

es fand seinen Nährboden in den schweren Kämpfen gegen die Lettischen Roten Schützen und in der lettischen Einstellung gegenüber den Esten als Besatzer. All dieser Ballast verhinderte den Aufbau wirklich gutnachbarlicher und gegenseitig vorteilhafter Beziehungen. Deshalb hielten die estnische Staats- und Militärführung krampfhaft am Abkommen vom 18. Februar 1919 mit der Regierung Ulmanis fest, das eine günstige Lösung der Grenzfragen und anderer aktueller Probleme versprach. Dies führte wiederum zu einer ziemlich begrenzten politischen Weitsicht, die es unabänderlich für notwendig hielt, Ulmanis' Macht in Lettland wiederherzustellen, und keine alternativen Lösungen auch nur in Betracht zog.

Man kann natürlich nicht ausschließen, dass der Krieg mit der Landeswehr auch dann ausgebrochen wäre, wenn die Esten ihn nicht gewollt hätten. Nicht wegen des estnischen Hasses gegen alles Deutsche und ihres Misstrauens gegen die Letten, sondern aufgrund der politischen Ambitionen von General von der Goltz und der Deutschbalten aus der Landeswehr. Allerdings stellt dies nur eine Möglichkeit dar, da der Konflikt aus den in diesem Beitrag genannten Gründen von der estnischen Militärführung entfesselt wurde.

SUMMARY

Break Out of the Landeswehr War: The Estonian Perspective

In June 1919, an armed conflict erupted in the Cēsis area, in which from one side took part Estonia and Latvia and from the other side German and Baltic-German forces. When talking about the reasons of the conflict that became known as the *Landeswehr* war, it was a common practice in the Estonian historiography to blame the Germans for malevolence and treachery towards Estonians. It was only too often claimed as if it were the aim of the leadership of German forces and the local Baltic-German upper classes to abolish the independence of Estonia and Latvia and to form a Baltic Duchy from the local areas. Nevertheless, it was no more than a national history myth. Since during the later decades the *Landeswehr* war no longer merited any more attention, the question concerning the reasons and the people responsible for the break-out of the conflict has remained somewhat unclear up to now. The present article approaches the problem from the Estonian perspective and arrives at three main conclusions.

Before the *Landeswehr* war, the Estonian side was much more militant-minded than the (Baltic) Germans. The Estonian military leadership

– Commander-in-Chief Major General Johan Laidoner and Chief of Staff of 3rd Division Colonel Nikolai Reek – played an especially prominent role in the break out of the conflict. Neither of the officers even tried to find peaceful solutions to the threatening conflict, but instead presented to the adversary unreasonable, ultimatory and even provocative demands. Although both the German command in Latvia (Major General Rüdiger von der Goltz) and the *Baltische Landeswehr* (Major Alfred Fletcher) had political ambitions, neither of them was – at least before the conflict – interested in realising them with weapons and preferred to remain relatively passive. However, it is true that it cannot be claimed with complete certainty that the war could not have broken out independent of the will of Estonians, growing out of the aims of General Goltz and the Baltic Germans.

The main reason behind the break out of the *Landeswehr* war was the deep hatred towards Germany and the Baltic Germans that prevailed among the Estonians. This hatred against Germany begun already during the period of National Awakening and aggravated during World War I, especially in connection with the establishment of German military dictatorship over Estonia in 1918. Reich and Baltic Germans were identified with, they were blamed for hostile acts towards Estonia both in the distant past and at present and they were associated with criminal future plans. This hatred was strongly encouraged by the Estonian press of that time.

The second reason for the conflict was the mutual distrust in the Estonian-Latvian relations. This distrust rendered the cultivation of good-neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations difficult between the two neighbours. As a result of this, the Estonian leadership overestimated the agreement with the government of Kārlis Ulmanis concluded on February 18th 1919, which seemed to secure Estonia's interests in solving the border issue and other important questions. In order to ensure the continuance of the concluded agreement, the Estonian politicians were interested in restoring Ulmanis' power in Latvia. In order to do this, in turn, it was necessary to deal a crushing blow to the forces that had overthrown the government of Ulmanis, first and foremost to the *Baltische Landeswehr*.