farm at Blinstrubiskiai, complained to the chief of the Raseiniai district that Lithuanians had thrown two hand grenades through his window. Arson

⁵³ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.11

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.23 and p.20

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.19

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.20 and p.12

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.12

attacks were frequent occurrences on the German colonists' new farms. In a meeting in Kaunas in August 1942 the Lithuanian agronomists refused to participate in the work of German colonisation and requested that they be dismissed. First Councillor General Kubiliunas declared that if the agronomists did not continue in their duties they would be handed over to the military and face court martial. The chairman of the Colonisation Commission, Colonel Bobelis, urged the agronomists to be more 'accommodating' and 'not to spoil relations with the Germans'.⁵⁸ The eleventh circular of the Association of Fighters for the Freedom of Lithuania indicated that by this time the Agriculture Board had already registered all the best farms in the settlement belt for future colonisation. Even the *Generalkommissar* of *Generalbezirk* Lithuania, Theodor von Renteln, requisitioned a large estate for himself.⁵⁹

In June 1943 the Lithuanian Legation in Washington wrote in its survey of the situation in Lithuania that, as a result of the evictions, the Lithuanian Councillor General for Agriculture had resigned. He was not replaced by an agricultural specialist but by a police official from Telsiai. It was therefore clear that the agriculture administration in Lithuania had more need for an organiser of population transfers than for an agricultural expert.⁶⁰ Lithuanian families were often evicted with only thirty minutes' notice and forced eastwards outside of the settlement belt. These journeys often took as long as three weeks and caused untold distress to the expellees.⁶¹ When they arrived the Lithuanians found their new farms to be of poor quality with poor sandy soil, whilst many of the Poles and Russian evictees would be sent to the Reich as labour. By this time the Jews had already met their fate.

As a result of the German colonisation actions Lithuanian farmers deliberately failed to meet their quota targets. As relayed by the eleventh circular of the Association of Fighters for the Freedom of Lithuania, an article in the underground newspaper *I LAISVE* reported that the Germans threatened Lithuanian farmers who considered such action. Farmers who did not meet their quotas might, alongside other forms of punishment, be evicted from their farms

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp.12-13

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.22

⁶⁰ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, Vol. II, 6 (30) The Lithuanian Situation, The Lithuanian Legation, Washington D.C., June 1943, p.11

⁶¹ Ibid, p.10

and handed over to the labour institutions. The first colonists were established on farms that had been nationalised or belonged to Jews or 'aliens', the vagueness of the latter giving the Germans complete freedom of action. There were cases where even Lithuanians who had fought in the war of independence (1919-21) were evicted as 'aliens'.⁶²

As the representatives of the Lithuanian people the General Councillors were placed in a particularly difficult position. As the contents of the American report on colonisation confirmed, four of the General Councillors did take a strong stance against the colonisation policy of the Germans and their own sycophantic leader Kubiliunas. Councillor Generals Germantas, Mackevicius, Puodzius and Petronis wrote to *Generalkommissar* von Renteln airing their severe displeasure: 'We are compelled to inform you of the existing situation and of the impossibility of cooperating with the local people. We have become the object of general hatred. The public is putting questions to us that we are unable to settle or give a full reply to... Reich Minister von Rosenberg and other high officials of the civil administration of the Reich have stated and emphasised that after the war Lithuanians will have an appropriate place in the New Europe. These statements, however, are not consistent with the present practices of the German authorities in Lithuania and are in general very difficult to explain'; The General Councillors went on to say that if change did not occur, they could not continue in their role.⁶³ By the autumn of 1942 the SS had expropriated 6,597 farms in Lithuania and had settled on farms 16,786 *Volksdeutsche*.⁶⁴

On 22nd October 1942 the chief of the German *Anseidlungstab* in Lithuania, Dr. Duckart, wrote an article for the *Kauener Zeitung* in which he attempted to temper the Lithuanians' attitude towards German settlement. Dr. Duckart claimed that in the three months that the Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* had been returning to the country, there had been no difficulties in resettling them on their former land. Jewish estates were also being claimed in connection with the transfer, and those Lithuanians who had been managing the 'resettlers' land and other property during their absence, as well as Jewish property, would be compensated by the

⁶² PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.23

⁶³ Ibid, pp.5-9

⁶⁴ Czesław Madajczyk, 'Generalplan Ost' in Polish Western Affairs Volume III No 2 (1962), p.399

allocation of other land, including property formerly owned by *Volksdeutsche* in areas where no *Volksdeutsche* would return. If some Lithuanians refused to accept the new land allotted to them, they had to take the consequences, as no other alternatives would be offered them. Dr. Duckart added that many of the Germans repatriated from Lithuania had found work in Greater Germany and would not return; thus rumours that Lithuania was being inundated with German nationals were devoid of justification.⁶⁵ Dr. Duckart's threatening tone would have done little to settle the increasingly anxious Lithuanians.

The *Dagens Nyheter* reported on 19th December 1942 that, as a result of the poor number of student volunteers for labour service in 1942, the Germans had closed the universities of Kaunas and Vilnius.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, on 1st October 1943, the Swedish *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* reported that these and other 'excesses' incited the former Lithuanian President Grinius and former Premier Krupavicius again to protest on 9th November 1942, this time publicly. They also lodged a written protest with the *Reichskommissar*. Fearing further civil unrest the Germans put a temporary halt to their settlement activities. Nevertheless following the poor results of the first military recruitment campaign in Lithuania in the spring of 1943 the Germans had no qualms in restarting the colonisation of western Lithuania which began in April 1943 and ended in May 1943. It would be during this second wave of resettlement that the urban centres of western Lithuania would also receive large numbers of *Volksdeutsche*.⁶⁷ It was also clear to the British that by June 1942 thousands of Lithuania's urban population were being ordered to leave their apartments and houses including non-nationalised residences. Rumours abounded in Kaunas that these apartments were to be taken over by *Volksdeutsche*. Hans Crammer, the *Gebietskommissar* of Kaunas, issued a statement on 2nd July 1942 declaring 'there is a serious shortage of apartments and office quarters in the city'.⁶⁸ The American Legation's 'well informed' source revealed that Kubiliunas had

⁶⁵ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, p.2

⁶⁶ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.3, Issued with Review A, No. 177, Foreign Research and Press Service, 1st March 1943, p.6

⁶⁷ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, p.2

⁶⁸ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.3

promised the Germans 10,000 flats in Kaunas, 35% of the city's total. Kaunas, as well as being the capital of the *Generalbezirk*, was at the heart of Himmler's settlement bridge to Riga and as such was to be a purely German city. As with the selection of farms in the rural areas, any returning *Volksdeutsche* were not to be housed in the poor dwellings of suburban Kaunas; they were to be firmly centred in the heart of the city. The 1,500 German civilian officials and their families were also to be housed there, bringing back memories of the Ober Ost's plans for Kaunas.⁶⁹ By 21st December 1943 the British were aware of this similarity; the FORD reported that Nils Borman had written in the *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* on 1st October 1943 that the Germanisation of Lithuania was 'based on a plan drawn up by Ludendorff for the colonisation of Lithuania during the war of 1914-18'.⁷⁰

The FRPS reported on 1st March 1943 that in August 1942 a housing and business census had been conducted in Kaunas and housing controls introduced. All persons who had come to live in the city since the expulsion of the Soviets in June 1941 and who were without regular work were ordered to return to their original localities.⁷¹ The LAF's mid 1942 memorandum, revealed how convenient it had been for the Germans that 98 percent of the Jews of Lithuania had resided in urban areas as, following the murder of the Jews in 1941, there were many vacant flats for the German resettlers.⁷² The American Legation's 'well informed' source reported that Crammer had prepared plans for the complete Germanisation of Kaunas and he planned to achieve this by the Lithuanianisation of Vilnius. According to the latest census figures Vilnius, the historic capital of Lithuania, had only 159,000 inhabitants but could easily house 300,000.⁷³ Many Lithuanians had fled Vilnius to Lithuania proper after the city's incorporation into post-war Poland, whilst 28 per cent of the population had been Jewish and therefore slain by the *Einsatzgruppen*.⁷⁴ Many Poles and Russians were also forced out of Vilnius after the German invasion.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.13

⁷⁰ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, p.2

⁷¹ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.3, Issued with Review A, No. 177, Foreign Research and Press Services, 1st March 1943, p.2

⁷² PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.15

⁷³ Ibid, p.13

⁷⁴ Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation* (London 2002), p.258

By early 1943 the information from the American Legation's 'well informed' source enabled the FRPS to be in full possession of the details of Crammer's plan to transport *en masse* the Lithuanian population of Kaunas to Vilnius. This move was not planned as a purely demographic one; Lithuanian institutions, such as schools and even the University of Kaunas began to move departments to Vilnius. By September 1942 the Board of Health and Justice and other offices had already been moved to Vilnius.⁷⁵ These were some of the 'excesses' that brought ex-President Grinius to protest in November 1942. This protest did succeed in halting institutional moves but, as we have seen, German settlers would continue to arrive in Lithuania, and Lithuanian evictions would continue until Hitler's general halt order of 5th July 1943 on all *Volksdeutsche* resettlement activities. General Kubiliunas, on the insistence of the Germans, appealed to the Lithuanian inhabitants of Kaunas to move to Vilnius and make room for the 'returning Germans and the requirements of the German military forces'.⁷⁶ This policy was also pursued to a lesser degree in other towns in western Lithuania. On 18th April 1943 the *Oberdonau Zeitung* reported that 'the town area of Kaunas has greatly expanded of late when 23,000 people were added to its population bringing the total to 140,000'. Although this figure was clearly an exaggeration, it was a clear indicator that the German propagandists wanted the public to know that Lithuania was within the German sphere of *Lebensraum*.⁷⁷ The Swedish *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* had reported on 1st October 1943 that the shops on the main thoroughfare of Kaunas were now exclusively reserved for Germans.⁷⁸

According to RKFDV statistics, 28,000 *Volksdeutsche* (some sources estimate the figure to be as high as 36,000) were settled in western Lithuania between August 1942 and July

⁷⁵ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, pp.13-14

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.14

⁷⁷ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.44 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 6th July 1943, p.4

⁷⁸ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, p.2

1943.⁷⁹ This represented one of Himmler's largest resettlement projects in the East. Himmler's aim of linking the former Teutonic lands of Estonia and Latvia with East Prussia via a population bridge, were, like all of the Reich's settlement projects, doomed to failure as the war was effectively lost by the summer of 1943. Himmler pursued his settlement schemes in Lithuania with a vigour which was perhaps unsurpassed. He instituted independent plans for the region long before the General Plan Ost was presented and, even after its acceptance by the *Führer*, the *Reichsführer* pursued his own path by creating the Riga settlement bridge. Vilnius did not become a German strong point as proposed by the General Plan Ost, nor would it for a considerable period of time as a result of the Lithuanisation of the city. Vilnius and eastern Lithuania were, it seems, destined to become a Lithuanian reservation, as the Lithuanians were clearly not deemed to be 'Germanisable' in Himmler's eyes; they were only fit to be pushed inexorably eastwards.

In August 1944 the end came swiftly for the settlers in the Riga settlement belt following the collapse of Army Group Centre in late June and July. The Red Army stormed through eastern and central Lithuania before pausing in early August due to exhaustion. Kaunas fell on 1st August whereas Schaulen had fallen as early as 27th July as the Red Army had tried in vain to reach the Baltic Sea before its supply lines became overstretched.⁸⁰ The speed of the Red Army's advance had caused widespread shock and panic for both the German settlers and the indigenous Lithuanians. Those who could flee in time headed for East Prussia, Memel or Latvia and did so without the help of the paralysed German civilian administration, which was unable to organise an effective evacuation in time. The remaining settlements, now deserted, were overrun by the Soviets in October 1944 in their offensive to reach the Baltic and isolate Army Group North in Latvia.⁸¹ The final German *Drang Nach Osten* had ended in abject failure.

⁷⁹ Czesław Madajczyk, 'Generalplan Ost' in Polish Western Affairs Volume III No 2 (1962), p.399n, see also PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, p.2

⁸⁰ Brian Taylor, Barbarossa to Berlin Vol II (Staplehurst 2004), p.206-08

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.235

The Germanic Brethren

In line with Hitler's dreams and plans for Germanic settlement in the East, propaganda encouraging the future settlement of fellow 'Nordic' peoples was instituted. These bearers of Germandom were to take their rightful place in this 'Garden of Eden' alongside Reich Germans and *Volksdeutsche*. Flemish, Dutch, Danish and Norwegian Nordics were all considered for settlement during the war.⁸² A trial settlement conducted late in 1941 had brought 416 Dutchmen to Lithuania and White Ruthenia.⁸³ The trial was deemed a failure by Lohse's administration due to the Dutchmen's' poor level of prior training. Rosenberg was, in the spring of 1942, still keen to push the issue on ideological grounds, and Hitler believed that a thousand Dutchmen would be an acceptable number to begin with. The Dutch Nazi Labour Minister and President of the Dutch National Bank, Rost Van Tonningen, headed a commission to the Ostland with the blessing of Dutch Nazi leader, Anton Mussert.⁸⁴ The *Ostforscher* (contemporary scholarly experts on eastern Europe) believed the Dutch would be a perfect substitute for the Jews in the towns and dreamed of using Dutch ingenuity to drain the Pripet marshes.⁸⁵ In the Netherlands the Netherlands East Company (NOC) was established in June 1942, with its seat in The Hague, to promote the employment of Dutch firms and individuals in the East. It was proposed that Dutch workers would be assigned state property as a 'base' in each of the Ostland's *Generalbezirk*. However, again this only occurred in Lithuania.⁸⁶ The *Donau Zeitung* stated on 1st November 1942 that 'by virtue of a lease contract the NOC recently took over the first two state-owned model and training estates, 'Landvaravas' and 'Verkiiai' in the Vilna district. These estates, ... are to be a training centre for Dutch farmers as estate managers. The company will run the two estates on its own account'.⁸⁷ In early 1944 there were still 200 Dutchmen recorded as 'doing good work' on the model farms. Other Dutchmen were engaged in industry, general agriculture, peat cutting and

⁸² Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Germany and the Second World War V/II (Oxford 2003), p.211

⁸³ Ibid, p.210

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.211

⁸⁵ Michael Burleigh, Germany Turns Eastwards (Cambridge 1988), p.215

⁸⁶ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, Second World War V/II, p.211

⁸⁷ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.25

fishing on Lake Peipus. These additional Dutchmen did, not, however create any new settlements in the Ostland.⁸⁸

On 9th June 1942 the decision to found the NOC was announced in the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland*. The President of the Dutch National Bank, Rost Van Tonningen, added to his powers in the East by becoming president of the NOC's governing body. The chairman of the governing body was another prominent Dutch Nazi, the Vice President of the Council of Industrial Economy, F. B.J. Gips. Van Tonningen arrived in Riga via Berlin on 9th June to discuss future policy.⁸⁹ In November 1942 the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* had reported that Van Tonningen had declared in a speech in Riga on 10th June his determination to settle two million Dutchmen in the Ostland within a generation.⁹⁰ The FRPS also reported that it had been broadcast on 12th and again on 21st June that Dutch financiers would help reconstruct closed down industrial plants in the eastern territories, and that Dutch pedigree stock and expert agricultural advice would be supplied to the Ostland. The NOC was to be initially provided with 2,500,000 Guilders.⁹¹

The Danes particularly interested Lohse's Ostland administration, and in the autumn of 1941 the Danish government 'agreed in principle' to the employment of Danes in the *Reichskommissariat*. The Danes formed a 'working committee to provide Danish initiative in eastern and southern Europe'. In the spring of 1942 Thorkild P. Juncker and the Danish Transport Minister, Gunnar Larsen, visited Lohse in Riga. By this time a Danish-owned cement factory was already in operation in Riga, one of only two Danish firms in the East.⁹²

⁸⁸ Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/II*, pp.212-13

⁸⁹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 143, Foreign Research and Press Service, 29th June 1942, p.4

⁹⁰ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.25

⁹¹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 143, Foreign Research and Press Service, 29th June 1942, p.4

⁹² Hans Umbreit, "German Rule in the Occupied Territories 1942-1945," in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Umbreit, *Second World War V/II*, p.212

The American Legation's report of December 1942 revealed to the British that the failure of Germanic settlement was not due to the lack of effort of collaborationist propagandists such as the Norwegian journalist Peter Jerndorff-Jesson. In November 1942 Jerndorff-Jesson wrote an article in the *Aftenposten* about the recent tour of Lithuania he had embarked upon at the invitation of *Reichskommissar* Lohse. He pointed out that the 'Northerners' could establish themselves in Lithuania and that there were good opportunities for colonisation. He wrote that Lithuania was a country with a future for Norwegians, Swedes, Dutch and Finns, who, together with the Germans, would build a new Europe and which 'is already taking form'. Commenting on Van Tonningen's speech in Riga on 10th June Jerndorff-Jesson wrote: 'If there is so much space for so many Dutchmen, there is also space for Scandinavians'.⁹³

The other major impact on German *Volksdeutsche* policy in the vicinity of the Ostland came as a result of the Soviet general advance following the Red Army's victory at Stalingrad in February 1943. In early 1942 the Finnish government was informed that they could, after all, 'repatriate' their Ingria. The Finnic Ingria had inhabited the region south of Leningrad for centuries. It was not until it became obvious that the war was lost that any action began to be taken. A joint Finnish-German inspection commission visited the area and on 6th October 1943 and a 'repatriation' agreement was signed in Riga.⁹⁴ On 29th August 1944 the FORD reported that, by the end of June 1944, the last instalment of the 60,000 *Ingermarlander* refugees had been dispatched from Estonia to Finland. The *Ingermarlander* had previously been evacuated to Estonia to avoid being engulfed by the Soviet offensive to relieve Leningrad which had begun in January 1944.⁹⁵ The Ingermanland march of settlement was the only march proposed by the General Plan Ost which remained entirely on the drawing board and received no *Volksdeutsche* settlers.

⁹³ PRO FO 371/36768B, Situation in Lithuania 1943, 19th December 1942, American Legation in Stockholm, The German Colonization of Lithuania, p.25

⁹⁴ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1944* (Basingstoke 1981), p.281

⁹⁵ PRO FO 371/43060, Disintegration of the Ostland 1944, No.220 Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 29th August 1944, p.3

Military Collaboration

One area of press monitoring which did have an immediate effect on the FRPS/FORD's understanding of the level of collaboration between the three Baltic states and Germany during the Second World War was that of the German establishment of, and expansion of, Baltic military units to fight alongside the occupiers against what was seen as the mutual enemy, the USSR.

The FRPS declared that the *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* had on 15th November 1941 reported from Tallinn that internal security in Estonia was being maintained by a voluntary militia in addition to the police, and that Estonian detachments were fighting on the Eastern Front between Lake Illman and Lake Peipus and in the Leningrad Sector. The supplement also reported similar activities involving Latvian and Lithuanian volunteers. In the same Ostland supplement it was reported that on 29th December Moscow radio had quoted from article in *Pravda* which stated that 'the partisan movement is also growing in the younger republics of the Soviet Union – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia'. The FRPS correctly judged that 'this description of the Baltic territories is perhaps significant, as an indication of the probable attitude of the Soviet Union towards Baltic claims to independence at the end of the war'.⁹⁶

The *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* reported on 25th January 1942 that Major General Schröder, SS and Police Führer for the General Commissariat of Latvia, had declared that the Latvian police force numbered 14,000 men and as voluntary enlistment for active service had been so successful it had been possible to send two volunteer police battalions to the front (attached to the 2nd SS Brigade). In February an official recruiting campaign for the Latvian volunteer battalions was inaugurated, and it was pointed out that the response would be proof of the nation's readiness to take its place among the other nations of Europe. This was a clear

⁹⁶ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 120, Foreign Research and Press Service, 19th January 1942, p.2

indicator that the Germans were using the autonomy issue as an incentive during the mobilisation campaigns in the Baltic states.⁹⁷

The FRPS noted in April 1942 that in the preceding two months the Germans had made constant appeals to recruit Baltic volunteers in the Baltic territories, particularly in Latvia. Early in March the Estonian National Director Dr. Mae declared that 12,600 Estonian volunteers were on active service. At the time the FRPS had no figures for the two other Baltic states.⁹⁸

In June 1942 the FRPS reported that in early May three battalions of Latvian *Schutzmannschaft* (militia) had been sent to the Eastern Front.⁹⁹ Towards the end of July the Chief of the SS and Police for Latvia, *SS Brigadeführer* Schröder, declared that it was significant evidence of German-Latvian co-operation that tens of thousands of Latvians had fought with the *Wehrmacht* on the Eastern Front and also in the hinterland in the police force. The FRPS also noted that three more Latvian *Schutzmannschaft* had been dispatched to the front. On 17th July the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* reported that the Estonian volunteers also included some small contingents of airmen.¹⁰⁰

The FRPS reported in September 1942 that on the occasion of the first anniversary of Tallinn's liberation (28th August 1941), the General Commissar for Estonia Karl-Siegmund Litzmann announced that Hitler had ordered the formation of an Estonian Legion, which, as an integral part of the *Waffen-SS*, would be subordinated to the *Reichsführer SS*. The Estonian Legion would serve alongside the legions or regiments from Finland, Sweden, Norway,

⁹⁷ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 127, Foreign Research and Press Service, 9th March 1942, p.2

⁹⁸ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, The Ostland, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 132, Foreign Research and Press Service, 13th April 1942, p.2

⁹⁹ Ibid, Series A, The Ostland, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 139, Foreign Research and Press Service, 1st June 1942, p.2

¹⁰⁰ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 152, Foreign Research and Press Service, 31st August 1942, p.2

Denmark, Holland and Belgium in the common struggle for a new Europe.¹⁰¹ This was a clear indicator that the FRPS could be relied upon to quickly gather important political and military information from the Ostland. Estonia was clearly being given preferential treatment in German-occupied Europe for in the year 1942 only natives of countries which were considered racially pure would be permitted to wear the uniform of the *Waffen SS*. To the Nazis there was no greater honour that could be bestowed on a nation's population.

In the autumn of 1942 the native Estonian Directorate of Education issued a new regulation affecting all forthcoming students of both sexes in the age-groups 1921-24. For these groups, entrance into any University or higher educational institution was made conditional on the completion of one year's service in the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (RAD) or, alternatively, of six months service in the German army or similar organisation (e.g. The Estonian Legion or the Todt organisation). Failure to enrol in the current year involved permanent loss of the right to pursue higher studies. The Scandinavian press reported in December that fewer than 500 students of around 3,000 had obeyed these regulations, and opposition to them resulted in the closing-down of the Universities of Kaunas and Vilna and the consignment of about 50 professors and students to concentration camps.¹⁰²

In July 1943 the FRPS Baltic States Section noted with some scepticism that 'if recent reports from Sweden are to be relied upon. German efforts to recruit Baltic man-power for the new SS Legions have, except, possibly, in Estonia's case, proved a complete failure and have been virtually abandoned'. In actual fact the recruitment drive in Latvia had, as in Estonia, been very successful. The Swedish press had, however, been correct to report that the recruitment of Lithuanians had been an abject failure. In fact the opposition to recruitment had been so strong that the FRPS reported that the plans for a Lithuanian SS Legion was dropped in favour of the organisation of native engineer battalions which were to be attached to the *Wehrmacht*. The break down in the Lithuanian recruitment drive resulted in mass arrests of the Lithuanian intelligentsia in addition to the previously mentioned closing of institutions of

¹⁰¹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 156, Foreign Research and Press Service, 28th September 1942, p.1

¹⁰² PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.3, Issued with Review A, No. 177, Foreign Research and Press Service, 1st March 1943, p.4

higher education. In Estonia the FRPS noted that the German Baltic press had reported in the middle of May that the more advanced units of some 20,000 volunteers for the Estonian Legion had almost completed their training. Additionally four new militia battalions had been sworn in for service inside the territory, whilst in the same month members of the new Estonian air force were also sworn in.¹⁰³

The FORD noted on 2nd November 1943 that, following quotes in the Riga and Tallinn press, strong action would be taken against partisans; ‘The official introduction of military conscription in Estonia, announced on 27th October by the Chief of the Estonian “Self-Administration”, may possibly part of this action. The Estonian *SS-Oberführer* Soodla, who has recently been appointed to the new post of Inspector-General of the Estonian SS-Legion, is to carry out the conscription, and, according to a Stockholm dispatch, has been given all powers formally enjoyed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Minister of War under the Estonian Republican regime; further a special military court has been set up to try persons charged with evading or hindering conscription; the 1925 age-group is to be called up at once. Estonia is thus the first German-occupied territory in which military conscription has been openly introduced’. This information clearly shows that the FORD was capable of reporting swiftly on events in the Baltic states. The FORD reported this intelligence just six days after the announcement of conscription for the 1925 age group in Estonia had appeared in the German Press. The FORD also noted that the ‘SS Narva Battalion’ had been the first Estonian SS unit in action, having been attached to the SS Wiking Division. The battalion had fought in the battle south of Belgorod in August 1943, while Estonians also fought in ‘Ost battalions’ in the Leningrad area. It was noted in August that the Inspector-General of the Latvian SS Legion, Bangerskis had been promoted to *SS Gruppenführer* and *Generalleutnant* of the *Waffen SS*, a sign of the Germans’ satisfaction with the Latvian SS Legion. Meanwhile in Lithuania the FORD reported on the formation of new voluntary self-defence detachments. These new units were to become operational on 1st October 1943 and

¹⁰³ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.44, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 6th July 1943, pp.1-2

would be recruited from persons of Lithuanian descent of 16 years and over with a ‘spotless political past’.¹⁰⁴

In December 1943 the FORD observed reports that the Estonians and Latvians may be rewarded for their continued military commitment to the German cause by the granting of full independence. A *Transocean* news agency despatch from Berlin on 19th November by Georg Schröder stated that ‘The first step towards sovereignty in Reval and Riga, in the opinion of Berlin, was the mobilisation by the Latvian and Estonian Self-Administrations’. However Schröder was careful to add that ‘official German quarters for the time being withhold any answer to the question as to when an independent Latvia or Estonia with governments of their own will be proclaimed’. Importantly the FORD also noted that Schröder went on to emphasise the connection between the political future of the two countries and their military record during the war, and concluded with the explanation that ‘the new German plans concerning the Baltic states are certainly meant to be a reply to the Moscow Conference. Latvians and Estonians at any rate consider present developments in this light. The mobilisation of the 1925 class by the Estonian Self-administration on 26th October, the mobilisation of ten classes by the Latvian Self-Administration on 16th November, and the expected extension of the Estonian mobilisation also to ten classes, are accompanied by mass demonstrations of workmen and peasants against Moscow’. In the FORD’s own words ‘two points are worthy of note in connection with this dispatch. One is the significant omission of any mention of Lithuania, where –it was stated in Berlin (according to a Swiss Overseas Service despatch) – the situation was of a different nature. “In this country thousands of Lithuanians, influenced by Soviet propaganda, are hiding in the forests and are committing hostile acts against the German occupying authorities”. The second point is the complete failure of the German authorities, up to this date, to follow up *Transocean*’s hint by any practical implication of the promise which is implied, and this notwithstanding the desperate efforts made by the Estonian and Latvian Administrations to earn it’. There was, of course, a third point which was made that the Germans were aware that the British had, to all intents and purposes, recognised the Soviets’ claims to the Baltic states and the Germans therefore were trying to promote, through cunning propaganda, the Balts’ dual fear of another Soviet

¹⁰⁴ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, The Ostland, No.104, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 2nd November 1943, pp.1-2

occupation and that no aid could be expected from the Western Allies, despite the lofty sentiments of the Atlantic Charter.¹⁰⁵

The FORD Baltic States Section had correctly deduced that the Germans had no intention of granting Estonia or Latvia full independence even though the two states had already made mammoth efforts, given their size and wartime situation, to meet all the German military man-power recruitment drives, yet still independence was withheld. While the FORD was also correct to surmise that, as it now had extensive knowledge of the German distrust of the Lithuanians, independence of any sort would never be offered to the disobedient Lithuanians. As the FORD noted on 15th November General Dankers, leader of the Latvian self-administration, announced the call-up of the 1915-1924 classes for service in the Latvian SS Legion. In Estonia the call-up of the 1925 class (which Dr. Mae, the leader of the Estonian self-administration, had described as ‘the first sovereign act, from the point of view of state law, which I have been authorised to perform’.) was completed by 10th November. Under the decree of 18th October, also signed by Mae, a scheme was introduced for the military training of all Estonian youth from the ages of 16 to 18. The FORD reported that in October the Latvian SS Legion was engaged on the Volkhov front, while the Estonian SS-Brigade was dispatched in mid November to the Nevel sector, and was reported to have distinguished itself there in early December. Once again the FORD saw through the Germans’ propaganda to conclude that ‘Baltic military effort and civilian eloquence alike have so far remained unrewarded, and it seems reasonable to guess that so long as the Germans intend to defend their position in Estonia and Latvia, so long will these two countries remain subject to rigorous German administrative control’.¹⁰⁶

On 22nd February 1944 the FORD reported that following the mobilisation of the 1925 class, the 1924 class was mobilised in the following week and both had been met with German satisfaction. Out of the 5,000 men who complied to make up the 1925 class, approximately 4,000 were deemed fit for military service. 3,000 of these men were drafted into the Estonian SS Legion, with the remainder divided between the Estonian defence battalions and the auxiliary police. It was reported that the Estonian defence battalions had been recently

¹⁰⁵ PRO FO 371/36770, Situation in Estonia 1943, No.125, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 21st December 1943, pp.1-2

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp.1-2

renamed as Estonian Police Battalions and that at the beginning of 1944 their number consisted of approximately 20,000 men. The Estonian SS Legion was also estimated to consist of around 20,000 men by the summer of 1943. On 15th February a DNB dispatch announced that the Estonian SS volunteer brigade which had been fighting on the Nevel front, together with Estonian troops in other sectors of the Eastern Front, were shortly to be sent home. Finally on 31st January a general mobilisation was proclaimed by Dr. Mae. All men of 1904-23 classes, inclusive, were to be conscripted. The older age-groups for military service, the younger for military training, whilst those between 17 and 60 years of age, who were not mobilised, would be liable for service in the *Selbstschutz* (Home Guard). The process of mobilisation was begun on 3rd February and completed by the 15th. It was announced on 15th February in a Berlin press conference that the mobilisation had been ‘the overwhelming result of Estonia’s recruitment for the fight against Bolshevism. The contingent aimed in Dorpat was surpassed by 30 per cent and in Tallinn by as much as 90 per cent’. According to *Transocean* there was ‘a mass rush to the colours... from everywhere in Estonia, especially since the fighting came close to the Estonian border. The number which had been fixed... has been exceeded by 4,000 volunteers’.¹⁰⁷

As the FORD stated ‘Even if allowance be made for the habitual exaggerations of the German propaganda machine, there is little reason to doubt that the mobilisation was substantially successful’. The FORD also noted that Professor Uluots the last Prime Minister of the Estonian Republic, who had hitherto consistently declined to collaborate with the Estonian Self-administration in any way, declared on 7th February that “having regard to Bolshevik methods, an occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union would mean the destruction of the Estonian people and the final devastation of the country” and indicated his approval of the mobilisation of all the national forces. The FORD Baltic Section made precisely the right judgment on the successful Estonian conscription drives when it declared that; ‘It would seem, therefore, that the Germans have contrived to secure the maximum amount of Estonian support against Russia that was possible in the circumstances, without being compelled to play their last card, namely the concession of national independence’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ PRO FO 371/43054, The Baltic Territories (Foreign Office Research Department) 1944, No.149, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 22nd February 1944, pp.1-2

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.2

Meanwhile the FORD reported that in the two other Baltic territories the sense of imminent crisis, was at that time, rather less acute than in Estonia. Although on 9th February the *Svenska Dagbladet* reported that the 1910-14 classes in Latvia had been called up with a view to reinforcing the Latvian SS Legion and defence battalions on the eastern frontier. In Lithuania according to the Swedish press of 6th and 7th February, 20 separate age-groups were called up for military service. The FORD assumed that these call-ups would be used to reinforce the Lithuanian defence battalions or the German Army as there was no Lithuanian SS Legion. A certain number, however, were drafted into a new special unit, under the command of General Povilas Plechavičius, which was formed to combat the growing partisan activity in the region. It was also noted that there was still a considerable amount of unrest and anti-German activity in Lithuania.¹⁰⁹

On 18th April the FORD noted a further attempt by the Germans to induce the Estonians and Latvians to continue to provide their military support by offering a place at the table of the New Europe, something which would not be extended to Lithuania. In an article in the *Berliner Börgen-Zeitung* on 18th March Walter Zimmermann, the press chief for the Ostland, wrote that there was a direct connection between the recent establishment of autonomous Directorates of Agriculture and the ‘outstanding’ contribution to the war effort made by Estonia and Latvia in respect of the recent military mobilisation measures. In affirming an affinity between the ‘racial and cultural structure’ of these territories with that of *Mittleuropa*, as opposed to Lithuania’s long connection with East European (and particularly with Polish) culture. Zimmermann did, however, acknowledge the recent enlistment of more than 18,000 volunteers in General Plechavičius’ ‘Special Units’ as evidence of a growing disposition, even in Lithuania, in favour of more active participation in the struggle against Bolshevism. The FORD could see that by 1944, despite the Lithuanians’ clear hatred for the Germans, military resistance against the approaching ‘greater evil’ was seen as the only sensible course of action for the majority of Lithuanians.¹¹⁰ It was also reported that the response to the recent general mobilisation in Estonia had been 100 per cent satisfactory. Of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p.3

¹¹⁰ FRPS/FORD, Review of the Foreign Press 1939-1945 (Munich 1980) Series A, The Ostland, No.173, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 18th April 1944, p.1

the 42 age groups that had been called up, 20 had been drafted into the *Wehrmacht* and 22 had been enrolled into the Home Guard. The FORD also reported that the German ‘promise to return the various units serving on the Eastern Front to defend their own homeland seems, partially at any rate, to have been fulfilled’.¹¹¹

In its 13th June Ostland supplement, the FORD looked in detail at the question of military mobilisation in Lithuania and the subsequent mutiny. The FORD described the Lithuanians as ‘perhaps the most obstinate race in Europe’ and that by the time of the supplement’s publication ‘the patience of the German authorities in Lithuania has at last, apparently been exhausted’. It was reported in the Swedish press on 6th June that General Plechavičius, the commander of the Lithuanian ‘Special Units’ formed in February to combat partisans in Lithuanian territory, and General Urbonas, his Chief of Staff, had been arrested by order of the chief of the German Police in Lithuania, General Hintze on 14th May. At the same time, the staff quarters of the Lithuanian military detachment in Kaunas had been surrounded and many of the officers were killed whilst resisting arrest, and the remainder were overpowered. During the night of 14th May German SS units tried to disarm the Lithuanian training battalion numbering 1,800 men and the officers training school with 1,200 cadets that were both stationed in Mariampolė. Fighting continued until the Lithuanians had used up all their ammunition, and both sides suffered severe losses. Seven Lithuanian battalions stationed in the Vilna area were disarmed but the remaining battalions, as many as 14, stationed in northern Lithuania, with their headquarters in the town of Panevėžys, were warned in time and withdrew to the forests with their arms and ammunition.¹¹²

The results for the Lithuanian mobilisation which had begun in February 1944 were so successful that there were 30,000 volunteers. The problems described above occurred after the Germans tried one again to force the Lithuanians to form the recruits into a Lithuanian *Waffen SS* Legion. Panevėžys responded by disbanding his entire force and it was this move that led to the German actions of 14th May. Whole units managed to flee into the forests of Lithuania with their arms ready to fight the Red Army on their own terms, while others

¹¹¹ Ibid, Series A, The Ostland, No.173, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 18th April 1944, p.2

¹¹² Ibid, Series A, The Ostland, No.190, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 13th June 1944, p.1

simply melted away. Those remnants that were captured by the Germans were given the option of service with the *Luftwaffe* as auxiliaries or being sent to the Reich as forced labour.¹¹³

A good indicator of the irregular nature of covert intelligence lay in the use of Ultra intelligence regarding the political occupation of the Baltic states. Only once during the entire German occupation of the Baltic states did GC&SC supply the Prime Minister with Ultra intelligence of a political nature relating directly to the Baltic states. This occurred on 23rd July 1944 when the Prime Minister was handed a decrypted message from Himmler to his Higher SS and Police Leader in the Ostland, Friedrich Jeckeln, which had been sent on 9th July. In the message Himmler informed Jeckeln that Hitler had granted him full dictatorial powers to conscript nationals and Germans in the Baltic states for the strengthening of the Baltic Legion's forces and for the building of defence lines.¹¹⁴

It interesting to note that by the end of the following month the FORD had reported the very same information in its final Ostland supplement. The FORD had not been granted access to Ultra decrypts yet clearly the publication of this information highlights the fact that overt intelligence could be relied upon to provide the very same high grade intelligence, intelligence deemed to be important enough for the Prime Minister's attention.¹¹⁵ As has been highlighted earlier the FRPS/FORD had been supplying intelligence on exactly the same subject, the formation of the collaborative Baltic Legions, throughout the German occupation of the Baltic states. It can be reasonably assumed therefore that this intelligence would be seen as highly important.

In a final desperate attempt to procure man-power for the front, which was now cutting deep into the Ostland's territory, Dr. Mae announced on 6th August that the 1926 class of Estonians would be immediately called up for service at the front while the 1927 class would be called up for anti-aircraft defence. According to a Norwegian broadcast of 14th August it was

¹¹³ Ibid, Series A, The Ostland, No.190, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 13th June 1944, pp.1-2

¹¹⁴ PRO HW 1/3104, East Europe: Himmler and Führer give SS dictatorial powers to conscript in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 9th July 1944

¹¹⁵ PRO FO 371/43060, Disintegration of the Ostland 1944, No.220, Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, Research Department, Foreign Office, 29th August 1944, p.2

estimated that there were about 140,000 Estonians under arms, including 40,000 in the Home Guard. Meanwhile the FORD declared that the *Aftonbladet* had reported on 21st June that the Latvian *Waffen SS* forces under General Bangerskis' command numbered about 75,000 men.¹¹⁶

The Nazis population policies were only to evident to the FRPS/FORD. The German press in the Ostland had clearly laid out the ideological goals of the Reich in the region. In particular overt intelligence had indicated that much of the territory of Lithuania was to be colonised with the indigenous Lithuanian population being 'encouraged' to resettle to the east in a reservation surrounding Vilnius. It quickly become obvious to the FRPS that the Lithuanians were being treated as an inferior race compared to the Latvians and Estonians, who seemed destined to be largely welcomed into the Germanic *Volk*. The FRPS also noted the redistribution of property taken from Jews and communist's following the German invasion. Another subject area which the FRPS/FORD was able to provide detailed intelligence concerned military collaboration. The FRPS/FORD noted the establishment and development of the Baltic SS legions, and conscription drives. This kind of intelligence would naturally have been of great interest to the British military. What is interesting to note is that the FRPS/FORD compared favourably with Ultra intelligence in terms of the time taken to pass the information regarding the granting to the SS dictatorial powers of conscription in the Baltic states in July 1944. The decrypted Ultra intelligence took two weeks to reach the Prime Minister's desk while the FORD took only five weeks longer to publish the very same information in its final Ostland supplement. This was a remarkably short period of time when one considers that the FORD's source was overt intelligence. Perhaps this is the most conclusive indicator that the FRPS/FORD provided a valuable source of intelligence to the British government.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp.1-2

Part IV

Post-hostilities Planning

Chapter 8

The Foreign Office Research Department and Post-hostilities Planning

As highlighted in chapter 2 the FRPS and its successor organisation the FORD did more than just monitor the enemy press in the occupied Europe. The organisation was very much concerned with the post-war reconstruction of Europe. The research sections of the FRPS/FORD would play a crucial role in briefing Allied officials on the likely state of Europe following the German defeat. In regards to Eastern Europe the FORD would compose a paper of fundamental importance to British strategy; this paper would be met with the full approval of the FO and would form the basis of the British government's post-war policy towards the Soviet Union. As will become apparent this policy, one of co-operation, would incur the ire of the Chiefs of Staff and the PHPS.

As the future of the Baltic states had, to all intents and purposes, been agreed at the Teheran Conference in 1943, their fate would be irrevocably tied to the Soviet Union. As a result in late 1943, when the FORD was asked to draft a paper on the 'probable long-term impact of Russian strategic policy on British interests' by the Chairman of the Post Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee (PHPS/c) Gladwyn Jebb, the Baltic states were not given much coverage. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union would naturally be the dominating factor in north-eastern Europe in the post-war period.¹

It was thought by the FO that the paper should be an official FO paper and not merely a FORD memorandum, perhaps to add some perceived weight to its arguments. Warner made the necessary adjustments to the FORD draft, after which he stated on 4th January 1944 that,

¹ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Internal FO letter from Christopher Warner Head of the Northern Department to Deputy Under-Secretary Sir Orme Sargent, 4th January 1944

if this were approved, 'it will be comparatively easy to recast the FORD paper to fill in these outlines'. The final printed version of the FORD paper would be the most influential paper covering post-hostilities planning and the Soviet Union. Its findings and conclusions would be strongly endorsed by Eden and ultimately would become government policy. When the paper was officially printed on 29th April 1944 under the title 'Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests', it was the first major paper on the subject of Soviet post-war foreign policy. The FORD Russian Section had been working on the paper since October 1943 after it had finished its work on the FO handbooks.² The paper was designed to provide guidance for the PHPS/c so that it would not deviate too far away from FO policy. As a result the FORD Russian Section can justifiably claim to have had an influential impact on the post-war policy of the British government towards the Soviet Union. Having read the paper Eden wrote to Churchill on 8th May 1944 describing it as 'excellent' and worthy of distribution amongst the Dominion Prime Ministers.³ On 11th May Churchill gave his approval to this suggestion.⁴

The paper was able to make certain predictions with some confidence. It was believed that the USSR would exit the war in a far stronger position than when she had entered it in 1941, and 'in, say, ten years time in man-power, in economic resources, in industrial capacity she will be immensely strong and well organised'.⁵

Although the Soviet Union would be forced for the next five years to devote her energies towards the colossal task of post-war rehabilitation and the further development of her territories, she would continue to focus on maintaining her own security from any threatening power or combination of powers that may threaten her. In particular, as a consequence of her near defeat and tremendous losses, she would fear a German recovery. As a result of the impending defeat of Germany, the Soviets had been presented with the opportunity of

² PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, FO paper, Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests, 29th April 1944

³ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from Anthony Eden to Prime Minister, 8th May 1944

⁴ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from V.G. Lawford of the Cabinet Office to Sir E. Bridges at the FO, 11th May 1944

⁵ PRO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, FO paper, Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests, 29th April 1944, pp.1-2

indefinitely neutralising the threat to her security from Germany. She would also find a place of equality amongst the principal world powers.

The authors of the paper presumed that Russia would welcome a prolonged period of peaceful relations with the Western Allies, provided that the Soviet government believed that Britain and the USA did not want to deprive the Soviet Union of the means of eliminating the menace from Germany, that they did not appear to be supporting a combination against her and gave reasonable consideration to her views. It was thought she would require at least five years for the development of her internal resources, for industrialisation and social development, during which time it was thought unlikely that she would be prepared for a major war, regardless of whether she decided to cooperate with the Western Allies.

The paper warned, however, that this prediction was only based on the assumption that the Russians did not suspect the West of having hostile designs to her security. This largely depended on whether she was satisfied with the measures that were undertaken to render Germany innocuous. Should she not be satisfied (and this might be hard to achieve, given her expected high demands), she would always be in fear of an eventual combination with Germany against her. Her attitude towards Britain would be more suspicious and potentially antagonistic. She would be more preoccupied with her own security, take measures to provide for it and then probably become an intensely disruptive force in Europe. She would be unlikely, except as a last resort and in exceptional circumstances, to combine with Germany, for this would lead to a German revival that could be potentially dangerous. She was expected to help install, dominate and have the support of puppet left-wing governments throughout Eastern Europe.

The paper confidently concluded that, over the five years following the termination of the war with Germany, Russia would be preoccupied with her post-war rehabilitation and would constitute no menace to British strategic interests. During this period it was thought that she would almost certainly experiment with the policy of co-operation with the Western Allies in whatever world organisation that may be set up after the war. The Soviet Union, however, would almost certainly keep herself immensely strong on land and air.

Despite her immense sacrifices in men and material, the USSR was expected to emerge from the war as the strongest land power in the world and one of the strongest three air powers. She would also be a great Slav power with a strong war record based on the achievements of a planned economy which could be expected to arouse widespread sympathy and admiration abroad. All the indicators were that the Soviet government had been strengthened by the war and no internal dissension was expected.

The USSR wished to fully exploit Germany economically, whilst keeping her as weak as possible. She would also demand that her frontiers should be similar to those of 1941. The FO no longer believed that the Soviet Union would be dependent on Allied economic aid in the post-war period and now thought she would revert to her traditional autarchic policy.⁶

It is quite clear that the FO believed that frank and open communication between Britain and the USSR would be vital, if harmonious post-war relations were to be maintained. A weak Germany was central to this policy. The FO was optimistic that this could be achieved, given that the USSR would be exhausted and required a period of rehabilitation, which would provide time for relations between the West and the USSR to be improved. As the paper stated 'any friction there is between us and Russia will not arise so much out of ideological disagreement but chiefly, if not solely, because we and the Russians may take different views as to the post-war treatment of Germany'. Eden thoughtfully remarked 'I wonder?' in the margin of his copy.⁷ The belief that the USSR was governed by realists and nationalists rather than ideologues was a common theme of the paper. The FO therefore believed that, as long as the question of Germany's fate did not cause too much conflict, the USSR should be content to view cooperation as the best way of ensuring its own security and allow for its internal development. Eden wholeheartedly approved of this line of policy as he believed it was both possible and desirable for cooperation with the Soviet Union to be pursued.

With great foresight the paper predicted that, if the Soviet Union decided not to cooperate with the Western Allies, it might not become clear for a number of years 'as instances of Soviet action antagonistic to the interests of this country accumulated. We should probably little by little fall back into a prolonged period of uneasy relations poisoned by mutual

⁶ Ibid, p.4

⁷ Ibid, p.5

suspensions, which would spread to and divide other countries and would hinder the progress of settlement and recovery in war-devastated Europe'. It is worth noting that Eden highlighted this passage in his copy of the paper.⁸

The paper then went on to analyse the individual countries which would fall in the Soviet Union's orbit. In regards to the Baltic states, it was known that they would be subject to the Soviets Union's desire to protect her access to Leningrad; therefore their incorporation along with Memel, Tilsit and Königsberg was to be expected. 'The Soviet government will maintain their position that the incorporation of the three Baltic states corresponds with the wishes of the Baltic peoples as declared in plebiscites, and that it is an accomplished fact that is not open to reconsideration'.⁹

By 1944 the Prime Minister's views had evolved in regards to the Soviet Union, for her great sufferings, victories and the debt owed to her by Britain, had made her demands for the Baltic states seem more palatable. As a result the likelihood of tension in regards to the Soviets' claim to their 1941 frontiers decreased. The real stumbling block was the difficulty in making the Polish government realise that the Curzon Line, either with or without Lvov, was the best they could hope for in any negotiations with the Soviets regarding their eastern border. The Poles would ultimately lose favour with Churchill due to their unwillingness to compromise. Stalin's emerging Lublin government, coupled with the Red Army's rapid advance into Poland in 1944, would soon make the Poles' views irrelevant.

The PHPS/c first paper, which was issued in its final form on 6th June 1944, reflected many of the arguments of the FO 29th April paper. This was not surprising as the cabinet had instructed the PHPS/c that the aim of British policy would be 'to foster and maintain the friendliest possible relations with the USSR'. Fundamentally the paper followed the FO line that the Soviets would give cooperation a try and that Soviet foreign policy in Western Europe was limited and realistic in nature. The paper did argue, somewhat surprisingly, that

⁸ Ibid, p.7

⁹ Ibid, pp.9-10

Britain had the ability to meet a Soviet threat on her own, if such a situation arose. This was quite simply a ludicrous sentiment.¹⁰

On 9th August 1944 Eden presented to the War Cabinet his paper entitled 'Soviet Policy in Europe' in which he recommended the FO view that the Soviets were likely to be interested in cooperation with Britain in the post-war period. Eden not only strongly supported the FO view, but his arguments were largely based upon its April paper. Eden dismissed the PHPS/c view that if a threat did emerge, Britain could meet it alone. A powerful alliance would be necessary to combat such a threat. It was vital, however, that the Soviets did not view this Western bloc as being built up around a revived Germany in order to oppose her. As long as Britain was viewed as keeping Germany weak, Eden believed the Soviets would continue their policy of cooperation. Eden therefore did not see an inevitable threat to Western Europe from the Soviet Union.¹¹

As the FORD Russian Section had to all intents and purposes written the April 1944 FO paper they had directly influenced the Secretary of State and the War Cabinet. The FORD Russian Section assessments were endorsed by the highest authority and the FORD had helped to create what was arguably the British government's most important post-war strategy, how to deal with the emerging Soviet super-power. The FORD recommendations and arguments now became the official stratagem of the British government when dealing with the Soviet Union in post-war Europe.

Following the PHPS/c first paper concerning the Soviet Union in June 1944 the newly named PHPS began to disagree severely with the FO over the perceived threat of the Soviet Union in post-war Europe. The PHPS and the FO were in agreement that the Soviet Union might very well be an enemy in the future, but the PHPS believed the FO and War Cabinet-backed policy of cooperation was destined to fail, with the COS believing Eden's task to be an impossible one. The reason for the change of attitude in the PHPS can be accounted for by the fact that in May 1944 the former PHPS/c had become a Staff of the COS. The PHPS was re-staffed with young officers who shared the COS suspicions of the USSR. Although by

¹⁰ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), pp.198-200

¹¹ Ibid, p.200

1944 many leading members of the British government had mellowed in their attitude towards the Soviet Union, the COS had maintained their rabidly anti-Soviet attitude, even if they grudgingly admired the Red Army's achievements. Gladwyn Jebb of the FO would be withdrawn by the FO from his role as chairman of the PHPS in August 1944, in protest over the PHPS' constant portrayal of the USSR as being hostile.¹²

As we have seen the FO placed great emphasis on keeping Soviet perceptions of the Western Allies positive. The need to keep Germany weak was fundamental to this policy. For their part the COS believed this was irrelevant, due to their belief that the Soviet Union would be hostile towards the Western Allies, regardless of the policy pursued by the British government.

The PHPS paper 'Security in Western Europe and the Atlantic', which was prepared for the War Cabinet and printed on 15th September 1944, painted a bleak post-war picture and indicated that the Soviet Union *would*, after a period of rehabilitation, be a threat. By 1955 the USSR would be immensely powerful, be immune to blockade, and could disperse her industries against air-attack and she would have an overwhelming superiority in land forces. The USSR would not just concentrate her economic efforts on domestic reconstruction but also on the creation of a strategic bomber force and an ocean going navy. Increasing technological progress could be expected which would bring the USSR's military equipment up to western standards. The development of air power and long range missiles had severely debilitated the strategic position of Britain. As the PHPS in all probability knew nothing of the Manhattan project, Britain's security must have seemed very fragile.¹³

The PHPS believed the only way of countering the Soviet threat to Western Europe was by the creation of a close military alliance of the western European states which would, if possible, include western Germany. It was thought a dismembered Germany was the best way of ensuring that the entire German state would not be remilitarised and therefore available for possible Soviet use against the West. Whatever happened it was essential that

¹² Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945 (Basingstoke 2000), p.124

¹³ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union, pp.202-04

Britain did not agree to evacuate her zone of Germany before the Soviet Union evacuated her zone.

To the COS, the whole point of a western bloc and a dismembered Germany was the ability it gave them to create a bulwark against the USSR, whereas the FO's view was that a western bloc and dismembered Germany should be aimed at assuring the Soviet Union that Britain wanted, above all, to keep Germany weak. The COS acknowledged this and that cooperation was still the preferred policy 'but the more remote, but more dangerous, possibility of a hostile Russia using the resources of Germany must not be lost sight of'. The COS believed the USSR was 'the greatest potential danger we have ever faced'.¹⁴

The use of western Germany as part of a policy of defence in depth, in a dismembered form was strongly pushed for in a PHPS paper 'The Dismemberment of Germany' on 15th November 1944. It was believed by the PHPS that this would reduce the chance of a united centralised Germany moving into the Soviet orbit. The FO was sure this would destroy any chance of an Anglo-Soviet alliance and it believed that a united Germany would help hold an Anglo-Soviet alliance and western bloc together, so long as the Soviet Union did not believe that Britain was hostile.¹⁵

As there was clearly a difference of opinion between the FO and the COS on the way to approach the Soviet Union, Eden requested Sargent to arrange a meeting with the COS on 4th October 1944. Eden was convinced the basic problem was that the COS were not adhering to the guidelines laid down in the FO's April paper, which the FO had become convinced could work, but only if applied wholeheartedly. It was made clear to the COS that the FO did not deny that the Soviet Union might become an enemy, but this could only happen in a number of years. Every effort must be made, without harming British interests, to accommodate the Soviet government with frank and friendly relations. Soviet sensitivities were a danger, for if they felt the western bloc was anti-Soviet, they would naturally work against it. Knowledge in Moscow that Britain was thinking of a war against the USSR was the surest way of bringing it about. As we have seen this did not stop the COS-led PHPS. The only concession Eden managed to obtain was that the papers dealing with a potentially hostile USSR were

¹⁴ Martin H. Folly, Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, p.128

¹⁵ Ibid, p.128-29

placed in a separate annexe with limited circulation.¹⁶ The FO stated that the Soviets seemed to have a remarkable forte for rooting out hostile thoughts concerning the USSR. This was hardly surprising as Donald Maclean, the Soviet agent at the FO, had access to these documents.¹⁷

Therefore two separate policies developed which both allowed time for giving cooperation with the Soviets every opportunity to succeed. The FO believed, however, that this policy would succeed, whereas the COS and the PHPS believed it would fail and conflict would be the inevitable result of this failure. In reality neither view would prove correct, as the Soviets did not cooperate in the long term and yet no major war occurred, with the result that the Cold War ensued.

During wartime the idea of a post-war alliance with Germany was obviously unpalatable to the FO and Churchill. Eden feared that if the Soviets were to hear of these plans this might lead exactly to the conflict the COS were planning for. As the FO had been compromised by Soviet agents, the Soviet Union had been in receipt of a steady supply of material which indicated Britain was bankrupt and war-weary. When these reports of anti-Soviet post-hostilities planning reached Moscow, the USSR was less concerned about the threat posed by Britain to her security than she might have been, if Britain had emerged from the conflict as an economic superpower. Ironically, then, the Soviets agents may well have helped to ensure peace.

The importance of the FORD Russian Research Section's January 1944 draft of the 'Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests' paper cannot be underestimated for it successfully advocated Anglo-Soviet cooperation and effectively directed the British government's post-war attempts to remain at peace with the Soviet Union. The FORD paper had been taken on by the FO and presented as its own. However, the fact remains the FORD had written the majority of the paper and therefore made a significant contribution to the British government's post-war policy. Such was the significance of the paper it is no exaggeration to say that this one paper, justified the existence of the FRPS/FORD during the Second World War. Armed with the paper's conclusions Eden was

¹⁶ Ibid, pp.129-30

¹⁷ Stephen Dorril, MI6, Fifty Years of Special Operations (London 2000), pp.13-14

able to successfully confront the rabidly anti-soviet COS and present an alternative policy to the war cabinet. This policy gave the British the best possible chance of maintaining at least a cordial relationship with the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

At the outset this study set itself three central aims: (1) to ascertain the level of exclusion and restriction placed on British covert intelligence gathering and covert military operations in the Baltic states; (2) to examine how viable and valuable overt intelligence was as an alternative source of information from the Baltic states; and (3) to determine the significance of the role played by overt intelligence in shaping British post-war policy towards the USSR. The FO ban on overt intelligence gathering in the Soviet sphere effectively negated the involvement of SIS in the Baltic states. Operating initially from Finland, the FO ban pushed the organisation to the periphery of intelligence matters.¹ The SOE agreement with the NKVD, which placed the Baltic states inside of the USSR's sphere of influence, effectively meant that covert military and intelligence operations in the Baltic states were under the control of the Soviet Union.² Therefore an alternative to covert intelligence was required if intelligence from the region was to be acquired. The alternative, overt intelligence, as we have seen, would prove to be a hugely successful source of information for the British government.

SOE for its part found that operating in the Baltic states, far behind enemy lines and with little Soviet support or interest in its activities, was an extremely uninviting proposition. Following the failure of SOE's solitary mission in the Baltic states, Operation Blunderhead in November 1942, all British military covert operations in the Baltic states ceased for the duration of the war.³ Although SIS' Harry Carr did maintain contact with some agents in the Baltic, the fact that he was asked to break off contact with any agent operating in an anti-Soviet manner only highlighted the need for a 'safe' intelligence source that would not jeopardise Anglo-Soviet relations.⁴ SOE's failure can largely be attributed to the poor co-operation with the NKVD and the distances involved in operating within the Baltic states.

¹ Keith Jeffery, *MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service* (London 2010), p.554

² Dónal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil, Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War* (New York 2010), pp.27-28

³ PRO HS 4/240, BLUNDERHEAD: correspondence on R Seth 1942, Copy of translated Luftwaffe interrogation reports conducted in Berlin on 6th and 26th February 1943, 6th December 1943

⁴ Keith Jeffery, *MI6, The History of the Secret Intelligence Service*, pp.371-73

The fact that Operation Blunderhead was the only covert mission attempted by the SOE Russian Section in the Baltic states is testament to the difficulties such a mission faced. Overt intelligence was the only option available to the British, even though many in the British government still believed throughout 1941 that intelligence acquired from the enemy press was unreliable. In some quarters this view persisted into 1942.⁵

By June 1941 when the Germans commenced their invasion of the Soviet Union, the FRPS had managed to place itself, with a great deal of assistance from Anthony Eden, in an ideal position to be the British government's primary analyser of the enemy and neutral press supplied by the SPRB. The crucial aspect here was the FO's recognition that the FRPS Baltic States Section's work was of the highest calibre. The FO, with Anthony Eden at the helm, was one of the most influential bodies in the British government. By gaining the recognition of the FO, the FRPS Baltic States Section gained the recognition of all the British government departments. This had been achieved as a result of a number of factors. The FRPS had been allowed to focus predominantly on the examination of the enemy press and on post-hostilities planning. The organisation was excused from the propaganda work that her highly educated staff had, hitherto, believed to have been a waste of their talents. The previous problems of sourcing the enemy press that had been faced by the other FRPS geographic sections in the summer of 1940 were resolved by 1941. The formation of the SPRB in September 1940 was vitally important as it was capable of regularly acquiring and distributing the enemy press from the Baltic states to the FRPS Baltic States Section. The SPRB was also capable of supplying any other relevant neutral press and documents it could lay its hands on. As Eden had requested the establishment of the SPRB, he was naturally alive to the value of overt intelligence gleaned from the enemy press. The FRPS would therefore have a powerful ally throughout the war at the very top of the FO.⁶ As Eden had commissioned the February 1941 government enquiry by R. A. Butler into the FRPS, its findings were unsurprisingly very positive about the potential of the FRPS to be an effective

⁵ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, Notes on FO Baltic States Department cover sheet by FO Central Department and Wilson, 6th and 8th October 1942

⁶ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, letter from Mallet at the British Legation Stockholm to State Secretary Anthony Eden, 16th October 1941, p.1

source of overt intelligence as well as a post-hostilities planning organisation.⁷ Butler's report ensured that the FRPS would receive top priority in obtaining the enemy and neutral press. The enquiry also allowed the FRPS to obtain permission to view secret documentation in Whitehall which greatly increased its credibility in the eyes of FO staff members. Butler stated that the FO departments should not hesitate to draw upon the FRPS' 'reservoir of knowledge' for memoranda or notes. The FO had found its alternative source of intelligence for the Baltic states. The value of overt intelligence was specifically highlighted by Parrott when he stated: 'While revelations of great significance are seldom to be found, the sum total of material available, if scientifically read and treated, often provides a remarkably revealing and coherent picture of conditions in occupied territories'.⁸

The uniqueness of the Baltic states' position in regards to British intelligence made the FRPS Baltic States Section particularly important to the British government. The Baltic states were viewed by the British as being highly developed western cultural nations which, until recently, had played a full role in the European community. This view encouraged the continuation of intelligence gathering from the region from a moral standpoint. The British government also faced strong pressure from the War Cabinet, the House of Commons, public opinion, Baltic émigré communities and embassies not to recognise the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states. These factors enabled the FRPS Baltic States Section to become the most productive FRPS geographical section, outside of Germany, during the first two years of the German occupation of the Baltic states. Its output only slowed from mid-1943 after the section had exhausted the number of specialist subjects it could study.

SIS could operate with impunity outside of the Soviet 'East' and was therefore the primary source of intelligence for the British government in those regions. In the East the FRPS held sway, yet the Baltic states was the only region where the enemy and neutral press could be regularly obtained. In addition the newly annexed Baltic states still had a fully functioning FO department that regularly requested information. This helped to increase the importance

⁷ PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Result of Government Enquiry into FRPS, conducted by R. A. Butler, 8th February 1941

⁸ PRO FO 898/252, Stockholm Press Reading Bureau: Intelligence Reports 1940-1942, Parrott Memorandum, 9th October 1941, p.1

of the FRPS Baltic States Section still further. Unlike in the case of the Baltic states, the FO was not under pressure to gather intelligence in order to help reconstruct an independent Ukraine. There was little requirement for intelligence from a region which had little hope of being prised away from Bolshevism.

Elisabeth Pares would, in addition to her work on the Ostland supplements to the Review of the Foreign and specialist reports, participate in research as part of the FRPS Russian Research Section. Her experience of developments in the German occupied Baltic states and the East at large would prove invaluable when the FORD was asked by the FO to construct a post-war policy to deal with the Soviet Union. A sign of the confidence placed in Elisabeth Pares by the FO occurred when she was asked, in January 1943, to write a paper on the German banking system for the entire German occupied East including the Ukraine and the General Government, in addition to the Ostland. This again highlighted the FO's lack of specialists on the German East. As Elisabeth Pares had now gained a reputation for excellence in the FO, it is not surprising that the FO turned to the FRPS Baltic States Section for this paper as the German press in the Ostland regularly commented on the wider 'East'. In 1942 the FO requested a summary of the work that had been produced so far by Elisabeth Pares as the FO had been overwhelmed by the quantity and detail of her work. This was an amazing revelation when one considers that, at the beginning of the German occupation in 1941, the FO was complaining it was 'exercised' by the lack of intelligence it was receiving from the German occupied Baltic states. Overt intelligence had proved itself to be a viable, reliable and regular source of intelligence. Through its analysis of overt intelligence the FRPS Baltic States Section was able to gain an accurate account of life in the *Reichskommissariat* Ostland. This account included the policies of the occupation and the civilian reaction to them, the racial discrimination of the Lithuanians compared to the racial tolerance the Germans had shown towards the Letts and Estonians, the fate of the Jews in the region and the policy of economic exploitation and the slowness of denationalisation.

The decision to absorb the FRPS into the FO and abolish the PID weekly intelligence section can only be viewed as the ultimate recognition by the British government of the importance of overt intelligence. The FO wanted the FRPS close at hand to perform the crucial role of post-hostilities planning. It had become inconceivable that the FRPS could continue to operate as an independent body, given its successes following the Butler enquiry. In little

more than a year the FRPS had been transformed from a quirky organisation full of 'long haired academics' into a serious intelligence and research body essential to both the war effort and post-hostilities planning.⁹

Martin H Folly's assertion that, in the field of political discussions, the FRPS/FORD 'were not very influential' is clearly misplaced.¹⁰ Although the organisation's undeniable long-term legacy lies in its contribution to post-hostility planning, the fact that the West would ultimately have little use for the intelligence gathered by the FRPS Baltic States Section, due to the political realities in the East, is not really the issue. It was given the task of reporting on the overt intelligence emanating from the Baltic states. The success of the FRPS Baltic States in executing this task is the crux of this study.

As Elisabeth Pares had experience in research, analysis and reporting on the Baltic states and the East as a whole, it was only natural that she assumed an important role in the FORD Russian Research Section, which would formulate, arguably, Britain's most vital post-war policy, namely the best way of maintaining peace with the Soviet Union. She helped the FRPS construct the Peace Handbook on Russia for the Reconstruction Committee, which laid the foundations for future investigations into the likely post-hostilities policy of the Soviet Union towards Britain.¹¹ As the Committee on Research Problems was 'very much concerned with the German reorganisation of the European Economy and with the legacy that it will leave after Germany is defeated' Elisabeth Pares' knowledge of the Nazi regimes impact on the economies of eastern Europe would have been invaluable to the Reconstruction Committee in its production of the Russian Peace Handbook.¹² The FORD Russian Research Section finally finished its work on the delayed Russian peace handbook in October 1943.

⁹ Robert H Keyserlingk, 'Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939-43 and its Post-war Plans for South-east Europe' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 21:4 (1986), p.549

¹⁰ Martin H. Folly, *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, 1940-1945* (Basingstoke 2000), p.44

¹¹ PRO FO 371/37017, Handbook on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 1943, Notes on FO Soviet Union Department cover sheet by Dew of the FO Northern Department, 3rd June 1943

¹² PRO CAB 117/77, Studies on Reconstruction by the Foreign Research and Press Service of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 1941, Letter from Sir George Crystal Secretary of

When in the autumn of 1943 the chairman of the PHPS/c, Gladwyn Jebb, asked the FORD to produce a paper on the 'probable long-term impact of Russian strategic policy on British interests' Jebb, as a FO official, knew that the FORD would compose a paper in keeping with FO policy.¹³ On receipt of the FORD draft paper in January 1944, the FO decided to present the paper as an official FO paper and not as a FORD paper. The significance of this decision is that, even after the development and progress made by the FRPS/FORD in establishing a reputation of excellence within the FO, the FO officials still believed a FO paper would carry more weight in the War Cabinet than a FORD paper.¹⁴ It is beyond doubt that the paper was the most important paper produced on the subject of Soviet post-war policy for it was strongly supported by Eden and, subsequently, by Churchill.¹⁵ The paper moulded British policy towards the post-war Soviet Union as it strongly proposed co-operation with the Soviets and highlighted the futility of trying to oppose the Red Army on the battlefield, a view that would bring the FO into direct opposition with the COS. As Eden fully agreed with the authors of the paper on the best way to deal with the post-war Soviet Union, the paper received his full backing. He championed its cause to the Prime Minister and the rest of the War Cabinet in August 1944, when the policy was fully endorsed.¹⁶

The efforts of the COS' newly re-staffed PHPS to push for a more aggressive policy towards the USSR would fail. It needed Eden, however, directly to confront the COS in October 1944 to achieve this. The COS proposal of forming an anti-Soviet western bloc, which included Germany, was bound to cause alarm in the FO and the War Cabinet, for if the Soviets found out the British government was considering such a policy, the future peace of Europe could

the Greenwood Committee on Reconstruction Problems to Sir Leith-Ross at MEW, 1st April 1941

¹³ PRO FO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Internal FO letter from Christopher Warner Head of the Northern Department to Deputy Under-Secretary Sir Orme Sargent, 4th January 1944

¹⁴ PRO FO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, FO paper, Probable Post War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests, 29th April 1944

¹⁵ PRO FO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from Anthony Eden to Prime Minister, 8th May 1944 and PRO FO 371/43335, Soviet Post-War Foreign Policy 1944, Letter from V.G. Lawford of the Cabinet Office to Sir E. Bridges at the FO, 11th May 1944

¹⁶ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (Basingstoke 1986), p.200

be jeopardised.¹⁷ It must not be forgotten that the Soviets had spies well placed to pass such information to the Kremlin, although at the time the British government did not know this.¹⁸

When viewing the two FRPS case studies it is easy to see that the FRPS Baltic States Section succeeded in supplying the FO with an abundance of intelligence concerning German activities in the Baltic states. With regards to the economy, the FRPS knew by January 1942 that the Germans were refraining from dismantling the Soviet economic system, and as a result the Balts were understandably frustrated. The FRPS was therefore able to deduce that the Germans wanted to exploit the economy and industries of the Baltic peoples without indemnity.¹⁹ The FRPS was able to see that the Germans only allowed small industries to be privatised, whilst they kept a tight control of the major economic concerns, such as the vital Estonian shale oil and phosphate industries. Individuals were not allowed private ownership and were given only usufructuary rights which further angered the population. Naturally this policy destroyed any prospect of free enterprise in the Ostland. As a result conditions in the Baltic states did not improve. It must be remembered, however, that these conditions, although considerably better than those in the other parts of the German East, were still poor, particularly in Lithuania where a hardline policy of exploitation held sway. This economic intelligence helped the FRPS to paint a picture for the FO of German economic exploitation and Baltic dissatisfaction. As the FO had desired economic intelligence and the SPRB could supply Elisabeth Pares with a large amount of material on this subject, the FRPS Baltic States Section was able to provide the FO with the most accurate information available on the German economic policy in the Ostland and the wider East. The FRPS Baltic States Section's standard of work on the economic issues in the Ostland proved that the British government had a legitimate, high calibre source of intelligence focussing on the Baltic states.

It was in matters affecting population policy that the FRPS Baltic States Section was given the clearest signals of the Germans' future plans for the Ostland and its population. The FRPS first began to learn of the full horrors of the Germans' population policies early in 1942 when the organisation obtained information from the Swedish press that Jewish ghettos were

¹⁷ Ibid, pp.129-30

¹⁸ Stephen Dorril, *MI6, Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London 2000), pp.13-14

¹⁹ PRO FO 371/32730, Situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 1942, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 120, Foreign Research and Press Service, 19th January 1942, p.3

being ‘disinfected’ due to a spotted typhus epidemic.²⁰ By December 1942 the FRPS had also linked German legislation for the confiscation of Jewish property to the corresponding German plans to return the Lithuanian *Volksdeutsche* who had been ‘resettled’ in the Reich.²¹ It therefore came as no surprise to the FRPS that the Germans were intending to colonise the Baltic states. Hitler had made clear his desire for *Lebensraum* in the East, while the Germans economic policy as well as language used towards the Balts in the German press, gave the FRPS the clearest indication that at least some sections of the indigenous population would be considered for assimilation into the expanding Reich. By mid-1943 the FRPS could say with certainty that it knew the German plans for the Ostland. These were: Jewish murder, Lithuanian expulsion, German colonisation and Estonian and Lett assimilation. The FRPS Baltic States Section was therefore only too aware of the German plans and policies and how they were being received by the local population in the Ostland. Overall overt intelligence had enabled the FRPS to provide the British government with a highly detailed summary of German occupation policy in the Ostland.

There is little doubt that the traditional intelligence services had been forced out of the East by the FO ban on covert intelligence operations in the Soviet sphere of influence. The FO still required a source of intelligence for the East. Fortunately for the FO in the case of the Baltic states all the ingredients existed which enabled the SPRB to procure and then supply overt intelligence to the FRPS Baltic States Section for analysis. The work of Elisabeth Pares was of a phenomenally high standard; the quality of the Ostland Supplements and specialist memoranda she produced are testament to this. The FRPS Baltic States Section’s work was both accurate and produced in abundance. Ultimately, this proved to be enough to overcome the hostility of the traditionalists within the FO. If her work had not been well regarded by the FO then, quite simply, she would not have received so many requests for studies to be made. Her work drew ever stronger recommendations from the FO departments and as a result she, and the FRPS Baltic States Section, gained a reputation for excellence.

²⁰ Ibid, p.3

²¹ PRO FO 371/32733, German Occupation of the Baltic States 1942, The Ostland: German Economic Trusteeship, Supplement to Review of the Foreign Press, Series A, No 166, Foreign Research and Press Service, 7th December 1942, pp.1-2

In the field of post-hostilities planning Elisabeth Pares and the FORD Russian Research Section's work was of fundamental importance in the formation of the British government's post-war policy towards the Soviet Union. The typically detailed disclosures of the resurgent power of the USSR contained within the January 1944 FORD paper left the FO, Eden, War Cabinet and the Prime Minister in complete agreement that co-operation with the Soviet Union after the war was the only realistic policy that could be pursued if peace with the Soviet Union was to be maintained. This was the FRPS/FORD's most significant legacy. There is no doubt, however, that the organisation also made an important contribution to Britain's war effort through the analysis of overt intelligence from the Baltic states. If the British government wanted information on the German occupation of the East then it had no recourse but to turn to the FRPS Baltic States Section.

The role of overt intelligence in the East in the Second World War is a topic which has not been studied in great depth by historians. Ultimately the intention of this study is to open a debate on the importance of overt intelligence in wartime, and to highlight that, given the right conditions, this intelligence had the potential to be very accurate, detailed and influential.

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