

SUMMARY

*The Activities of the US Mission  
Led by Warwick Greene in  
Latvia, April – May 1919*

The Provisional Government of the Republic of Latvia proclaimed on 18 November 1918 faced two years of difficult military and political action in order to liberate the young republic's territory from foreign armies and an even longer fight for international recognition *de jure*. Obviously, the most difficult period was the first phase when the government was territorially limited to the city of Liepāja and its neighbourhood while the rest of the territory was under Soviet control. On 16 April 1919 (Baltic) German forces, dissatisfied with the Latvian government, organized a coup d'état and created a pro-German government that challenged the Provisional Government for several months. However, right from the start the Provisional Government followed a course oriented towards the Entente Powers. Therefore its activities were, to some extent, protected by Great Britain, France and the USA represented by military missions on Latvian soil. In spring 1919 there were British and US missions active in Liepāja whose support was crucial for Latvia.

This article discusses the impact of the US mission, led by colonel-lieutenant Warwick Greene during the time when the Latvian Provisional Government was still located in Liepāja using hitherto unknown archival sources. Greene was one of the most outstanding allied representatives in Latvia and the great importance of the US mission is quite obvious. However, Latvian actors sensed a considerable conservatism that held to the traditional American viewpoint of the potential negative consequences if a great power should collapse. Although this factor seemed to be a rather typical expression of certain disfavour against Latvian independence in general, Greene, a convinced anti-Bolshevik, tried to be as fair as possible concerning the involved parties. Whereas he was very critically disposed to Germany in general, and the presence of German forces in Latvia in particular, he was not indifferent to the Baltic German nobility as the traditional elite in Latvian society. Even if this attitude was quite understandable in the eyes of Americans given the position of the Baltic Germans as a considerable economic, political, and military force in Latvia, it is not true that Greene unequivocally supported them in conflict with the Latvians. Thus, he personally and the mission officially provided protection to the high rank officials of the Provisional Government whom the Germans wanted to arrest after the coup of 16 April. At the same time, Greene was not simply an observer and caretaker in case of threatening events. He

also tried to ensure the establishment of a strong anti-Bolshevik coalition government and thus became involved in Latvian affairs. This involvement was motivated by the conviction that this solution would best serve the given contested situation in Latvia. Due to different circumstances, his goal was only partially accomplished in the second half of the mission's presence in Latvia, in the summer of 1919, after the Baltic German forces were defeated in the battle of Cēsis. This latter period, however, is not discussed in this article.