



General Nikolai Reek Writings on Operations and Leadership

Including Operation Albion and Battle of Cēsis



Compiled and Edited by Art Johanson

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The Editor would like to express sincere gratitude to all the contributors who helped with the book. It is important to remember that the history book series began at the Baltic Defence College in 2020 when we published the memoirs of General Pēteris Radzins, and now we are continuing with Lt. General Nikolai Reek's writings. Thus, it is important to thank all the related persons, especially Col (ret) Dr Zdzisław Śliwa, Mr. Toomas Hiio, Maj. Gen. Andis Dilāns, Brig. Gen. Ilmar Tamm, Ms. Katrin Põdra, Mr. Ilmar Anvelt and Capt. N (ret.) Juris Roze.

The story of publishing Nikolai Reek writings in English dates to the 2000s when the employees of the Estonian Military Academy Museum found a manuscript of the English translation of Nikolai Reek's "The Defence and Conquest of Saaremaa in 1917" in the archives and digitized it. Behind this work were Dr. Andres Seene and Mr. Eduard Astel. Dr. Seene contributed to the publication by providing additional materials, which were published in Estonian in 2015. A special thanks to both of you!

We would also like to thank our institutional partners, who provided invaluable help with both editing the text and materials: Vali Press and Luisa Translation Agency.

Thank you very much for your contribution!

EDITOR'S NOTE

We are pleased to announce that we are publishing a second book on the writings of one of the highest military officers in the Baltics. The first book on the Latvian General Pēteris Radziņš was published last year: *Visions cannot be neglected – compilation of General Pēteris Radziņš writings*. This is very important for the Baltic Defence College, where these books will also find practical use. Nikolai Reek's manuscript of *The Defence and Conquest of Saaremaa in 1917* has been used on our Staff Rides to Saaremaa, where we analyse Operation Albion. This work covers very thoroughly the situation and activities of the Russian forces during this operation and is the necessary material in English to investigate these events.

Nikolai Reek is in many ways an important historical figure. He participated in the Estonian War of Independence and was the operational leader in the War against Landeswehr, where Estonian-Latvian cooperation took place. Later, based on his experiences, he wrote comprehensive overviews about leadership in Estonian armed forces, and these were the writings that were used as educational readings for the officer corps.

All this makes his writings an important subject for both the military and historians, who had been unable to read his books due to the language barrier. The writings regarding conquest of Saaremaa were translated before World War II by Estonian Naval Lieutenant Richard Johannes Kokk and were "forgotten" in the archives because of historical turmoil. Thus, it is our duty to make it public, and the Editor hopes that it will receive warm welcome.

Republishing old texts inevitably raises a number of linguistic and terminological problems. Reek used the 1920's Estonian language and military terminology was then evolving and different from modern writing. The same problem is with the place names, when sometimes old German names are used. The names of larger settlements and places have been harmonized with modern names. In addition, the text uses the Latvian version of Cēsis instead of the Estonian Võnnu, for example.

The book is divided into two parts - the first covers Nikolai Reek's writings on management and his theoretical views. The second part is devoted to his research on military operations.

Art Johanson

Military History and Strategic Planning
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FOREWORD

Art Johanson

Lieutenant General Nikolai Reek (1890-1942) made significant contributions to the Estonian Army. We need focus on two essential perspectives when evaluating his work. The first is the participation in the First World War and the Estonian War of Independence. The second is the construction of the Estonian Defense Forces in the interwar period. In the first place, he was an officer who had a fast career, and later, he had the opportunity to be a pioneer in the development of military science.

During both the First World War and peacetime, he continuously improved his military education – he was the first Estonian officer to receive his education at the French Staff College. Therefore, his career was mainly related to the development of the theory of military education and training. Due to this, Lieutenant General Nikolai Reek became the Estonian officer who published the most written texts. His excellent knowledge of foreign languages certainly contributed to this – he communicated fluently in Estonian, German, Russian and French. However, his writings were primarily influenced by the approaches of French theorists.

At the same time, his experience and knowledge gained from the Russian Imperial Army should not be underestimated. It is particularly evident in his book, *The Defence and Conquest of Saaremaa in 1917*. What makes the book particularly interesting is that he took part in the defence of the island of Muhu and was based on the substantial number of reports he prepared immediately after the battles. When his work was published in 1937, he could also use an overview of the German side of Operation Albion. Thus, the current approach provides an excellent overview of the activities of the Russian side through the eyes of one of their officer and is a necessary source of material for many who research Operation Albion.

Operation Albion is essential for Baltic Defence College Joint Command and General Staff Course (JGCSC) in terms of historical experience. The College organizes staff rides to Saaremaa, where they get acquainted with the battlefields from that time. Operation Albion was the first joint military operation in the history of warfare, and it offers rather excellent examples of leadership and planning.

The international significance of Nikolai Reek's text is also shown by the fact that it was initially being translated in the late 1930s. However, unfortunately, the book was not published in English. We will try to fill this gap with the current publication, and hopefully, this text will have much feedback from readers.

After the battles of Saaremaa in Autumn 1917, Nikolai Reek was taken prisoner by the Germans and initially managed to cooperate with the Germans.

Later in 1919, he started organizing the underground Defense League. When the German occupation forces left Estonia, Reek was one of the few senior officers to start organizing the Estonian Army. Despite his youth (28 years of age), he had reached the rank of lieutenant colonel, and the 5th Infantry Regiment on the Viru Front was subordinate to him.

In April 1919, he became Chief of Staff of the 3rd Estonian Division. One of his most outstanding achievements in the Estonian War of Independence was his leadership of operations in Northern Latvia against the Baltic German Landeswehr. In this book, we can read his memoirs of the events that occurred during this operation (Battle of Limbaži–Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna), and in many ways, these texts must be translated into English. First of all, these battles are interesting to contemporary enthusiasts and historians. For example, as an operations chief, he confronts the division commander opinions, Major General Ernst Pödder, who organized the rear areas. Reek gives a more detailed overview of battle management from a leadership perspective alongside the texts published so far.

The victory of the Landeswehr war was of decisive strategic importance for both Estonia and Latvia. With this, it became possible for the independent Republic of Latvia to emerge and for Estonia to secure its southern border. In Latvia, Prime Minister Ulmanis came to power again, and German units were made subordinate to the Latvian Armed Forces. In general, it is difficult to overestimate Reek's role in the war against Landeswehr and even in the subsequent negotiations, when he was accommodating with his German language skills.

His previous experience in the Russian Imperial Army, in Estonian War of Independence, and with his exemplary service gave him great opportunities to build up the Estonian Defense Forces. During the War of Independence, General Reek also organized military training and education, which he continued after the war. He was the author of numerous writings on military theory, including leadership, topography, tactics, and many other topics. His most comprehensive leadership writing is also represented in the work, *A Leader's Decision and How It is Made*. It emphasizes the role of the leader in military activities, examines the importance of morality and the role of the leader in the leadership process, and the technical side of leadership.

He is one of the most published Estonian officers, and as such, there is a clear need for his work to be translated into English so that it might reach a wider audience. His career was one of the illustrious for his time; he was one of the three Estonian officers who reached the rank of lieutenant general. It is possible to speculate what actions he would have done in the service of some great power, but his service is an example for many officers today.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NIKOLAI REEK (1890–1942) – ESTONIAN OFFICER AND LEADING MILITARY THEORIST

Andres Seene, PhD

The late Lieutenant General Nikolai Reek was born in 1890 in the Estonian capital of Tallinn. He was Russian by birth, *né* Nikolai Bazykov, but became orphaned at a young age. Reek's story confirms, once again the understanding that nationality and identity are much more influenced by environment than by birth. Nikolai Reek grew up as an Estonian by language and mind, becoming an Estonian patriot as well. The Estonian railway worker Aleksei Reek adopted this soon to be famous Estonian officer. A man who was an islander by descent from Estonia's largest island of Saaremaa, which also lies at the centre of the planned publication.

Reek began his military career as a volunteer in Russian Army in 1907. Army service gave the possibility to obtain free education and the opportunity to advance one's social position. In 1910, Reek graduated from the Russian Cadet School and started his active service with the rank of second lieutenant. One of his first service positions was an infantry regiment (*Polk*) located in Tallinn. This fact is interesting as the Russian policy usually seemed to send individuals from one region or so-called 'foreign' nations to serve in other faraway areas of the Russian Empire. Reek's interest, gift, and possible pursuit of promotion became evident when in 1913 he was accepted to Russian Nicholas General Staff Academy (*Nikolajevskaja Akademija Generalnovo Štaba*) in St. Petersburg, which can be considered as a military career-highway to future promotions.

The number of officers of Estonian origin in Russian General Staff Academies (including Academies of Supplies or Logistics and Military Medicine) grew gradually in years before the First World War. According material from last years before Great War, there are at least 12 Estonian graduates of Russian General Staff Academy and some ten graduates from other branch academies. The number was likely even higher, as there is not enough correct evidence about national identity. After the Russian February Revolution, permission was granted from the Russian Provisional Government to form the Estonian national unit (national regiment); there were not

enough service positions for staff officers in one regiment. That was why there was a lack of qualified and experienced staff officers in Estonia when German occupation forces started to leave Baltic areas and Red Army began to invade in autumn of 1918. Among the officers who began to form national defence forces and the first resistance in Estonia were 7 Academy graduates, and only 3 of them had graduated a peacetime course. Only a few of them had the experience of leading a section in divisional staff or had served temporarily as deputy chief of division staff.

Because of the high losses in the number of active-duty officers during the First World War, many graduates had to start wartime service as frontline commanders at the regiment, battalion, and even company level. Additionally, Reek's studies as lieutenant in the Academy were interrupted by the outbreak of WWI, as he was sent to frontline service as a company commander in the Galician (Western-Ukraine) and Romanian fronts. According to some evidence, however, in 1915, he served in Staff of Russian XI Army as an assistant of the chief of reconnaissance section and after that as chief of signals in the Staff of VI Army in Galicia. Because of his work in reconnaissance and signal companies, he was probably sent to the school of aviation observers in Kyiv, what he graduated in 1916. At the beginning of 1917, Reek's studies continued in a reopened but shortened wartime course at the General Staff Academy. He graduated successfully in the same year in the rank of captain (staff-captain). His subsequent service position was necessary, keeping in mind the following publication about Operation Albion.

Starting from the summer of 1917, he worked once again in the homeland in Staff of Fortified Moonsund Position in Saaremaa as chief of operational section, later as deputy chief of staff.

The fortifications in Estonian islands, mainland coasts, and the coast of the Gulf of Finland were planned to be outposts and defensive lines on the way to the Russian capital of St. Petersburg. The construction of these massive concrete coastal artillery positions and other fortifications were designed to be a sophisticated defence system with a network of additional railway lines, military factories, and stocks behind them. The whole build-up of the system started after the turn of the century, which helped turn Northern Estonia and Tallinn into one of the more industrialised regions of Russian territories solid railway network in the neighbourhood. The whole planned build-up was not complete before the German invasion. The first defensive lines with artillery sectors in the Estonian islands and the Åland islands were made to prevent an enemy invasion from sea to the Gulf of Riga or the Gulf of Finland where they could advance to the gates of Kronstadt and St. Petersburg. Also, some mainland positions and fortifications were built up as

secondary defence lines (probably not so much known late WWII defence position in North-Eastern part of Estonia – such as the location of Sinimäed heights, where these defensive lines were marked by bloody battles in the summer of 1944). All the same, the whole defence system could be described possibly as the Russian WWI answer to the Maginot line.

Reek's approach to the events of 1917 in Saaremaa and other the islands in question (issued first in Estonian in 1937 as *The Defence and Conquest of Saaremaa in 1917*) is interesting he was itself at the centre of developments. On 13 October 1917, the day following the successful German landing in Saaremaa, he left with the Russian staff from Saaremaa to Muhu island, where transport vessels took them to the Estonian mainland. According to his book, he was given a task by Commander of the Fortified Position Rear-Admiral Sveshnikov after the German landing and Russian retreat to write a report of events. According to Reek, there were five copies of the report, and one remained with him, which formed the basis (when he was acting as Chief of Staff of the Estonian Commander in Chief) for the book published regarding these events. After some having been complemented with some other sources and materials in question and additional editing, it seems that Reek's approach is quite descriptive. He is not deriving any ideas for the future defence of these islands because they were not the first defence priority for an independent Estonia.¹ Reek derives more general conclusions from this operation about the importance of combat morale. He concludes that the whole operation was lost by the Russians already before it started due to the non-existent fighting morale and broken combat spirit and overall panic as well in leadership and soldiers' level despite costly fortifications and relatively good equipment at their disposal.

The majority of the inhabitants of Saaremaa were ethnic Estonians (distinguishing themselves from mainland Estonians, sometimes still as

1 The first defence priority for Estonian Defence Forces following the victorious war of Independence 1918-1920 was the Soviet threat. For solving the problem of long coastal defence against the Soviets, the secret cooperation between Estonia and Finland emerged and developed in the 1930thies. The Russian era military infrastructure heritage was used in that perspective. Former Coastal batteries and sea fortresses were renovated on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. They were developing this way joint fire direction ability from both sides to close the Soviet Baltic Fleet in case of war to the backyard of Finnish Gulf with heavy coastal batteries, sea minefields and securing it with mutual submarines. As a part of this doctrine, Estonia bought two modern submarines at the end of the 1930ies from Great Britain. After the signing of under a forced "Al Capone style" Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Treaty (considering the isolated situation and hard choice between fighting alone or surrender in hope to save the nation) and following the occupation of Baltic states by the Soviets in 1940 the so-called "Finnish Bridge" did not materialise in practice if not considered later German-Finnish cooperation.

“islanders”), who surrendered first at the beginning of the 13th century to German knights in series of crusades. Swedes also inhabited some smaller islands and coastal areas. Estonia, together with the Northern part of today’s Latvia, and its islands formed a historical region known as Livonia) lay at the crossroads between East and West and was controlled in following centuries by several rising powers (the Danes, Swedes, and Russians). Up to 1917, the area had been governed for almost 300 years by Russia, although preserving the considerable autonomy exercised by the local governing nobility and manor owners – the Baltic Germans – descendants of the crusaders. This situation, however, formed western orientation and cultural identity amongst these local nations. During the First World War, the number of Estonians mobilised to the Russian Imperial Army is estimated to be 100,000 persons.² Estonians (and Latvians) were generally loyal to Russia and did not welcome the German occupation. Historically, the Germans were generally more disliked by local nations than Russians (a situation that quickly changed in the opposite direction after the first Soviet occupation from 1939-41, when massive murders and deportations were enacted). The Protestant religious background of the so-called Baltic provinces (Estonia and Livonia) also contributed to better general education and literacy rates, which gave local nations some advantages in becoming junior military leaders positions in the Russian wartime Army.

After the collapse of Russian power and the takeover by the Bolsheviks, the Estonian national political circles decided to use the period between coming German occupation of the Estonian mainland and Bolshevik retreat to declare Estonia an independent republic and to ask Germany and other the other powers recognition of its independence and neutrality. Independence was declared on February 24th, a day before Germans marched to Tallinn. Germany had no intention to recognise Estonia’s independence, although the Estonian national division units were at first not disbanded. Reek began his service in the Estonian Army at the end of February 1918 as the Chief of Staff of the Army and was promoted to colonel lieutenant (*sub-polkovnik*) rank. In April 1918, the Germans formally disbanded the Estonian units. Many officers continued, whether with German consent or secretly, to organise home guard (*Kaitseliit*) militia units, collecting weapons. At that time, Nikolai Reek was organising home guard units in North-Eastern Viru County. Following the Compiegne Armistice, the German army started to leave Estonia and Red Russian troops were eager to replace them. That was when the Estonian War of Independence began at the end of November 1918. Estonian army units were organised fervently by Estonian (former Czarist, primarily wartime

2 According to population accounts, Estonias population was 1.1 million (1922).

trained) officers who had seen the revolutionary mess and disorder and therefore believed in the possibility of forming an adequate response initially with the older volunteer schoolboys and small units of students while properly mobilising behind the frontlines. At the outbreak of hostilities, Colonel Reek formed of his home guard militia members of the 5th infantry regiment. With this regiment, Colonel Reek participated in retreat and offensive operations at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919. From the Spring of 1918, he was acting already as a Chief of Division Staff (during the war, three divisions were formed). In the summer of 1919, a new threat emerged from the south. Latvian national units, formed in 1915, had turned red, supporting the Bolshevik government with their bayonets. To avoid a Bolshevik's invasion, Latvian national circles had to collaborate with local Baltic German units. Additionally, agreements were signed with German units (the force is known as Baltic Landeswehr). The German units that had remained and organised in Latvian territory formed a puppet government there. Rivalries rose among the Estonian units, which also had conquered parts of Northern Latvia where Latvian units were formed loyal to Latvian national circles. These events led to the so-called Landeswehr campaign against the "historic enemy – Baltic barons". The architect of the victorious Landeswehr campaign was Reek in his role as the Chief of Staff of Estonian 3rd Division operating in Northern Latvia in June of 1919. The decisive battle took place in Northern Latvia at the end of June 1919 near the city of Cēsis (Estonian name: Võnnu), where Landeswehr units were defeated, and the armistice of Riga was signed under the mediation of Entente Powers representatives.

In September 1919, Reek was promoted to the rank of colonel before the signing of the armistice with Soviet Russia. He was serving as chief of staff of the North-Eastern Front, where the Soviet Red Army had made some desperate advances and breakthrough attempts at the end of the same year.

During the War of Independence, three Estonian divisions were formed, which created problems in finding proper leadership personnel. A lack of qualified staff officers (and notable success of those who had suitable training) in a war caused senior military leaders to seek quick solutions for staff officer training after the end of hostilities. In 1921, Reek, as one of few officers having Russian higher staff education, was appointed to Head of Army Teaching Committee (also responsible editor of the military magazine *Soldier* (Sõdur) and Commandant of the newly established General Staff Courses, also functioning as the Inspector of all military training facilities). The first staff preparation and all military training were organised on the Russian model because, at the end of hostilities, there were many former Russian higher officers, professors, and specialists who had fled from Bolshevik

Russia or managed to escape with White units. Many of them were employed now, although a cognizance of their possible disloyalty towards the independence of Estonia (a chauvinistic attitude of "great and undividable" Russia was suspected). Probably one of the more famous of these officers was the former Russian general and professor of military history Aleksei Baiov at the St. Petersburg Nicholas Staff Academy. In 1923, Reek became the first Estonian officer who was accepted to that time worldwide notorious French Staff College (*École Supérieure de Guerre*). Returning to Estonia two years later, he was appointed short time to the Chief of Staff position and was promoted to the rank of General-Major. He now initiated the reorganisation of officer education under the French examples. The Russian officer training was outdated in its methods as too theoretical, basing its lecturing with its endless repetitioning and examinations. Instead, stress was laid now practical training on case studies and written independent work. Reorganisation met some response, and 'old-school pedagogues' were forced to leave their positions and were replaced by young Estonian graduates, who subsequently went through French colleges. Reek himself contributed personally much besides organisational work in the field of manual writing. Under his name already in 1921 appeared the short manual "Battle Leadership/Management", which is said to be the first theoretical publication in which former Russian tactical orientation ("*bayonets before bullets*") was replaced by modern fire tactics ("*fire kills*"). To help to solve tactical training problems, Reek issues short manual "A Leader's Decision and How It Is Made" (1927), which introduces in case of new Western tactical manuals situation analysing principles (French, Belgian manuals and for example, German *Führung und Gefecht der verbundenen Waffen* (1921)). Also, in this respect, in the next year a translation appeared with Reek's foreword to *Commandant Gerin. Le Combat des Petit Unites* (1926) (Small units combat. Four exercises on map) These were also meant to help officers and cadets guide and manual to practical exercises. Both two manuals were used in officer training as tactical manuals throughout the next two decades in Estonia. Among his other writings there are the full books *Infantry Anti-Tank Problem* (1936) and with his participation collective teamwork with other officers *Leaders Manual* (1935). *Defence and Conquest of Saaremaa in 1917* followed in 1937.

There is also one hidden aspect of Reeks later service that should be taken into consideration when his book about operations in Saaremaa in 1917.³ Among

3 However, there is no evidence of an original aim or idea of translating Reeks book into English. As the original book was published in Estonian in 1937, translation was probably prepared before the Soviet occupation in summer 1940. The original English manuscript is preserved in Estonian National Archives.

the Estonian senior military leaders, Nikolai Reek was undoubtedly the most significant military writer, thinker, and teacher. We have to stress the importance of his writings regarding peacetime training, education, and the development of military literature from the perspective of an officer, which resulted in the creation of an original unified military leadership doctrine.⁴ The goal was straightforward: to meet the enemy with overwhelming human and technical resources and to “*avoid swampiness in the mass of our leadership mental ground and revive military thought*”. Reek considered original military literature as the best means for this purpose. In military training, no way is better for training and cultivating subordinates than commander’s personal example. Reek’s book about his experience can also be taken from that perspective. For promoting Estonia’s original defence doctrine, at least two other nations’ experiences were translated into Estonian under Reek’s guidance. In 1923, the small booklet *Field Service Regulations United States Army* was published, followed by *Defence Question of Finland* with Reek’s foreword and introduction in 1927.

During his career in the Estonian Army, Reek tried to open new military magazine series and create opportunities for cultivating and promoting military thought when possible. At the end of the 1930s, he initiated the State Foundation for Promoting Military Literature. In his later peacetime career, Reek served as Commander of 2nd Division (1926–1927, 1928–1934) and twice held the positions of Minister of War (1927–1928 and 1939–1940). During the Authoritarian Government Era of the Republic from 1934–1940, he acted as Defence Forces Chief of Staff. In this position, he was promoted to the rank of General-Lieutenant (1938). Under his management, important changes were implemented, such as a programme for renewing the armaments (orders for anti-tank and anti-aircraft arms and equipment, aircraft, and submarines, enhancing of the self-sufficient munition production capabilities), and the necessary rearrangements in the field of officer training.

In 1917, landing operation in the Baltic isles was undertaken to secure the left wing of German advancing front units in Latvia. These islands played a strategic role in this case, which was probably not comparable with the secondary significance of later WWII operations in these locations. As German war propaganda tried to show before the 1917 campaign the strategic importance of the isles as alleged British aspirations to found a naval base here (i.e., a ‘Baltic Gibraltar’), this created some

4 This Estonian doctrine of the period seems to be something like “*quality before quantity*”, especially stressing vital elements of success in its situation to be outstanding training and leadership skills.

kind of mythos that was echoed still years after WWI in Soviet rhetoric. Although Estonians were later interested in having a British naval presence here, Britain saw no standing interests in the Baltic after sending its squadron here in 1918–1920 (with the British support in the War of Independence). Soviet propaganda still repeated the myth of the coming British bases to Baltic islands in the 1920–1930ies. There were even the possibilities to construct a solid naval base in these islands because there were not enough depth of waters and ports in the neighbourhood. After 1935, when the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was signed between Germany and Britain, there could probably be no illusions in Baltic States of the possibility of British help in case of aggression from the east. The only hope was that a rising Germany and its persistent antagonism with the Soviets would create a mutual balance of power that enabled the preservation of the region's *status quo*. Considering the changing nature of earlier German-Russian relations, there was also likely the possibility of mutual agreement, which happened in 1939, resulting in divided spheres of influence in the Baltics and Poland.

Twenty years of independent defence preparations in Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) was never tested in reality. In 1939 following Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Baltic States found themselves isolated from the outside world. The dilemma was between fighting alone or surrendering to the Soviet demands. In the hope of saving the nation, the latter choice was made by the leadership. This did not save the people nor their leadership from massive executions, deportations, and other suffering.

After the Soviet occupation, General Lieutenant Nikolai Reek was released from active duty, was soon arrested, and deported to Siberia, where he was executed in a prison camp in spring 1942.

It is momentous that now, more than 80 years after the first appearance of a forgotten Estonian officer and leading military theorist on the world stage, part of his legacy will be accessible to a broader audience.

**PART I:
THOUGHTS ON A LEADER AND
LEADERSHIP
(1935–1937)**

BACKGROUND OF LEADERSHIP TEXTS OF NIKOLAI REEK

Andres Seene, PhD

Any of the texts by Nikolai Reek that were published in military publications in the 1920s are compilations by nature, and they introduce or quote several Russian and Western European military theorists and commanders to a relatively substantial length. A certain crystallisation of his thoughts and ideas can be noticed in later years, as they become more to the point and are edited to a more generalised format. His main publication, manual or textbook on leadership is the brochure “A Leader’s Decision and How It Is Made”, published in 1927. In terms of style, the publication is similar to a set of rules and, unlike some similar earlier publications, contains no examples from military history to prove his claims. “A Leader’s Decision and How It’s Made” became a methodical guideline in the Estonian Defence Forces and its training institutions. The cadets and reserve officer cadets of military training institutions and guests of the lectures of the staff school (then the Military College) solved tactical tasks on the basis of the principles given in the book. The assessment of a situation according to the scheme in the book consisted of an analysis of one’s own and the opposition’s forces, the landscape, the time factor and the climate. The decision made by the leader on the basis of the above had to include an impression of the opposition, an idea of a manoeuvre, and the application of the necessary forces and tasks to units. The version of this work presented here is a later one, that was supplemented, reworked and published in 1937, where developments in military technology (armoured forces, air forces) have also been taken into account.

Many of the examples and principles given in earlier writings have been gathered and presented in a more generalised and edited format in the later series of articles on leadership published in *Sõdur* magazine from 1935–1937. “Thoughts on a Leader and Leadership” published in *Sõdur* in 1936 is a sequel to the article “Thoughts on the Preparation of Senior Leadership” (1935), which describe the qualities and knowledge that a good military leader must have, and how these qualities and knowledge can be developed. Leadership is emphasised as the main factor of success, and the importance of morale, the role of the leader in the leadership process, and the technical side of leadership are discussed. Finally, the

decision-making process is analysed and the general requirement for the issue of commands is provided: "The main virtue of a written command is conciseness."

In the obituaries and memoirs written later in exile, Reek has been lauded as the pioneer of Estonian military literature, who was very productive in this field. Although Nikolai Reek was certainly not the only Estonian officer of his era who published works on military science, his works stand out with their quantity, diversity of topics, and also quality. He personally promoted the development of military literature and science in the Estonian language and stood for the development of the respective periodicals. The publication of *Sõjateadlane* magazine started on his initiative in 1925. The publication of the magazine stopped for some time but started again in 1938. The writings of Reek also attracted some international attention at the time. His works have been translated into English and French, and translations into Latvian and Polish are known to have been published as well. For example, "A Leader's Decision and How It's Made" was published in Polish in 1938. It's possible that there are other translations as well. Reek wrote about leadership, tactics, military psychology and pedagogy, as well as military geography and military history. Reek's work (excluding his personal memoirs about operative leadership) is largely a compilation and does not include anything particularly original in the broader military theory of Europe or the world. As military literature is primarily practical and the local needs and objectives had to be considered in the context of Estonia, it was largely inevitable that introducing and explaining the military issues of the 19th and the early 20th century to a small nation, in whose language the creation of terminology in most fields was only beginning, was of primary importance. The work done in theory and practice in this short time was remarkable, but unfortunately it was then interrupted for more than half a century.

THOUGHTS ON THE PREPARATION OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Major General Nikolai Reek

I.

The fight for one's existence is a normal phenomenon in the life of an individual and even more so in the lives of nations – it is in fact a natural phenomenon, as life without battle is unimaginable. War is a kind of battle in the lives of nations; it is the harshest, sharpest form of this battle; it is needed when there is no other way to achieve one's objectives. War has become extremely harsh in this day and age – it shakes the existence of a nation or nations to the core, quickly spreading destruction on an unprecedented scale. Present and also future war has become the last resort; it is the ultima ratio in the lives of nations.

A state is the comprehensive manifestation of the organised life of a nation, which is why war is one of the means for the achievement of national goals or the execution of national defence; it is the continuation of the protection of the state or national interests in a sharp and decisive way, which in most cases puts the existence of every state between life and death. So, based on the conviction that defending the state or the state's interests with weapons is one of the manifestations of the life of a nation, we also build our views on the belief that life itself, where it comes into contact with warfare, is a harsh and merciless judge who heartlessly punishes everyone who violates the laws and guiding principles of the art of war developed over centuries.

War is not a game. Military action requires the cool calculation of the options in front of us, consideration of the results, and impact of the steps we take and precedence over individual interests, i.e. details must be viewed in the context of the whole, and the whole must dominate over details. Nothing is limitless in life, even less so in warfare. This is why it's only possible to give commands that can be fulfilled, and this is exactly what must be recognised, not only in the development of military action, but earlier, in peacetime when national defence is prepared and organised. Creation in strategy must start long before the outbreak of war, as this creation is only realised in war. The content of strategy itself lies

in art, the ability to coordinate the desired goals with the measures for their achievement, the existing possibilities. The ability of strategic foresight in creation is of indeterminate importance. Foresight is a gift of nature, but we're convinced that the ability of foresight to penetrate is a result of consistent and determined work. We must develop foresight in order to take it to the required level and the measures for this are knowledge of military technology and the history of wars. An old Roman statesman has said that "not knowing what was done before us, before we were born, means being a child forever". Knowledge of military technology only provides the basis for the development of foresight, whilst studying the history of war develops the ability of foresight to penetrate. Synthesis in both fields of the work must show us "how everything has come, how it had to come, and how it will come again". This is the only way for us to find a steady basis for our strategic and operative creation, both during the preparation of national defence in peacetime, and when carrying out military activities.

The preparation of national defence in peacetime, in which the state participates with all of its manifestations of life, is the foundation on which warfare is based. The national defence of today and its actual implementation – war – cannot and may not be improvised. The important factors of 20th century military activities are the fire of automatic handheld and collective weapons, as well as heavy and far-reaching artillery, reinforced concrete, gas, the motor – as the source of power on land and in the air – and radio. The last two factors – the motor and radio – have caused a major change in military activities, the extent of which is not yet clear, but the manifestations of the art of war have certainly become broader. However, these factors have also made the preparation of national defence more difficult, because the demand for high intelligence in warfare has never been as imperative in human history as it is today, not only among the leadership, but the entire mass of combatants. Nations with low intelligence are incapable of succeeding in modern warfare. The nations whose military staff have not kept up with modern developments or cannot understand and keep up with the development of life are in deep trouble. However, this requires a high general culture that is the foundation for military preparations. Only good general education and constant self-improvement in general culture give the opportunity and create a fertile ground for learning more about warfare. A modern warrior, especially one in a position of leadership, is not just a professional, but a highly educated scientist. Theoretical knowledge is the first step in the ability to perform military activities. The peacetime training of an army, especially its leadership, must be based on the

achievement of the ability of performance. The transition from knowledge to the ability of performance requires, above all, strengthening and training one's spirit.

Our army was born in combat. The victorious War of Independence was our first lesson in the achievement of the ability of performance. The War of Independence must continue serving our army as well as educating and training the spirit of our leadership.

The ability of systematic thinking must be enhanced in order to grasp and handle all military issues and solutions to military problems in the harmony of all elements. Systematic thinking is the foundation of successful action in preparation and performance. This systematic thinking must be trained and practiced. Nothing is more fearsome than inconsistent thinking, no matter how clever the person is. Today, we need leadership that can think logically and act firmly. The nature and nerves of the leadership must be strong enough to do what common sense tells them to do. In the assessment of the character of leadership, we are convinced that a strong character is not just ready for strong actions, but one that manages to remain balanced under strong influences. An emotional and warm heart on the one side, and a cool, logically and precisely working mind on the other create a leader whose actions are dominated by well-considered activity that corresponds to convictions even when feelings are boiling and raging in the heart. This ratio of emotion and action must be similar to the movement of a compass arrow on a ship navigating a stormy sea. Heart, mind, and nerves – a purebred Arabian horse, skilful rider and curb-bits – the heart must carry us, the mind must lead us, and the nerves must ensure that the mind rules over the heart. Much has been said about the highly esteemed *coup d'oeil*, i.e. the ability to understand what's going on at the speed of light. This ability is of primary importance to leaders fighting at the front, but the leaders who are ranked higher and lead operative activities independently need another ability now and in the future: to recognise the opportunities that lie ahead with the logical work of a cool, sharp and intelligent mind, so they can develop a mature understanding of the situation. This is the only ability that can lay the groundwork for courageous historical decisions, similar decisions that will be known as a "proud fall" even in the case of failure. The systematic thinking described above is not in conflict with the freedom of the mind, because flexibility in decision-making that makes it possible to take advantages of the situations that could not be foreseen for sure, the ability to adapt to changing situations, mental resilience and balance in the case of coincidences and inner strength in calamities can only be achieved with the considerations taking place in the mind as preparations for initial decisions. Activities must be seriously and thoroughly,

i.e. logically and systematically, thought through and weighed before any action is taken. The feeling of inner certainty and mental balance in a volatile situation are the result of the mental preparations that go before any decisions are made; this mental preparation that precedes decision-making is an ability against everyone, a beacon of light in the fog of a volatile situation. The personal courage and mentality to sacrifice oneself are only basic elements of character, as actions must be based on the skill and incessant attempt to save the efforts of one's subordinates and neighbours and achieve the overall goal of life; the interests of the whole are the guiding light. However, those who have stepped into action must march towards the achievement of the given goal at any cost; there must be no hesitation in the action itself or it would be the same as death, self-destruction.

Since the start of the World War until now, the massive successes of technological development have had an enormous impact on our understanding of the future of war and the technical performance of the activities. New problems have arisen in time and space to an unprecedented extent. Leaders can recognise solutions if they're able to separate the important from the unimportant; a clear overview and understanding of things must be maintained in every assessment by putting them in a logical order according to importance. We're convinced that only the external form of activities is volatile and not the elementary fundamentals of leadership – laws. The battle was, is, and will be carried by people with their dependence on physical and mental forces and instincts. We must not lose sight of this in the light of technological development. Otherwise, people will soon start seeing and considering things not as they are, but as they want to see them. In order to grasp things in their actual sizes and harmonies, we need skills and experience in addition to our knowledge of technology and tactics. These two factors are the mind's strongest allies. Technical knowledge and peacetime skills are not enough for the achievement of proficiency and life experience; one has to study history. The study of history must not focus on details without explaining the whole.

A leadership without executors – the people to carry out the ideas and commands – is nothing. The leader is the brain. And the force lies in the subordinate body. In all parts of the subordinate body – keeping the head and the heart, the nerves, the muscles, and the stomach healthy and strong is the main task of every leader. The leader must know the abilities of the subordinate body and know how to improve these abilities without overexertion. Recognising the strength of the subordinate body precisely and at the right time is the guarantee of success.

But the strength of a state does not lie in the army alone. The army is only a part of it. The people with their national system are the source of power. This is why

a leader has to know the manifestations of the life of the state and its people from every angle in order to serve them. The leadership must be able to understand and follow politics whilst being unaffected by politics, it must be able to understand and observe the state's cultural and economic development; the leadership must know where the state's and people's power sources are located.

Based on the above, it should also be clear to people not involved in the army that a modern military leader is not a simple professional who only knows how to handle weapons and order his subordinates around, but a modern military leader is a highly educated specialist.

(Source: Sōdur No 49, 1935 pp 1143–1145.)

THOUGHTS ON A LEADER AND LEADERSHIP

Major General Nikolai Reek

II.

Knowledge and technical skills alone are not enough for a leader. Certain personal characteristics and abilities are also necessary. The first signs of the manifestations of an organised life are that some lead and others execute. Family, school, industry, agriculture, army, state life – none of the activities of people can be performed without leading and guiding thoughts. This means that there is always a leader and there are executors. Execution, however, requires subordination. Chaos, confusion and mayhem rule where there is no leading and organising will, and a power that executes the commands.

This is why the existence of people is characterised by leadership and subordination, which are the factors with the strongest impact on the society. This problem of leadership and subordination is the one that gave a great poet, who was also a scientist and statesman, the push to ask: “Who is a useless man?” and answer with: “He who is unable to command or subordinate”. There are no detailed, comprehensive guidelines about the issues of leadership and subordination. Life is so variable and diverse in its manifestations that people are unable to grasp it in its entirety. But we still need leading principles, as the development into a leader should not be left to chance and routine. Especially since leaders have to handle the biggest value in the world – people, and influence the most sacred thing on earth – the human soul.

So, who is able to be a leader? The one who has the required character in addition to the knowledge and technical skills. Intelligence and physical abilities cannot make up for shortcomings in character; they are only a favourable, fertile ground, but can never replace character. Character itself must be nurtured and developed, so that every man who rises to the position of leader has the ability to give commands and also delegate; i.e. so that he is able to lead his section in the interests of the whole. The interests of the whole also require some subordination. Everyone must be leader and a subordinate, acting in the framework of the whole.

A single leader is able to personally lead and supervise only a small number of men. If the number of men required for joint activities increases and this also expands the quantity and scope of tasks, the single leader will no longer be able to personally lead every single activity and to supervise its performance. This is why small groups, which the single leader is able to lead personally, must be gathered into sub-units, sub-units in their turn to units, and ultimately to a whole. This is how the leadership pyramid that guides the activities of individuals has developed, and its foundation consists of the groups of persons personally led by single leaders. The leader of the whole – the highest leader who is the soul of the entire initiative – stands on top of the pyramid. The highest leader exudes will, which transfers to the leaders of units, and through them to the leaders of subunits, until its gets to the privates, growing in power and becoming this collective and powerful will that beats the fear of death and puts the benefits of the whole in the foreground. This is the foundation of a military body; it hides the body's source of power and the secret of its might. Thousands of men in this body are bound by this will, they are the joint carriers of this will, the embodiment of a thought, the executors of an idea – the idea of state – the carriers of the will that supports the independent life of the nation and protects its highest values. This obviously indicates that everyone in a military body must be a leader and a subordinate at the same time. To subordinate means to act for the benefit of the whole, according to the will of the higher leader and in his spirit; to lead means to train and guide men in the performance of their duties in the interests of the whole. The character of a leader must include these qualities above all.

A lot has changed in the principles and conditions of the training and treatment of a team. This is a result of the spread of education and the new factors of battle – automatic handheld and collective weapons, far-reaching fire, especially of heavy artillery, the motor, tank, plane, gas and radio.

The importance of the qualities of an individual fighter has increased and will keep increasing as a result of the technical development of weapons and combat measures. The power of a machine depends on the diligence, cold-bloodedness, and self-sacrifice of an individual man and a group of men. A person is the soul of a machine. People are and will be the creators and masters of robots. Machines increase the strength of people, but also require technical skills and considerably more bravery. The impact of technology has increased the importance of people, raised the requirements to the mental and spiritual capabilities of an individual fighter. The responsibility of each individual man for his activities rises higher and higher. The conscious cooperation of spatially divided individual men is the

deciding factor in modern battle. Subordination today is not established with blind obedience, but with a conscious, self-sacrificing sense of duty. Today, an individual fighter must be a whole man, a person, in the correct and serious meaning of the word. A modern soldier is spiritually different from his predecessors. A young man who turns up for service has been trained, literature and the manifestations of social life have already influenced him in one direction or another; he is already able to think, and has his view of the world. He feels that he's a member of a nation and wants to act as one. This is why the behaviour of a modern soldier is different to before. A leader must be able to win his soul and his trust. This is the most difficult task for leaders today, especially for younger officers, because they're not facing a naive child, but a trained, thinking young man. You cannot fall behind here, and woe to the staff whose mental development is not up to the task. This is one of the most important factors that must be kept in mind in leadership and subordination issues.

The manifestation of subordination is inner, i.e. mental, and outer discipline. Both of them must be in harmony, both have their own value, and one must not be preferred to the other, because it would result in harmful extremes. Outer discipline without inner discipline, i.e. mental subordination, is like a beautiful apple with a rotten core, and inner subordination without a form like a delicious apple with a bad skin. Neither of these are fully valuable to the gardener, the state. Discipline does not mean turning subordinates into people who blindly follow orders, but creating conscious self-sacrificing subordination, which is based on mutual respect and which binds the superior and the subordinate into a whole. Self-respect must be nurtured and developed in every subordinate. This self-respect must be rooted in joy and the self-sacrificing will to act in the interests of the whole according to the will and spirit of the higher leader. Good discipline is expressed in constant readiness for the conscious, diligent and self-sacrificial execution of the commands of superiors. Training and deepening discipline is not the highest goal; discipline is only a certain measure for achievement of the highest goal of training. This highest goal is to create units and men who are able to perform successfully in the ultimate tests in the modern battlefield, making the highest spiritual and physical efforts in the turmoil of combat. We must create the kind of leaders and men who would act with determination in the battlefield, as well as in exceptional peacetime conditions according to the will and in the spirit of the higher leader, even if the latter cannot give orders and commands, or if the orders do not reach the men. In brief, we must create leaders and teams that would work and act, blend into an unbreakable whole, in self-sacrificing camaraderie for the achievement of the

common goal. Those who lose sight of this higher goal of training and only subjects themselves to external forms and drills have obviously not understood the higher tasks of a leader or leadership. Historians who have studied the history of Rome have argued that the high discipline of the Romans was the factor that allowed the state to become a world power. Another belief highlighted in history is that the fate of a state depends on the discipline of its army.

The correct organisation of subordination requires the procedure of giving commands to be clearly defined and that responsibilities, rights and obligations are divided practically and fairly. However, laws alone are not enough here. A lot depends on the acts, understanding, and tact of the leader. Every leader must respect the borders of the authority of the subordinate. It's not good if a leader interferes with the activities of a subordinate leader, unless it's absolutely necessary, because subordinates and teams always have a very sensitive understanding of whether their superior is trusted or not, and whether the higher superior holds their superior responsible for everything that does and does not succeed. When the subordinates or the team feel that their leader is not trusted by the higher ranks, the subordinates or the team also lose their trust in their leader – it gives rise to criticism and rot sets in at the core of the army. Every leader must make sure that the authority of the subordinate leader will not decline in the eyes of the subordinates and teams. The goal in conduct should be to boost and develop responsibility and joy for the performance of official duties in all leaders and at all levels, as this will also be passed on to the teams. Criticism disappears if there is a healthy understanding of subordination and a prevailing good attitude.

Criticism and its sister – complaining – are the worst diseases in the body of an army. Criticising is human nature, but it's very dangerous to the body of an army. It must be avoided. Directness and fairness in relationships is the best medicine. Those who always criticise the orders of the superior demonstrate that they have no understanding of subordination. Subordinates are always very sensitive and immediately understand if their leader is not direct with his superior and doesn't have a correct understanding of subordination. However, discipline is undermined more if a leader criticises an order of his superior in front of the subordinates – it is the biggest offence against the mentality and healthy spirit of an army. There is no conditional subordination; there is only direct subordination. Orders and commands must be obeyed with integrity. Commands must be obeyed, even if one doesn't always like it. There is nothing worse and more damaging in an army than a leader who, after receiving orders, insinuates to his subordinates that this or that high-ranking person gave this order, and we must obey it whether we like

it or not. This is a poor attitude towards the task and an inaccurate understanding of one's duties. A received order must be accepted and obeyed without question, taking full responsibility for this in front of the subordinates; there must be no hesitation or finger pointing at a high-ranked leader. In the army, one does not serve an individual, but the whole, which is why every man and leader must be fully committed. The ability to commit must be nurtured in oneself and in the subordinates – this is the highest duty of a leader and leadership. If an order or command can no longer be executed due to the situation changing, everyone has to act according to the spirit and will of the leader, i.e. in the interests of the common goal. An order or command received from higher up may not be changed lightly. Only an extreme, commanding need, can force a change like this. The independent actions of a subordinate leader are a very acute issue; he must not turn into some kind of catchphrase. The execution of received orders and commands with commitment, in itself requires a subordinate to act fully independently. As hard as it may be, all commands and orders must be taken with affirmation, without complaint. The eyes must be kept on the prize until the last breath, the whole must be saluted at the moment of death – this is a real warrior! Only falling with your face turned towards the enemy is honest; surrender is betrayal! Only leaders and teams with this mind-set are capable of fighting successfully and with honour in contemporary battlefields.

In the present, a man in combat rarely sees his higher leader; the chief of a unit cannot grab a flag and lead his men in battle. Gaining fame this way may still be possible in the air forces, but in general, it's in the past. This day and age, every subordinate leader, every man must carry the will of the higher leader in his heart in everything they do. This must be accompanied by the understanding that the right subordination does not only work from top to bottom, but also from bottom to top; everything a leader must know must reach the consciousness of every leader, especially a higher leader. Truth and facts must also move from bottom to top. Successful leadership is unthinkable without it.

Mutual trust and the full truth are the basis of relations and the main factor of success. The relations between superiors and subordinates must be built on a firm, stable foundation. The respect of the subordinates for their leader is such a foundation. Not rank or position, but the trust of the subordinates gives the superior, the leader, the power to demand bigger mental and physical efforts from his subordinates. In critical moments, the subordinates will give their soul to the leader who has the trust and, consequently, the respect of the subordinates. Respect and trust cannot be commanded; they must be won. And it cannot be done

overnight! Losing trust is simple enough, but it's difficult to win. The leader, the superior, must assert himself with his everyday attitude, his lifestyle, his work and the performance of his duties. There is nothing worse than hesitation in the attitude and activities of a leader. A leader must not give in to moods or emotions. Sympathy and antipathy are not the right basis for assessing subordinates, but every man's abilities and value are the measure that makes a leader big and gives him the highest mental power over the subordinates. Not the likeability of the subordinate, but "the right man in the right place" – this is what created units that never disappoint.

The army does not need hypocrites; it needs men and only men in the real sense of the word, and they are needed at all levels of the military body. A superior who only looks for praise and promotions in his activities works for himself and not for the whole, and thereby loses his inner freedom. Inner freedom, however, is the biggest value of a leader. A superior must be able to do good things and be fair, protect his subordinates by putting himself out there without others even being aware of it. Popularity is very sweet, but it's also fragile. People look and long for popularity, and achieving it without losing one's inner freedom, without infringement of the interests of the whole, is excellent, but popularity should not be sought for the sake of popularity. One must seek inner satisfaction, not praise from others. The opinions of others must be taken into account, but they should not bind, especially when in conflict with one's convictions. Convictions must be verified, but not given up lightly. An inner battle about this often emerges in a leader's heart. What road signs could be followed in the case of such inner conflicts? The duty of the whole, above all. The fate of the people must be regarded as one's own fate, one's role must be recognised no matter how small it is, and all spiritual and physical powers must be used to play this role successfully. A deep responsibility for one's role, even if it's small, gives inner satisfaction and freedom. Not one's own fate, but the fate of the public must be of the biggest importance to every man.

One must avoid overestimating oneself when assessing one's role. The best measure against this is inner integrity. You must always "be more than you show". A man's destiny lies in his own hands. Those who think that they deserve a different destiny usually have the wrong opinion of themselves. If someone fails, they have to look for the reason within themselves. Those who complain about their lives and believe they deserve better only show that they're not satisfied with themselves. Satisfaction lies in work and in the performance of duties. Everyone has their role in the whole and it must be performed. Dissatisfaction and whingeing don't help; work for the whole is the saviour. There's no point in complaining about

others; one should rather take a look at oneself. One's strengths and abilities must be recognised, developed with work, and weaknesses must be eliminated. Every leader and man must believe in himself, and this fire must be kept burning, as losing it would be devastating to oneself and the whole. It is a very delicate thing, and every superior must help their subordinates at the right time and in the right place.

Today, it's required from every leader and man that, when left to look after themselves, they are able to make decisions during war or peace, and determine the action that needs to be taken, as well as commit with joy to what they think should be done according to the will of a higher leader and in the interests of the whole. In this day and age, a lot depends on the decisiveness of every leader and man, his preparedness to act without particular direction, and this is why every leader must encourage their subordinates to cooperate, to train them for this. The leader must show their belief in the subordinate as without it, the subordinate will lose his self-belief and become scared and hesitant, the fear of failure will awaken in him. When assessing the activities of a subordinate, the leader must distinguish whether failure is the result of negligence and disobedience, or mistakes in activities. Censure is not appropriate if the subordinate made the mistake in the joy of action, and the leader must benevolently point out the mistakes; even better, explain to the subordinate how he could achieve better results by acting differently. Only negligence and disobedience must be censured and punished depending on the extent of the guilt.

Subordinates must be recognised, their abilities must be developed, they must be given help in the elimination of their weaknesses and shaped to be men – this is the biggest and most joyful task of every superior. Based on this point of view, the service of an officer is not tedious or mentally exhausting but rather filled with great responsibility. To develop loyalty to the state in a subordinate young man, to contribute to the shaping of his soul, plant a sense of duty and the joy of responsibility in the hearts of the men – what in this world is more important than this? A lot must be given to perform this task successfully and it requires a great deal of spiritual wealth. This illustrates why the demands on superiors in every field are so high today.

Professionalism and calm conduct, also in the case of censure and punishment, always have a good impact on subordinates. However, the superior who wins the greatest respect is the one who is so mentally strong that, at the right time and in the right place, he is capable of admitting in public that a subordinate has found a better solution than his. There is no reason to fear that this would undermine

authority. Everyone is after all only human, and this is why mistakes are possible. A true man, a commanding man, can tell his subordinates directly that he is the one who made a mistake. If a leader tries to hide his mistakes – subordinates quickly recognise this – they will soon become the target of taunts and criticism, whilst the superior who admits that he's made a mistake will be respected. Public recognition of the work of subordinates, any fair recognition of the work of others, elevates the man and unites the superiors and the subordinates; moreover: it evokes respect in the subordinates for the superiors as well as for themselves and lays a firm foundation for mutual trust. Simplicity and directness in attitude is the right basis of relations. Not the privileges of place and education, but the extent of duties and responsibility is the foundation of rights. Those who perform their duties with care and commit fully to their field of activity have the right to be respected by others, no matter how small the scope of their activities in the whole.

Honour must unite men of war. The superiors and the subordinates must be the carriers of their calling, the honour of their people and the state, in every situation. Those who infringe the honour of others show that they don't understand honour. Honour is in the heart. One must learn the art of silence; modesty, fairness and seriousness are the guarantees of a warrior's honour.

Training and creating the right relations are difficult arts and nobody is a master of this from the beginning; everyone has to learn, and this learning is life-long, as life itself is constantly developing. Although mistakes in the difficult art of handling people occur, one must not despair or lose determination. Mistakes cannot be corrected with complaints, but with actions; one must always look for the right path and suitable solutions.

The correct solution and organisation of cooperation in every field of activity in society, especially in the military body, is one of the key factors of success. Every individual superior and subordinate, irrespective of whether they must act independently or with others, is only capable of acting correctly in the spirit of the whole when completely invested in attempts of cooperation. Every superior and every man must be led by the underlying understanding that his activities have a certain value within the scope of the whole; they must also firmly believe that the neighbours do what's their duty. Everyone must do their duty and consider the activities of the neighbours, because the neighbours on their side do the same, i.e. they also expect every man to perform his duty. The activities of neighbours are often criticised in peacetime. This is a morbid phenomenon and primarily a manifestation of one's own weaknesses. Self-sacrificing, selfless dedication to one's duties at all levels is the key to success. The whole, the neighbours and, ultimately,

oneself must always be kept in mind. The spirit of cooperation must be developed in peacetime. The things that were not done in peacetime, that did not become self-evident in peacetime, will not happen in war either. In war, people do what they've learnt and got used to in peacetime, and they don't do it better, but worse. The spirit of cooperation is destroyed by envy, reckless careerism, ambition and vanity. The attempt to achieve the best in one's activities is praiseworthy, but it must not happen at the expense of others, by pushing others aside. Progress must not be driven by envy about the success of others, as it destroys friendliness.

Egoism was born with humans. Results, even big ones, can be expected where healthy egoism has been put in the service of the public. However, nothing but damage to cooperation and the whole can be expected where morbid egoism manifests itself with all the friction it causes. Here, everything depends on the leader, the superior, again. The superior who only considers the interests of his service and duties in his activities has a healthy impact on his subordinates as well.

Nothing is more deadly to the spirit of cooperation than talking behind someone's back, which is the closest companion of criticism and complaining. People, especially in tight conditions, being brought close to each other by service and activities, quickly get to know each other and notice each other's weaknesses and strengths. This gives rise to the tendency to discuss the service and personal lives of others. These criticisms and discussions are often unfair and seldom benevolent; they destroy cooperation, because everything that's said is passed on and eventually reaches the person who was the subject of the discussions. It also appears that people are usually very sensitive towards themselves and strict about others in their discussions and this is related to another phenomenon – these discussions usually focus on a person instead of what should be discussed. Both of these circumstances together create injustice and bitterness towards the other and paralyse the spirit of cooperation. A man must be able to remain silent and to respect others. When a man like this sees something wrong in another and wants or has to correct this, they will express their opinion directly to the person concerned and that's the end of it. Taking matters outside one's circle is even more dangerous to cooperation and unity. That's betrayal. The things that need to be corrected are either solved between the people concerned or reported to the superior, and that's enough. Acting differently would show a lack of faith in the superior and this would mean that the entire unit is in a sad situation. Speaking behind someone's back takes no wisdom or courage, and it certainly isn't a feature of valour.

In training, it must be emphasised again and again that the men in the army don't serve a person, but a whole. The activities of a soldier must be dedicated to

the unit and military duties, and any malice in relations will disappear by itself. An army is either a strong whole, driven by a healthy mind, which is created by relationships of subordination, unwavering inner and outer discipline, mutual respect and committed cooperation, or it is simply a group of men that falls apart at the first hurdle. This is why the work and activities of army leadership are fully devoted to the training and development of the elements of a healthy spirit. All of the above requires the leadership to develop the necessary character traits in themselves as well. This means that the work of every superior, every leader in this field must consist of attempts to develop and improve oneself as well as guiding and managing the development of the subordinates.

A serious leader is a tireless worker in his field of activity; he dives into his work with deep commitment. Leadership is an art and not a science, which can be learnt like mathematics. The source of a leader's influence is his personality. Knowledge and technical skills are only the foundation; personality is the precondition. Every leader has his own path to success, because no two personalities are the same. Hesitant and unstable people who are incapable of withstanding calamities with valour are not made to be leaders. Leaders are people who don't despair in difficult situations, who are as good as their word, who speak the truth and are fair and unbiased in the way they think and act. This is why every warrior should maintain his personality and always keep developing. Everyone must be a tough judge of themselves, so they recognised their weaknesses at the right time and eliminate them. But that's not all.

It's also necessary to recognise the personalities of one's subordinates and support them and help them develop their personalities. Every warrior should be a strong personality. And the military body needs strong personalities at all levels. Men are united and joined by the duties of the whole, the state.

The army serves the state and sacrifices all of its mental and physical strength.

02. 01. 36.

(Source: *Sōdur* No 1-2, 1936 pp 1-7.)

THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP

Major General Nikolai Reek

Leadership – the main factor of success. The events developing on the international scene show that the need to exercise national defence, especially with one's own forces, has increased. Today, all nations are making massive efforts for the development of the strength of national defence by preparing oneself for armed conflict, either for defence of one's state or implementation of the state's interest, with great toughness. A lot of these preparations can be explained, such as the issues of organisation, the number of soldiers and the regions where they are assembled, observing the places of dispatch and the organisation of a road network, the armament, the new technical achievements in measures of combat and so on. All successes in this will soon be clear, revealed. Moreover, they are more or less aware of how the enemy is preparing its military forces. For this purpose, it's necessary to observe periodicals in all fields, official rules, laws, the presentations of officers officially allowed to instruct manoeuvres and drills, the legislation of the respective state, etc. – all this makes it possible to identify the overall preparation of the respective state as well as the tendencies of the leaders and staff, and their ideas of war. Everyone is looking for advantages for themselves by inventing new combat measures, or by increasing the effectiveness and number of their combat measures. As soon as a state has achieved something new in the military, as soon as the balance has been lost for a moment, other states will catch up and the balance has soon been restored.

The achievement of material balance is necessary, but how do you achieve dominance? Can it be done only by developing technical combat measures? Or by increasing the number of soldiers and combat measures? The nations that would only build their hope and faith on this would soon be very disappointed.

No! Victory and success do not depend solely on the number of fighters and measures of combat! The importance of numbers and techniques is huge, but they're not all-powerful!

There is a strength that's as old as humankind, but still young; more fearsome than the most modern weapon; capable of creating all kinds of surprises, it creates new, unexpected and variable factors; and are adapted to the situation with admirable precision.

This immensely old yet still young strength, terrifying in its might, is the inner force that's usually defined with the words "moral strength".

The sources of this force are:

- intelligence, created by guiding activities;
- will, which implements the creations; and
- an unbreakable sense of duty, which overcomes the fear of death.

Moral strength mobilises the masses, fires them up and makes them capable of bigger sacrifices than necessary for the achievement of victory.

Moral strength is the factor that tips the scales in favour of the side that's weaker in numbers and technology.

Based on the best qualities of the spirit and heart of the citizens, moral strength grows alongside the people's upbringing, education, and noble feelings. Moral strength grows to the same extent as the military organisation of the nation progresses, and it finds its highest manifestation in the increase in leadership capability.

Even the bravest teams with the most modern weapons will not be successful if they are not led and their activities are not guided. "A battle of soldiers" without an action plan today and in the future, without the coordination of activities, without the participation of the power of intellect, will lead to horrendous collapses! We need a leading idea that determines everyone's role, including that of the national forces, and guides activities and efforts.

Leadership! This is the creator of victory!

The leader's role in the leadership process. Victorious leadership needs good leaders and the performance of well organised and correctly resolved technical leadership. The importance of this fact became particularly clear in the 19th century, increased until day, and keeps growing in our era as well.

What is the role of a leader in leadership and what does the technical side of leadership entail?

On a broader scale, the duty of a leader is to correctly recognise and not lose sight of the moral and material status of his forces, and to also recognise the enemy's situation and intention, often on the basis of sketchy and contradicting data. This means that a leader's role on one side is to be able to recognise and always keep in sight the reality of the situation, and on the other hand to be able to foresee the development of events; make decisions on the basis of this and carry them out without delay; spare and assemble one's forces so they can act resolutely, without hesitation, and until the last man at the deciding moment!

A leader embodies the intelligence of the fighting forces, which creates, and the will, which implements the creations.

These beliefs are represented extremely well by one of the most outstanding companions of Napoleon I, Marshal Marmont, who wrote about the role of the leader in the execution of leaders: In our times, a general fight by will and mind; his sword-handling skills are of no importance at all; with his mind, he covers a considerably larger distance than the one that occupies his vision. In a nutshell – he is now less of a soldier than he was, although he is forced to be a soldier at times, he must be the moral factor that must lead events with his influence on the capabilities of others, as it happens in nature with mysterious forces.”⁵

The spiritual activity of a leader consists of three consecutive and harmonious phases:

thinking through or considering the given problem, which results in the establishment of the basis for the decision;

the decision;

determination of the general bases of the realisation caused by the decision (the general plan of execution).

The speed and accuracy of creation in these phases of a military commander’s mental work is an expression of talent.

So, before a military commander makes his decision, he has to do a lot of mental work, the thoroughness of which must ensure foresight; i.e. it must guarantee the possibility to immediately find and give new solutions for the final realisation of the leading, guiding thought, when the situation changes. Foresight is not purely a gift of nature, but the result of hard mental work; reality is its source. Not fantasies, but the ability to imagine reality leads us to foresight. “As I am always spiritual,” says Napoleon, “he answers everything at all times – this is the result that before every initiative, I have considered and thought, I have foreseen what can happen. It’s not a genius that immediately tells me what I should say and do in a situation that is unexpected to others, but it’s the result of my considerations and thinking.”⁶

Napoleon offers the following illustration of how exhausting and difficult the first and second phase in a leader’s activities are: “When I’m considering a military plan, there is probably no-one more scared than me; I increase dangers and all possible calamities; I am completely possessed by an embarrassing agitation. However, this agitation does not prevent me from being calm and happy in front of

5 Marmont, “Esprit des institutions militaires”, extract given in “Strategy” by Mikhnevich, 1911, p 344.

6 Roederer, Memoires, III r. p 380.

my surroundings. I am like a woman giving birth. But the decision has been made, forgotten, apart from the things that may lead to success.”⁷

Technical side of leadership. This means that decisions must be preceded by the necessary preparations, so that they are built on a firm foundation and not hanging in the air; a decision must in harmony with the situation. Imagining the latter requires data, which must be obtained and presented to the leader after technical processing.

The decision and the plan of its realisation must completely cover the problem that's being solved. The solutions to the implementation of decisions must be simple and in harmony with the situation in time and space.

Once a decision is made, i.e. the leader's creation has been implemented – it must be communicated to the executors and, once activities have started, the realisation of the decision must be supervised. It's also necessary to increase the realisation of the decision according to the changes in the situation. This means that the realisation of a leading thought requires the search for and collecting data on the opponent's activities, and presenting them to the leader, after processing, so that new, additional solutions can be found.

When the leader's role is to make decisions, to determine the guiding idea, showing the general direction of solutions, then everything else necessary for the leader's creative work and its realisation forms the technical side of leadership in a normal situation. Thus, the technical side of leadership consists primarily of the collection and processing of data about the military elements necessary for the leader's creative work and its realisation. These military elements are the moral and material condition of one's own and the enemy's forces, the placement of one's own and the enemy's forces, activities and preparedness, and the terrain. However, this is only part of the technical side of leadership. Once a decision has been received from the leader, its implementation must be prepared, i.e. the moral and material preparedness of one's forces for the impending activities; this means that the forces have to be supplied with everything they need for combat and released from everything that burdens them in combat. This material preparation consists of two branches – organisational and technical.

The moral preparation of the implementation of the decision covers preparation, strengthening and preservation of the will of one's own forces to fight.

The completion of preparations in all fields requires a respective plan and its implementation needs orders given to the executors. This is the second part of the technical side of leadership.

⁷ Ibid, p 380.

When preparations are done, it's necessary to start the activities with the armed forces in accordance with the leader's decision. This, again, requires timely orders.

Once the activities of the armed forces have started, they must be monitored and new orders must be given according to the development of events, both for the actions of the armed forces and well as for maintaining and increasing their preparedness to fight.

The staff. Now, when the technical side of leadership has been broadly explained, another question arises. Who will perform the described technical part of leadership?

The technical work in leadership is performed by the staff of the acting armed forces.

The leader and the staff create the whole of leadership.

A leader may be able to do all the leadership work by himself in the case of smaller units, regiment included. However, the situation is different when units from brigades upwards are led. In this case, a leader is no longer enough for the satisfaction of the technical needs of leadership and the most dangerous aspect of this is that the mental concentration of the leader, which is necessary for creativity, is de-concentrated with the technical details of preparation and realisation. The de-concentration of a leader's attention and cluttering it with technical details has always been one of the reasons of a collapse in modern times. The higher the leader's rank, the freer he must be from the technical details of execution and implementation. In other words, the bigger the unit, the more details of execution and implementation must be delegated to the staff. This is particularly important today and in the future. The new factors of combat – planes, tanks, gas and radio – have changed the conditions of operation and battle. Preparations now take longer, as the course of action against it is faster. The more thorough the preparations, the bigger the job of the staff; the faster the development of actions, the more a leader must be free of the technical details of leadership and supplied with the data that allow him to establish solutions for the realisation of the leading, underlying idea, at the right time.

The Chief of Staff is responsible for the work of the staff.

Tallinn, 27.06.36.

(Source: Sõdur No 27–28, 1936 pp 665–668.)

THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP

Major General Nikolai Reek

When we observe the conscious activities of a group of people in any field, we see that every conscious and considered activity begins and almost always ends with the decision of the person who leads the respective group. A process of consideration occurs in the brain of the decision-maker before each such decision is made, i.e. before the underlying, leading idea develops. The decision-maker considers how the task assigned to or established by him can be performed in the most advantageous and easiest manner; this requires the decision-maker to clearly imagine the outcomes that he wants to achieve with this task. He will also consider the technical side of the implementation as well as the impact of the favouring and hindering elements on the planned activities.

A decision is the most important part of leading military activities. No two situations are the same in military activities, which is why the decisions must be made outside the box. On the other hand, events develop rapidly and this is why the speed of decision-making must be developed in military leadership, and the decisions that are made must be flexible and easy to adapt to the changing situation; they must be specific, flexible and driven by unwavering will, whilst being free of anything abstract.

A decision concerning the conscious activities of a group of people, especially military activities, must be rooted in reality. Based on the task at hand, a decision that's rooted in reality must create harmony between the intended activity and the factors of the situation. A talented and decisive leader is capable of visualising the real situation in military activities clearly, realistically and rapidly.

He who makes the decision materialises his underlying, guiding idea, which means that the intelligence and intent of the decision-maker are expressed in the decision. The leading, guiding idea of a decision is usually defined in military activities as "the idea of a manoeuvre". Thus, the intelligence and intent of a leader in a military decision is embodied in the idea of a manoeuvre. The idea of a manoeuvre may not be confused with the methods of execution – the latter are the outcomes of the idea of a manoeuvre, not the idea itself. However, it often happens that the underlying, guiding idea that embodies the leader's intelligence and intent in decisions, orders and commands – the idea of a manoeuvre – has either not been

expressed clearly enough, is congested with the details of execution or missing altogether.

In the preparations of the leadership, the main emphasis should be placed on the ability to clearly express one's underlying, guiding idea in decisions, and in the orders and commands that embody the latter. If this has not been done in preparations, then it's impossible to highlight the idea of a manoeuvre clearly enough in difficult situations, which is what military activities are. This creates the kind of situation in leadership that paralyses the biggest guarantee of successful activities, the most important component of the morale of the leadership – initiative, and this results in subordinate leaders acting on their own initiative in rapidly changing situations, especially today.

In his study *"Reasons of Victories and Collapses in War 1870"*, General Woide asks why the Germans, despite being outnumbered at decisive moments and the mistakes made by higher-ranked leaders, still managed to achieve a number of victories whilst the French kept losing. What was the key to the success of the Germans and what were the French lacking? In the case of the Germans, the key to success was the ability of subordinate leaders to act independently.⁸

So, what is needed to ensure that subordinate leaders are capable of initiative and acting independently? Is everyday emphasising in letter and word enough? How do you raise, train and develop the requirements that "a good army is one where every officer knows what he has to do in every situation; the best army is the one that's closest to this ideal". A great military leader answered this question. He demanded that every soldier know his manoeuvre. How can we achieve this? How do you realise the main guarantee of success in military activities, which is that the conscious co-activity of subordinate leaders is also guaranteed in addition to skilful leadership? The only way this can be achieved is if the respective leader manages to communicate the outcome of his creation, the idea of a manoeuvre, to his subordinates clearly, figuratively and vividly. If the subordinates feel the guiding idea of the leader and are carried by his will, they will be able to add their own creation, intelligence and will to it, and this is how the morale of the leadership grows into an unbreakable, unwavering foundation of success. Not only constant reminders, but the actual implementation of these ideas, trains and develops initiative and independence in subordinate leaders, disciplines and promotes the development and emergence of independent activities. This means that in all operational and tactical preparations, it's always necessary to demand

8 Woide. *"Die Ursachen der Siege und Niederlagen im Kriege 1870"*. Berlin, 1897, pp 4–5; 325–326.

that leaders of all ranks have an idea of the activities and they are also able to express this.

So how can one recognise the reality of a situation when making decisions, make the activities to be undertaken based on the task comply with the reality of the situation, and achieve the expression of one's underlying, guiding idea and intent? There are no formulas or rules for this. War is an art and not an exact science. The creation of a leader must not be restrained or schematic; it must be the result of reality, not fantasy. There is only one measure that frees creation from restraints, that provides a clear understanding of reality, and makes it possible to define the guiding idea of the activity, the idea of a manoeuvre, in a synthesis. It's a method of analysis. The lack of a method explains the inadequate expression of the idea of a manoeuvre in many decisions and orders, and the problems it causes. What would this method and the path of the mental work be like?

The task is the first road sign. When analysing a task, one must ask themselves: what should I do to perform the task?

The second road sign is the terrain. One must find out the conditions that the terrain sets for the activities, what it facilitates and what it obstructs in the performance of the task.

The third road sign are the forces and measures given for the performance of the task. What opportunities do they offer, depending on the terrain? The given forces and units are not a mathematical element that can be calculated on an abacus, but a living body that fights and tires, that changes all the time, that forms the most important component of the reality.

The fourth road sign is the enemy. This element must be considered by asking oneself, how the enemy can, depending on the nature of its forces and the conditions of the terrain, obstruct the performance of the task? However, one should not focus too much on what the enemy is doing. What the enemy is doing may only be observed in light of the terrain and the nature of its forces. It's also a very delicate issue and if it's not implemented well enough, it may lead to false perceptions, as happened with the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. The following example should be a warning about this.

After the Battle of Sandepu in Manchuria, a plan was prepared at the headquarters of the Russian Commander-in-Chief (30 January 1905), which predicted six combinations of possible activities by the Japanese, as well as two special cases, one of them in two variants, so nine variants in total. A counteractivity by the Russians was prepared for each variant, including the number of battalions (on both sides), the marking of the troops for the counter-activity, and the special

table of distances for movement of the army corps to the right point. The plan consisted of 13 pages filled with fine text.⁹ Two weeks after the preparation of the plan, the Japanese did not use any of the nine variants predicted by the Russians, but acted according to their tenth variant, which is why they upset all of the calculations made by the Russians and didn't even give the Russians a chance to use their complicated table of distances.

Looking at this example, we must ask ourselves how the enemy can obstruct my activities depending on the terrain and the nature of its forces. However, what the enemy actually does depends on its intent, which may take various shapes and directions. It's not the intent of the enemy that's important, but one has to focus on one's own task and the resulting idea of a manoeuvre as the embodiment of one's intelligence and intent. Additionally, when the enemy forces are assessed, it must always be kept in mind that its forces are also a living body that needs to eat and sleep, that gets tired and is as variable as our own body.

These considerations make a leader see what should be done irrespective of the enemy's counteractivity, so that the task can be performed in full. This "what" is the underlying, guiding idea of the activities in which the leader's intelligence is expressed. This "what" is the idea of a manoeuvre in which the leader's intent must be embodied in addition to his intelligence. This means that this "what" should not be abstract; it must be a living idea, clear and intentional. This "what" guides subordinate leaders to creation and independent action.

This "what to do" gives rise to "how to do", so that the task can be performed. This "how to do" finds its expression in tasks to subordinate leaders, the division of forces and the coordination of the work of different weapons. The idea of a manoeuvre must be given to the subordinate leader, i.e. he has to know "what" the senior leader wants, must be aware of the task, and he will be given the necessary forces. The subordinate leader must perform the task himself within the scope of his task.

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Talent, a clear mind and willpower will not yield the desired results if the stomach is not working properly; the entire body will collapse if the stomach stops working altogether. Even the best teams fall apart without ammunition, without food, i.e. if the rear is not working or is not working properly. This is why operational and tactical preparations must, more than ever, focus on the tasks related to the organisation of the rear.

⁹ The Russo-Japanese War, Vol V, Part I, Annex No 7, pp 100–113.

The stomach is an inseparable part of the human body and although it has certain independence in its functions, it's still subordinate to the mind, because the latter controls the person's external acts. If these external acts are poorly controlled, the functions of the stomach will immediately be paralysed as well. The same relations exist in operational and tactical leadership, and the management and acts of the rear. The leader's idea of a manoeuvre guides the entire body of the forces, so too the organisation of the rear. However, the rear needs ideas of its activities for internal acts, which depends on the idea of the manoeuvre of the forces. The conclusion here is that the rear must also have an idea of its activities, which would carry and guide the organisation of the entire rear. This fact tends to be overlooked even more in peacetime preparations than the idea of a manoeuvre. An idea of the activity of the rear that carries and guides the organisation of the rear is very rarely obvious.

Who determines the idea of the activity of the rear? The rear is subordinate to the leader of the forces who defines the idea of a manoeuvre. This is why it's natural that he also defines the general idea of the activity of the rear. The general organisation of the rear as well as the tasks of the special branches of the rear depend on this general idea of the activity of the rear. Who controls the general organisation of the rear and divides the tasks of the special branches? Is it the leader of the forces or his closest assistant, the Chief of Staff? On the one hand, the Chief of Staff is committed to the development of the leader's underlying and guiding ideas, and on the other hand, his task is to prepare the realisation and implementation of the leader's idea. This is why shaping the general organisation of the rear and defining the tasks of the special branches of the rear will be a task for the Chief of Staff. The leaders of the special branches of the rear, proceeding from the idea of the rear's activity and the assigned tasks, define the methods of technical implementation in their areas.

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The next false perception that often tends to prevail in peacetime operational and tactical preparations is the vague length of the orders and commands. There are leaders and teachers in military schools who sometimes seem to enjoy giving extremely detailed written orders. However, one must not forget that the main virtue of a written order is its brevity. The situation during peacetime schoolwork and some operational and tactical drills can be good for reading and studying long orders. However, this is not the case during military activities. Situations develop and change rapidly, the working conditions are far from good, time is more than limited and this is why a long order, a long command, becomes a scourge. It

becomes a scourge for the leader's closest assistants, his staff, who tend to be late due to the complexity of their work. It is a massive scourge to the executors, who are in an even worse situation in terms of working conditions, as events develop even faster within the borders of their activities. It's an old truth that the speed of decision-making is particularly important for those ranked lower, as higher-ranked leaders have more time for the work of leadership. But you cannot make a decision if you haven't read the higher-ranked leader's long order and materialised it on the map or the terrain.

A purely psychological false perception also appears in the case of long orders and commands. The idea of a manoeuvre becomes murky and disappears in details in long orders and commands that attempt to explain everything in great detail. This is accompanied by the psychological perception of the subordinate leaders that they are not trusted enough when it comes to details.

This is why everything possible must be transferred from a written order to a scheme, such as action lines, strike directions, signs and placements, and the scheme must be enclosed with the command. The idea of a manoeuvre, the tasks for subordinate leaders and the division of forces will remain the most important part of an order. If maps can be enclosed with an order, it must be done whenever possible, because a subordinate leader who receives the idea of a manoeuvre, the task and the forces, takes in the action lines, strike directions and placements on the map quickly and, more importantly, accurately. This method speeds up the work of the person who issues the order as well as the one who receives it. Let's try to imagine the work of the recipient of the order when an attempt is made to describe everything in the order. In dire working conditions and often under fire, he must start picturing everything concerning directions, signs, etc. on the map. How much misunderstanding, how many errors has this caused? All we need to do is recall experiences of war. However, if a subordinate receives a clear and short idea of a manoeuvre, his task, and forces, from a superior leader and all other details are indicated on a map, he will have a lot more time for himself, for thinking about his task. What's particularly important here, however, is that the subordinate understands what is expected of him. How much does this facilitate the work of the assistants of the leader who gives the orders and ensures that the order is given on time? There are few maps or none at all, for the use of this method in peacetime preparations costs a lot, so schemes may and must be used; there are enough methods for using them accurately.

One of the most important factors of leadership, which is the skill to navigate quickly on the terrain and quickly grasp the characteristics of the terrain, often tends to stay hidden in peacetime work and preparations. The use of modern mobility and combat measures requires such quick navigation and understanding of the nature of the terrain. This is often forgotten in peacetime work. The pursuit of convenience often goes so far that in order to avoid mistakes, people start erecting the most accurate road signs in the training fields, forgetting that helpful road signs do nothing to develop one's ability of navigation. When I asked about this once, I was told that these signs in the training field were necessary for the people who carry soup. Yet it seems to me that these soup carriers should be able to find their units in wartime as well! So what should we do?

A training field is like one's own room or nest, and if we don't know what's where in our own room, then where should we go with the preparations in navigation? If people are afraid to get lost in the training field, then for the sake of consistency, we should also mark the hills with some sort of signs. But that's not the right approach. The failure to develop the ability of navigation may lead to major difficulties in activities, unnecessary efforts and often losses. This is why we must emphasise the need to develop and improve the ability to navigate in the leadership, as a map alone is not enough. This is well illustrated by the fact that signs are necessary despite there being maps of the training field. However, it's completely clear that erring is the factor that pushes a diligent leader to develop his navigation abilities and makes it possible to check the level of this ability.

Petseri, 06.09.36.

(Source: Sōdur No 37-39, 1936 pp 901 – 904.)

THOUGHTS ON LEADING A WAR AND THE ACTIVITIES OF ARMED FORCES

Major General Nikolai Reek

*“Tout homme a le droit de publier
ses reflexions sur l’art qu’il cultive”¹⁰*

Comte de Guibert

The development of science and technology, especially in our century, has not made life easier for humankind. On the contrary, it has made the national manifestations of life of some nations dependent on each other, created complicated knots in international relations, and placed these relations on a socioeconomic foundation, which gives completely new shapes to humankind’s manifestations of life. This is an already acknowledged source for shaping opinions of humankind’s manifestations of life. Every manifestation of life by an individual as well as a nation materialises with the respective activities. As the manifestations of the life of nations have taken a new shape because of the influence of economic forces, become more perfect and also more complicated, the activities depending on them have also changed their form and are also complicated. Every conscious activity has a certain definite goal that the activity aims to achieve. The conscious activities of a group of people, a nation and nations require leadership. This leadership manifests itself in the preparation and implementation of these activities for the achievement of the established goal. This means that, alongside the activities, the orders given for leading them have changed their shape as well, which is also complicated, firstly because leadership in this day and age sets very high demands on the organisation of leadership as well as on the individual who acts in this organisation of leadership, not to speak of the highest-ranked leaders.

War is also a national manifestation of the life of nations. Not only is it associated with all other manifestations of the life of a nation but interwoven with them in every way. In our century, war covers the entire being of a nation and state; it causes and influences all manifestations of the life of a nation and state and shocks the national body of the combating nations. From the viewpoint of the national lives of nations, war in our century is similar to an earthquake, the devastating

¹⁰ Every person has the right to express their thoughts about the field being practised.

impact of which lasts for years after its over, continuing to convulsively shake up the internal national organisation of a nation, people's perceptions and lives.

War is not an independent act, nor an explosion caused by some ancient force. It is a phenomenon caused by the national manifestations of the life of several nations. The conflicting socioeconomic situations of the states in conflict are the foundation for its development. Ethnic issues also have an important role, as they influence the tension of relations in international life. However, wars in our century are not caused by national hate alone. The socioeconomic situation is still the main factor here. Ethnic issues are a component of socioeconomic issues, as they increase the conflict in relations. They can be motives, but they are rarely the goals.

War is an act of violence. Its goal is to force the opponent to subject to the demands presented to them. However, in the context of small states, war is an act of resistance aimed at keeping one's independence and self-determination, forcing the enemy to give up their attempts, desires and demands. In order to achieve the goal of war, it's necessary to launch a strike or a series of strikes against the opponent irrespective of their strength. The strength of the opponent does not depend on their armed forces alone, but lies in their entire national body, the life force of this body. When strikes are launched against the opponent, they must always be aimed at the central points of their life, the sources of its power on which the whole depends. As the opponent also strikes back, it's also important to ensure that one's own sources of power are not destroyed. The strikes as well as the defence must be prepared within the national scope. Those who initiate a war or who have to engage in war to defend themselves, must clearly and concisely imagine the objective of the war in the national scope and, proceeding from this, steer all of the manifestations of life of the national body and the activities of the armed forces. Thus, any possible military conflicts must be considered early; this, however, causes a number of interrelated activities in all areas of the manifestation of life long before the outbreak of war. The activities of the armed forces are only the most important component of a state involved in war when a war breaks out. The activities of the armed forces, which in the case of a war are the centre of national life, are related to other national manifestations of life, influenced by them and also influencing them. This is where the following two concepts have come from in our century:

- leading a war; and
- leading the activities of the armed forces.

These concepts are closely connected to each other, but still clearly distinguishable. Leadership of a war assigns duties for the activities of the armed

forces and coordinates other national activities for launching strikes on the opponent on the general socioeconomic grounds; leadership of a war also directs the efforts of the national sources of power at resisting the strikes of the opponents on the socioeconomic grounds as well as in order to maintain the fighting spirit of the armed forces for continuing the activities.

This means that on the one hand, there is the state's leadership for warfare, and on the other hand – leadership of the activities of the armed forces for the achievement of the goals of war. These two activities are so closely connected to each other that they seem to blend into each other, especially from the viewpoint of the highest leadership of these activities. From this point of view, the problem of leading a war and the highest leadership of the armed forces has always been very difficult to solve. This problem has been widely researched. Several researchers have decided, based on historical examples, that an ideal solution to the problem is handing the highest leadership of war and the highest leadership of the armed forces to the same person.

However, solving the problem like this seems almost impossible in our century, especially in big states. The reasons for the difficulties lie in the fact that the highest leadership of war as well as the highest leadership of the armed forces in this day and age are so complicated that a single person cannot perform this superhuman task. When trying to solve this problem, we must not forget that solutions must not be sought from others, but each state must solve the problem of the highest leadership of war and the highest leadership of the armed forces itself, according to its own national structure, the state of home affairs and, even more so, the geopolitical situation of the state and the people. A normal solution seems to be that the highest leadership of war is handed to the head of state and the highest leadership of the armed forces is performed by a person trusted by the head of state. History has taught us that the difficulties in solving this problem lie, on the one hand, in the correct solution of the relations between the head of state and the highest leader of the armed forces, and on the other hand, the relations between the highest leader of the armed forces and the state government. In order to find the right direction when looking for a solution, we must first note the preconditions of successful warfare in our century. The main condition is, as indicated by recent events, that the highest power of governance must be given to the head of state for the successful leadership of the state's activities and in the shocks caused by war. This main condition of the success of national defence is of decisive importance to small states whose position is difficult due to their geographic location. The head of state is the leader of the national defence and its decisive action, war, who has the

full trust of the people in the preparation and implementation of national defence, and therefore also the full authority for the defence of the state and the people. A small state must always know in the case of a military conflict that the battle will be one of life or death, a fight for its national freedom or even for the existence of the state as such. If a small state faces a battle like this, it must not forget that there are no incomplete solutions in the future when it comes to national independence and existence. Depending on the modern means of fighting as well as the size of the state's territory and its geopolitical location, the entire territory of a small country, including its capital and the centres of national sources of power, becomes a battleground. In this case, there is not a single corner in the small state where an air raid of the enemy could be ruled out – this is the consequence of the development of modern weapons. This is why, when the issue of national defence in a small state is approached, the latter must be ready for any unexpected action from air and land, and also from the sea if it shares a border with the ocean, and it must foresee that bombs dropped from planes may paralyse not only individual persons, but also the authorities in the functions and activities. Unexpected strikes by motorised units on the borders of small states are not unavoidable. In the case of war and in the modern conditions of warfare, decisions about national defence must be made quickly. In moments of danger or upon the development of military activities, the organised and rapid action of a nation may be paralysed, which is why we cannot require it to decisively participate in the declaration of mobilisation, which must be considered the first essential act of defence, and the declaration of war when the state has already been attacked or it has been unexpectedly involved, which must be considered the first forceful act of self-defence. Consequently, all this requires the consolidation of national defence when solving the issue of national defence, the granting of full authority to the head of state for the protection of the independence of the state and the people, i.e. the implementation of national defence. This gives us an idea of the balance between the head of state and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in war.

The Commander-in-Chief, who is fully independent in the strategic and operative leadership of the armed forces, is the person closest to the head of state. He is so close to the head of state that he is like the double of the head of state; his authorities are so extensive that all officials and authorities obey his orders as if they were given by the head of state; he must also support everything taken for being successful in war. No official or authority in the state has the right to call the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces to account. The Commander-in-Chief is only responsible to the head of state. There may not be any wedges

between the head of state and the Commander-in-Chief. History has shown us that full authority to the Commander-in-Chief has been demanded time and time again when solutions to the issue of authority of the Commander-in-Chief have been sought. The power to lead the war, not just the armed forces. The conclusion has always been that the highest leadership of war and the highest leadership of the armed forces should be embodied by the same person. However, this burden is too much for a single person in this day and age. That's why placing everything in the state in the hands of the head of state and giving the Commander-in-Chief the status of the double of the head of state allows us to hope that we can solve the problem correctly in the conditions of contemporary warfare.

Special conditions may emerge in small states, especially in our situation, which is neither war nor peace, but which fall fully under the concept of leading a war, i.e. declaring oneself neutral when international conflicts arise in neighbouring countries. Remaining neutral when a war has broken out in neighbouring states requires similar leadership of the state's manifestations of life on economic and social grounds and in the area of the organisation of the activities of the armed forces, just like in actual warfare. Often, neutrality is taken very lightly. Actually, neutrality in the neighbourhood of warring states in our state is just as much of a shock as war. A war raging in the neighbourhood creates devastating economic and social shocks also for the small states nearby. But that's not all. One's neutrality must also be strongly defended. The words of Louis XIV to the citizens of Liege characterise this very well: "Neutrality is only serious when you are strong enough or determined enough to enforce it yourself"¹¹ and Napoleon's address to the Government of the Republic of Venice: "What! You want to be neutral and you don't know how to defend yourself!"¹² The beliefs of these two great rulers and the status of Switzerland in the World War of 1914-1918 confirm this.

Those who study wars have always pointed out the difficulties that become evident when wars are fought in countries belonging to unions or coalitions. The main difficulties don't emerge in the organisation of the leadership of armed forces – this problem can be solved, albeit with some effort – but in the highest leadership of the war, i.e. in the joint direction of the manifestations of life of all states in the union. Solving the problem from this position is almost impossible: although it's possible to find and appoint a joint highest commander of the union's forces, a

11 *"La neutralite n'est chose serieuse que lorsqu'on est assez fort ou assez determine pour la faire respecter soi meme".*

12 *"Quoi! vous voulez etre neutres et vous ne savez pas vous defendre!"*

joint highest governance of the union's states is, at least according to our present understandings, inconceivable.

(Source: Södur No 9-10, 1937 pp 205 – 209.)

A LEADER'S DECISION AND HOW IT IS MADE

Major General Nikolai Reek

Foreword

The presented work “A Leader’s Decision and How It Is Made” is a result of beliefs and experience. The two wars – the World War and the War of Independence, war games, field trips of leaders, tactical training on the terrain as well as manoeuvres are the source of these convictions and experiences. Theoretical and historical studies have been a source of light in the assessment of experience and the development of convictions.

The difficulties created in the mind by the need to make a decision have repeatedly attracted attention during manoeuvres on field trips, etc. This fact, and furthermore the knowledge that the generation with war experience is disappearing, have been the imperative factors that have driven us to write down the convictions obtained on the basis of the studies and experience concerning decisions and how they are made, so that we can help those who have no war experience and provide a method for the mind, which can facilitate making decisions in difficult situations during military activities. As the creative work of a leader is an art and certainly not an exact science, this piece will certainly not provide a recipe for winning, but only the method for the creative application of the mind. The initial version of this piece was completed in autumn 1926.

Our military magazine *Sõdur* published it as an extra in 1927. For a decade, the initial version of this piece has tried to serve our officers in their training. However, the development of weapons has had a significant impact on the conditions of activities over these 10 years. This fact and the pressing need and obligation to pass on the assets we’ve collected urged me to publish the second edition by making changes in the first piece and filling in some of the gaps found there. Hope, the need to be useful and the duty to always be ready to serve the young generation are the driving forces that serve as the basis for reworking this piece.

5 March 1937.

Author

I. General Principles

When we observe the conscious activities of a group of people in any field, we see that every conscious and considered activity begins and almost always ends with the decision of the person who leads the respective group. A process of consideration occurs in the brain of the decision-maker before each such decision is made, i.e. before the underlying, leading idea develops. The decision-maker considers how the task assigned to or established by him can be performed in the most advantageous and the easiest manner. This requires the decision-maker to clearly imagine the outcomes that he wants to achieve with this task, consider the technical side of the performance of the activities and study the impact of advantageous and disadvantageous elements on the intended activities.

A decision is the most important part of leading military activities. The art of leadership lies in making decisions and recognising the right moment when a new decision must be made.

The leader has the competence to make decisions. Only the leader has the right to make decisions, and he must thereby exercise this right to the full as the highest prerogative, as doing nothing at all is a bigger mistake than doing something wrong. Only the leader is responsible for the decisions he makes.

No two situations are the same in military activities. This is why decisions must be made outside the box during military activities. On the other hand, events develop rapidly, and this is why the speed of decision-making must be developed in military leadership, and the decisions that are made must be flexible and easy to adapt to the changing situation; they must be specific and driven by unwavering will whilst being free of anything abstract.

A decision for leading the conscious activities of a group of people, especially military activities, must be rooted in reality. A talented and decisive leader is capable of visualising the real situation in military activities clearly, realistically and rapidly.

Thus, every military situation must be assessed separately, depending on the task at hand, and a decision must be made quickly. Great masters in the art of war have condemned the inability to act outside the box. There are no formulas or rules for rapid decision-making or avoiding schematic thinking because war is an art and not an exact science. However, simple life experience has shown that people are bolder and faster when walking down a known path rather than an unknown one, especially at night. And in regards to military activities? There is a

lot that is unknown and hidden from view, but ultimately decisions must be made fast! Certain methods of mental work are a leader's best allies in a situation like this, in addition to his knowledge and practical experience. The method gives a clear picture of the reality, releases the leader's decision from the box, ensures its practicality, balances the mind-set and provides the necessary speed for decision-making. When tactical tasks with practical exercises are solved on a map and terrain or in manoeuvres, one must consistently practice decision-making so that the method of making decisions would create something similar to "intellectual automation" in our minds, develop into a "reflex of the mind", i.e. that the method of decision-making becomes a familiar path for us.

What are the foundations or factors on which a military decision is based?

The decisions of a leader are based on the task and the situation.

A situation consists of:

- the forces and measures at one's disposal for the execution of the task, i.e. one's own forces;
- the terrain with the climate and time conditions; and
- the enemy.

These are the most important and variable factors of a leader's decision and the correspondence of the decision to the task and the situation depends on a correct analysis of these to a large extent.

In order to study the questions that interest us, we'll discuss the following method in this piece. Firstly, let's look at the aforementioned factors in the order in which they were given. We'll thereby try to show how a leader creates a picture of the task and the elements of the situation and how they determine the main features required for making a decision in this picture. However, our study would not be complete if we only focused on these factors. Therefore, once the main features of the situation have been explained, we'll try to group and summarise them in a form suitable for decision-making, i.e. a synthesis suitable for decision-making must be carried out after the elements of the situation have been analysed.

II. Task Analysis

A task received from higher up is the first and most important element and main basis of a decision.

A task is an indisputable and absolute obligation; one's whole mind as well as mental and physical strength must be applied in order to execute the task. It's clear from here that decision-making must start with a thorough analysis of the task. The experience of wars and manoeuvres demonstrates very well that the majority of mistakes in the execution of tasks were caused by misunderstanding the task or not giving it enough attention. A task usually determines:

- the nature of the activities in respect of the enemy;
- the specific limits of the activities in time and space;
- the part of the subordinate unit in the entire manoeuvre; and
- the specific requirements for the methods of execution and the use of measures.

1) Nature of activities in respect of the enemy

In respect of the enemy, our activities may be expressed in an offensive or defensive, meeting the enemy on the move or withdrawing.

As simple as this question may seem, mistakes have been made in practice because the nature of the activities in respect of the enemy hasn't been given enough attention or understood.

2) Specific limits of activities in time and space

The specific limits of activities in time and space may be determined with a task, e.g. to get somewhere by a certain time or to gain control of an element of the terrain (road junction, settlement, forest, etc.), position, or to resist until a certain time in a certain direction or on a certain line.

These specific limits of time and space must be studied with the greatest attention, as the activities of each unit are a part of the whole and the failure of a unit to comply with the limits of time and space provided for them may often become a hindrance or even paralyse the activities of the neighbouring unit. For example, being late in gaining control of a certain line or object of terrain may often render the situation of the neighbouring unit catastrophic and crossing the limits of the space designated for activities may obstruct the development of the neighbouring unit's activities and bring it to a standstill.

3) Part of the subordinate unit in the entire manoeuvre

A correct understanding of one's activities in the activities of a whole is the best measure of preventing mistakes in the execution of a task. An inadequate understanding of this factor has often caused serious errors of execution in wartime as well as peacetime practices. A military situation may develop faster or slower than predicted. New, unexpected events may arise. No matter how precise a task is, it's impossible to foresee all of the possible events and changes in the situation. Thus, there may be events when an assigned task is no longer enough for the subordinate leader to make new decisions. However, the activities must not stop! A task is a permanent obligation. It must be executed even if the situation has changed, but according to the overall goal of the manoeuvre. If the situation creates difficulties in the execution of a task that cannot be overcome, the person executing the task must inform their leader about this and only the higher-ranked leader will decide whether or not the initial task will be changed. This is right and necessary, but not always possible. Often, there is no time to wait for new instructions, often there is no communication either, but the activities must not stop. This means that activities must continue even in a changed situation, but they must always be in the interests of the whole, and this is where a leader has to show his initiative.

Taking the initiative in the execution of the given task is a leader's unconditional right and obligation in every event where the received order does not correspond to the actual situation.

Thus, irrespective of obstacles, the established goal must be achieved by developing one's activities with new decisions according to the changed situation.

So, what points the leader in the right direction and guides his mind in a situation like this?

It's the objective of the whole, which is expressed in the higher-ranked leader's idea for a manoeuvre, and the clear understanding of one's role in the manoeuvre. The tasks of the neighbouring units and the development of their activities are the specific limits of the new decision. Keeping the overall goal in mind and studying the tasks and activities of the neighbouring units, the leader will find the right way for his initiative. By studying the extent to which his task was dependent on the tasks of the neighbouring units and to which he was under their influence, the leader will find a direction for activities in the changed situation.

Simple activities where each unit acts independently of the neighbour are rare; the activities of a unit always tend to be linked to the others and the success or failure of a unit's activities has an impact on the neighbours as well. Often, a task executed by a certain unit makes it easier for the neighbour to execute their

task. This circumstance must always be kept in mind; it's also the best measure for bringing out healthy initiative. This is also demanded by the development of modern firearms and the increasing influence of the terrain caused by the development of weapons. The last two factors demand coordination of activities to an increasingly larger extent. The coordination of firing activities has acquired a decisive meaning in tactics. For example, let's take a look at the tactics of an infantry group, where the success of the activities of units is based on helping each other with light artillery fire. When we then look at the activities of a company or battalion, we once again see the need for mutual support of heavy automatic firearms in order to operate successfully. In the tactical activities of these units, the success of one also helps the other and the development of their success is almost always dependent on one another. We also see a need for mutual fire support and tactical assistance in the case of larger units to whom more artillery has been given.

This is why the tasks of the neighbouring units must be studied like one's own; it's necessary to clarify the extent to which the task and activities of one's own unit are related to the task and activities of the neighbouring unit, and whether there are any special requirements for mutual assistance.

The entire manoeuvre must be understood to give the neighbouring unit the necessary fire support at the right time. It's necessary to understand the whole in order to assist one another tactically. Only this kind of leader gives fire support to the neighbour if his own unit is in the most difficult situation, only this kind of leader gives his last reserves to support the other – the leader who understands the manoeuvre as a whole. Consequently, only a clear understanding of the manoeuvre as a whole is the foundation of healthy initiative; only a correct understanding of the whole can help in the most difficult and unexpected situations. Every new decision, every new activity must always be aimed at the achievement of the ultimate goal.

4) Specific requirements for methods of execution and use of measures

Specific requirements for the methods of execution and the use of measures may lie in a task. The ideal way would be to give the subordinate the task and the measures whilst letting the subordinate decide on the method of execution himself. However, such a simple approach is not always possible. Sometimes, units act completely independently, sometimes they are fully dependent on each other. Sometimes, a certain unit is not bound by the requirements to assist others and doesn't itself need assistance from others: sometimes, a certain unit at a certain time must support the neighbour with all of its fire. Sometimes, a certain unit is

given heavy firearms, such as artillery for larger units, heavy automatic weapons to companies, sometimes a higher-ranked leader gives the fire of weapons, not weapons themselves. This must always be very precisely explained because there have been many mistakes and misunderstandings about this. This analysis clarifies the borders of the initiative and the framework of independence in the selection of the course of action and the use of measures. In other words, a task can sometimes be very precisely detailed and other times much broader; this means the limits of initiative are sometimes narrower, sometimes broader. The subordinate must study and clarify this scale of initiative and independence with great attention.

Thus, the purpose of analysing a task is to clarify the following important bases of activities: the nature of the activities in respect of the enemy; the specific limits of the activities in time and space; the role of the unit in the entire manoeuvre and the ratios of activities with the units in the neighbourhood and finally, the special obligations or instructions for activities or use of the given measures.

III. Analysis of One's Forces

An exact assessment of one's forces is the basis of the action plan. What must a leader clarify here?

Every leader must clarify the exact number of the forces placed at his disposal for the execution of the task. First of all, he must find out whether he is allowed to use all of the units organically subordinate to him for the execution of the task; whether he's been given additional measures and what are the conditions of their use.

Let's explain this.

For example, the first thing a regiment commander must do, having been assigned a task, is to ascertain whether all of the battalions of the regiment are at his disposal or whether the senior leader has kept some of the regiment in his reserve. A battalion commander must also check whether all of the companies of the battalion are at his disposal for the achievement of the established goal. The same regiment commander must clarify whether any extra measures, such as artillery, have been given to him for the achievement of the goal. If they have been given, the hierarchy of tactical subordination must be clarified: does the artillery support the activities of the regiment only with fire and on which conditions will this be done, or will a unit, battery or group of the artillery be fully at the disposal of the regiment. Misunderstandings about this question have often emerged as a result of inadequate clarification.

Once this question has been clarified, it's necessary to get an overview of the number of the measures given for the execution of the task. It's necessary to ascertain the exact number of subordinates and extra measures, such as staff, firearms, especially automatic weapons and guns, their ammunition and transport measures.

Once the exact number of one's forces has been confirmed, it's time for substantive assessment of the strength of the forces.

What is this assessment about?

The actual strength of one's fire must be ascertained first of all, then the battle value of one's staff and thirdly, the readiness of one's forces for the commencement of activities.

Let's analyse each question individually.

1) Strength of own fire

The technical development of weaponry is certainly one of the most outstanding aspects of the development of the art of war; the successes in weaponry can be felt in strategy as well as tactics.

The firepower of modern weapons is destructive.

It's possible to break through a front consisting of well positioned automatic weapons, supported by the artillery, only if the fire of the units designated for this is at least equally as strong.

The firepower of modern weapons has changed the forms of operations thoroughly.

The firepower has primarily strengthened defence and made it possible to create an interrupted veil of fire on broad fronts, which can be broken through only by way of an organised offensive. This requires the attacker to concentrate its fire and other means of combat (e.g. armoured forces) as well as constant preparation.

These are the principles we must keep in mind when we assess our forces.

Firepower is the most important factor of a battle. An offensive is firepower that moves forward; defence is the firepower that forces a stop.

The above illustrates the importance of firepower as a factor of combat; it makes it clear why the strength of firepower as the main factor of combat must be accurately ascertained, as firepower both breaks and defends. So, the stronger your firepower, the stronger you are in a defensive or an offensive position.

What determines the strength of firepower?

On the one hand, it's determined by the number of automatic weapons and guns at one's disposal and the quantity of ammunition, and on the other hand by the width of the front. It's natural that the narrower the front, the stronger our firepower when compared to the same number of weapons on a wider front.

The main support to firepower in a modern battle comes from the automatic weapons of the infantry and guns. Thus, every leader who asks himself, how strong am I in terms of firepower, must weigh the number of his automatic weapons and guns on the one hand and the width of the front on the other hand. This only gives the first line, but not the whole picture. Some kind of measure or standards are required for the creation of a picture. In the west and the east, such standards have developed for defence as well as attack. What does our leader have to use as the basis for assessing the strength of his firepower when on the offensive and defensive?

In order to obtain an overview of one's firepower, it must be compared with the standards of the enemy's firepower. When on the offensive, we may not be weaker than the enemy in the region or strip of our main effort; when on the defensive, our

firepower must still be strong enough to allow us to have a shootout with the enemy and force their infantry to stop. This comparison does not give a full overview and may even be a cause for pessimism. We will obtain an accurate overview when we add a comparison of the actual situation to this comparison – on the one hand, we keep in mind the number of our automatic weapons and guns, and the width of the units' front, and on the other hand, we also consider the actual situation of the enemy, i.e. the organisation of their units and the width of the fronts. This comparison gives us an accurate picture of our firepower for a certain operation and alongside it, a basis for the development of our action plan. This also shows that it's necessary to have detailed knowledge of the enemy's organisation, as in the latter we find the number of automatic weapons and guns in the enemy's units, as reconnaissance on their front gives us an overview of the actual strength of their firepower. This overview is not always accurate, as reconnaissance may fail and accurate data are rare in military situations, but it does give us some idea. So, on one side are the enemy's standards, which have been published in rules and tactical guidelines, and the organisation of their units, and on the other hand, the width of the fronts of their units; all this together gives us the measure we can use to assess our own firepower to find an answer to the question of how strong am I in terms of firepower? This is the only way for our leader. We cannot issue standards in the case of small forces and wide fronts; every time we assess our firepower, we must consider what we may be actually facing and compare with the enemy's concepts that characterise their understanding of firepower. A comparison of the enemy's firepower standards with their actual firepower gives us an idea of how strong the enemy is in terms of fire; when we compare this idea with the number of our automatic weapons and guns on the given front, we get an answer to the question raised.

2) Combat value of own staff

The combat value of own staff is based on:

- the level of training;
- the size of permanent staff;
- the capabilities and character of leaders of all ranks;
- the moral and physical condition of the crew; and
- the military habits of the crew.

During peacetime, there are few favourable situations for practice in the assessment of the combat value of one's staff – a factor of much importance in war. It's an old truth that military brilliance depends largely on the knowledge of human nature and the ability to use people in the most advantageous manner. This fact

must always be kept in mind, especially in peacetime work, because during all kinds of tactical drills on the map as well as on the terrain without a crew, especially in military games, many participants tend to forget that they are dealing with people, i.e. the physical and moral strength of people. In these drills, it often happens in some participant's hands, a unit of people acts without food or rest. They often act as if people were some creatures whose moral and physical strength cannot be depleted. Even machines need rest: metal tires, parts must be cleaned and greased; and for people, the need rest is much greater. Practicing manoeuvres during peacetime gives very little experience for the development of the ability to assess this factor.

Practice for the development of this skill can be obtained from studying military operations in historical writings. When we study military operations, especially those of great military leaders, we must lend particular attention to how they assessed the staff of the enemy and the impact this assessment had on the course of the operations. Often, as we study operations, the decision of a leader only becomes understandable when we focus on the combat value of the staff at his disposal, because a decision that seems to be easy in one's peaceful office could not be implemented in reality and was beyond the strength of the men to whom it had been entrusted, whilst another decision that seemed inconceivable could be safely implemented in the actual situation due to the physical and moral strength of the people. These studies are the best exercises for the development of the assessment of the combat value of staff; they draw attention to the diverse expressions of this factor and the circumstances that influenced this factor. These studies also highlight the errors made in the assessment of this factor. Also, when we draw conclusions from our military experience, we have to ask: "What was the combat value of our own and the enemy's staff?" Without this question, our personal experience is also lifeless and nothing but a fantasy generated in an office.

Now, let's take a closer look at each of the conditions on which the combat value of staff depends.

a. The level of training

Training a crew for modern warfare is a difficult question, as it's become very diverse. The requirements for the knowledge and skills of each individual man have multiplied. In an ideal unit, every man should be able to use light and heavy automatic weapons, be a good shooter and skilled at throwing grenades; every man should be able to observe the battlefield and use the terrain whether on the defensive or the offensive, know the diverse forms of the order of battle and formations of modern tactics. This ideal is difficult to achieve, especially due to the

short duration of compulsory military service and because our barracks, training methods and fields don't often meet contemporary requirements. But life in every country is developing. Training conditions improve as a result of this, especially due to the establishment of barracks and contemporary training methods and fields, and whilst the duration of compulsory military service is shortened on the one hand, military education and preparation are made compulsory in schools. This means that due to the circumstances described above, the training of people of different ages in a mobilised unit is not the same. Yet this diversity will increase even further due to another factor: the combat measures as well as the tactical thought and the resulting courses and methods of action develop, which means that younger people will always be more appropriately prepared than the older ones. Every army tries to eliminate these shortcomings by calling its men to short reservist training sessions, but the state's financial resources don't often allow carrying them out to the ordinary extent.

These are circumstances that every leader must be familiar with and keep in mind when making decisions and assessing the level of training of its staff.

b. Importance of the permanent staff in the combat value of staff

As we've already mentioned, the shorter the duration of compulsory military service, the more difficult the organisation of training and the more intense the training has to be. The cadre are the teachers. The success of training depends on the skills and numbers of the cadre; consequently, the shorter the military service, the bigger the permanent cadre must be.

However, it's not simply the training alone that demands strong cadre.

The introduction of automatic firearms has given fire the first place in battle. Fire must be controlled well in order to be used to the full. This once again underlines the importance of well-prepared cadre; the losses caused by enemy fire also require strength of cadre.

A section is the most basic combat unit or combat cell in modern infantry. If these cells work well, the main weapon type of modern combat – the infantry – also works well. The activities of these cells are led by section commanders. The above shows that they are critical in modern combat. As we already discussed above, how difficult it is to create an ideal infantryman when the duration of compulsory military service is so short but creating a good section commander is even more difficult. It's difficult even with 18 months of military service. All of this proves that in order to increase the combat value of infantry during a short military service, the section commanders must also be recruited from amongst extended service men.

This is required by the appropriate training of conscripts and even more by battle conditions. But not every country's economic, political and population conditions allow for recruitment of section commanders from amongst extended service men. However, it must always be kept in mind that the stronger the permanent cadre, the bigger the combat value of the staff. It would be ideal if all section commanders in a mobilised infantry unit were peacetime extended service men, because as we said, tactical thought and the courses of action arising from it are developing; this means that being aware of them and the ability to use modern automatic weapons as well as skilled action when under the enemy's automatic fire demand constant practice, which is only possible with the existence of section commanders in permanent service.

Thus, the strength and value of the permanent cadre must always be kept in mind when assessing the value of one's staff, and the value of the smallest leaders, such as the section commanders, must also not be forgotten.

c. Assessment of the capabilities and character of subordinate leaders

The knowledge, skills and character of subordinate leaders have a decisive impact on the course of a battle. When a unit is selected for the execution of a certain task, the value of the team on the one side and the value of the leader on the other side must be weighed. We've noticed a few times in tactical training and manoeuvres that some men put their jackets on themselves whilst others need help. What it means is that certain tasks must be assigned not only according to the unit, but also according to the leader. Earlier, it was only applied to the leaders of large units, but in the contemporary battlefield and in the era of automatic fire, it also applies to the leaders of small units.

This shows that when making decisions and assigning tasks, a leader has to choose subordinate leaders that are the best for the task or if it's not possible, combine the tasks accordingly, primarily by simplifying the activities and strengthening supervision and personal influence.

d. Moral and physical condition of the crew

Every leader must always keep in mind that morale develops through sleep and food. A leader who places his crew in good physical conditions has a positive influence on his crew's morale. The morale of well rested and well-fed men is always stronger and more balanced. The physical strength of the men and the effort that lies ahead must be considered in every venture; it's always necessary to care for the physical strength of the men and make sure it can be replenished.

Sparing the strength of the crew has always been important to the biggest masters of the art of war. The past influences that the crew has been under must be kept in mind in every new venture, i.e. does the new venture follow victory or defeat. The morale of men who've experienced victory is always stronger than that of men who've been defeated. The morale of a crew is a fragile factor that must be skilfully used and maintained. Russian regulations and guidelines emphasise the need to give special attention to improving the crew's morale and also to taking measures aimed at destroying the morale of the enemy's crew (propaganda). The allies used the latter a lot in the World War. The Russians have approached this question very thoroughly and already use it for preparations in peacetime.

To obtain a clear understanding of the needs and capabilities of one's subordinates, it's necessary for leaders of all ranks to have contact with their units as often as possible. When the subordinates know that the leader shares all the joys and hardships with them, they are always prepared to give their all and failure is also easier for them to bear. The actual value of units from the leaders to the privates is manifested the best in failure.

The position of the infantry and its main role in contemporary battle, the danger in which it operates and the losses it has to suffer, make the infantry considerably more vulnerable to battle shocks than any other army specialisation.

This is why strengthening the morale of the infantry is of particular importance and keeping the morale of his crew as high as possible should be the care and concern of the leaders.

Maintaining morale in a crew is a very delicate task. It's necessary to inject unwavering faith in the capabilities of oneself and one's weapon as well as trust in one's neighbours and leaders in every individual soldier.

The enemy's forces may not be underestimated, but at the same time it's necessary to clearly express the superiority of our material, intellectual and moral forces to our soldiers, always and everywhere.

A leader should not be afraid to draw the attention of the crew to possible threats in battle, because known threats are easier to tolerate than unknown ones.

The morale of the crew should be under particular scrutiny in the case of newly mobilised units, where unity and inner discipline are still lacking, and the men are not used to the physical exertion and the effect of fire. The leader of every mobilised unit must primarily try to achieve unity and inner trust in his unit. Every time a leader makes a decision, considering the value of his staff, he must also weigh the strength of the unit's unity.

e. Military habits of the crew

This factor becomes particularly clear in the case of mobilised units. Mobilised units are not used to the effort or the impact of fire. Confusion and a sudden dip in morale on the battlefield are frequent occurrences. The percentage of those who are ill and physically exhausted is high in difficult situations. Every leader must keep this in mind when making decisions for activities with mobilised units.

3) Readiness of own forces to commence activities

As we mentioned above, many of the participants in peacetime war games, tactical training, etc. forget that the given forces and units are not a mathematical element, but a living body that fights and tires, that changes all the time. They forget that making decisions, giving and distributing orders, executing orders, etc. takes time. They pay no attention to the actual possibilities of supplying their forces. Everything seems to happen in some superhuman manner. This may bring a lot of disappointment and failure in the actual situation. Therefore, a leader who assesses the situation must also seriously consider the readiness of the troops for the initiation of activities. Two questions must be explained here:

- can the troops complete all the preparation for the initiation of activities by the required time or, in other words, when are the troops ready for activities;
- the situation in terms of supplies and evacuation. When analysing the first question, the leader must explain to himself whether the troops can complete all the preparations for the initiation of activities by the required time and whether they need additional measures to be able to complete them in a timely manner. Whilst considering this question, we must keep in mind that our forces are a living organism and all of their activities take time. When explaining the second question, the leader must keep in mind:
 - the requirements presented by the task of supply and evacuation;
 - the extent to which the situation in supply makes it possible to meet the requirements for the institutions operating in this area;
 - the possibilities (including the measures received from the higher-ranked leader) of making the area of supply comply with the situation required by the task in the given period of time;
 - the extent to which the above affects the decision.

Usually, these questions are not considered in peacetime work at all, or it's done extremely superficially. However, clarifying these questions in the real situation is of immense importance. The will to fight alone will not achieve much if we don't have the ammunition for our operation!

IV. Terrain Analysis

Terrain is an important and stable element of a situation. The terrain must be surveyed thoroughly according to the objective of the activities. It's an element that is the easiest to get to know.

The terrain is the main framework of the action plan on which various situations develop.

Surveying the terrain must explain to the leader the extent to which the terrain would favour or hinder observation and the development of firepower in the strip designated for activities and how suitable it is for our combat methods and weapon types. Also, surveying the terrain must explain to the one that's materially weaker the extent to which the terrain prevents the enemy from taking advantage of their material, technical and numerical superiority. This is exactly the angle from which the terrain must be surveyed. It should be added here that military experience has shown how the method of surveying the terrain has developed hand in hand with the development of weaponry or combat methods. We have to say that the World War highlighted a number of new important factors that change the method of surveying the terrain. These factors are:

- the extensive use of automatic weapons, which caused the expansion of infantry formations along and into the depth of the front;
- the abundant use of tanks and cars and the resulting problem of motor-mechanisation and antitank obstacles;
- the appearance of the air force on the battlefield and the related need for cover;
- military gases as a complementary element of automatic weapons and guns.

Let us now take a closer look at the survey method.

1) Terrain and infantry fire

Before the World War and in the first years of the World War (1914 and 1915), an infantry fought in linear formations whilst an infantry battle tended to localise into combat around natural support points (uplands, settlements, groves, etc.). The survey method was derived from this. The objective of the survey was to determine the characteristic features of the terrain (the military crest, the topographic crest, the opposite slope, valleys, declines, etc.) and their tactical characteristics (the extent of the shooting field, the observation possibilities of oneself and the enemy, etc.)

and to find the natural support points on these lines and determine their tactical characteristics (shooting field, possibilities to hide from the enemy's observation, possibilities of resistance when a support point is enveloped, possibilities of resistance in the support point itself, etc.).

This survey method has not lost its value in the present day either; above all, it remains effective in areas where the nature of the terrain forces the infantry to fight in a linear placement and also in situations where weak forces have to fight on wide fronts. However, the previous method is no longer complete in the aforementioned situations. The first of the factors mentioned above have to be studied in greater detail, keeping in mind that:

- the impact of automatic fire is the biggest in the case of flanking fire, i.e. flanking fire is the most effective fire barrier when automatic weapons are used.
- modern tactics require depth of fire, i.e. fire from the depth of the order of battle, to increase resistance or support an offensive better and to take full advantage of the qualities of automatic fire, and this depth must be sought by using the qualities of the terrain or the respective battle formations;
- in order to operate successfully, infantry units must support one another, companies and groups with heavy automatic weapons and the individual combat cells of infantry – the sections – with the use of light automatic fire, trying to create a crossfire in front of the fronts of supporting units;
- under contemporary fire, especially under automatic fire, an infantry uses sparse formations in order to reduce losses and make the use of automatic weapons easier, spreading in wide areas alongside and deep into the front.

However, this spread of the infantry and the attempt to create automatic crossfire is not possible everywhere on the terrain; settlements, groves, ground undulation or folds and the fireless areas¹³ caused by them create many obstacles that prevent the use of the firing properties of automatic weapons to the full.

The undulating ground and any objects form “fire zones” in the strip designated for activities.

The borders of the fire zones are shaped by the crests of the undulations or the lines in the slopes with objects on the terrain and on a flat terrain by objects such

13 The French call them “*les angles mortes*” and the Russians “*mertvyya prostranstva*”. If translated word-for-word, we should use the term “dead corner” or “dead area”, but we don't really want to do that and instead, consider the area that nobody can cross, i.e. where the fire is the most powerful, the dead area of a battlefield. Thus, it would be more logical to call the areas where the fire of the infantry is powerless the “fireless areas”, as it describes this term more clearly.

as groves, settlements, etc. In the first case, the borders of fire zones are easier to understand.

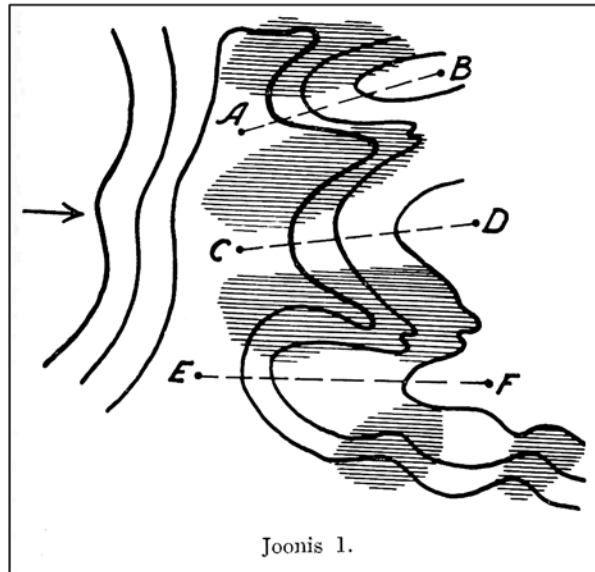
In order to familiarise yourselves with fire zones theoretically, take a look at Figure 1, where the fire zones are marked with diagonal lines. The arrow on the scheme shows the direction of survey and the dotted lines AB, CD and EF are the dividing lines between the fire zones. Automatic crossfire is possible inside the given fire zones, i.e. providing mutual support with flanking automatic fire. It must always be kept in mind here that the fire of automatic weapons is the most productive when they are used to shoot at visible targets. Also, it must not be forgotten that an automatic weapon (a weapon with a flat firing line) is a slave to the forms and objects of the terrain.

Fire zones are often more or less isolated from each other. Depending on the nature of the ground undulation and the placement of objects, each fire zone has a certain width along the front and also a certain depth. The width and depth of the fire zones in the section or strip of activities is of immense importance in the case of a defensive or offensive in terms of the full use of automatic fire.

Let's take a look at a topographic map (see the extract of a topographic map at the end of the book) to scrutinise this question in greater detail. Every survey must be carried out in a certain direction: when on the defensive, the terrain must be surveyed from the enemy's side towards our side, when on the offensive – the other way round. The direction of the survey is indicated with an arrow on the map.

On the map, we can see that crossfire and mutual support are possible in the zone outlined in the blue area covered with diagonal lines, whilst we immediately notice that these zones are separated from each other with crests or local objects and that the crossfire of one zone will not reach another. The red lines indicate the zones that prevent crossfire on the one hand and divide the fire zones in depth on the other side (e.g. the tube-like shape of uplands 74.6, 69.7 and 52.8). This specific example also tells us that the south-eastern fire zone, which is formed by ground undulation, is clearer; it's easier to recognise than the north-western one, whose northern boundary is shaped by local objects. As we move forward, we see that in lower spots we're dealing with short-range flanking fire; however, as we move higher, we may end up under automatic fire placed in the depth (higher).

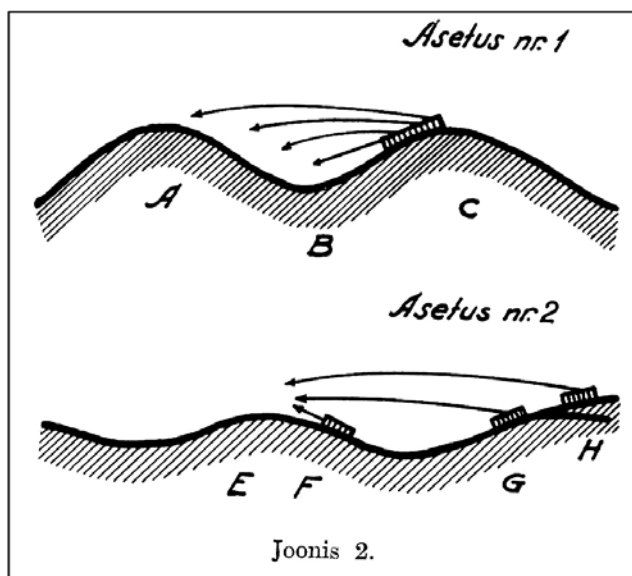
We know that on an offensive, advancing further is possible on the condition that all suspicious points on the terrain are neutralised one way or another. Thus, two fire systems must be organised to support an offensive: one that is aimed against the short-range flanking automatic weapons and another that is used to neutralise the long-range flanking automatic weapons. As we can see, the fire zones in this



case are not fully isolated; they are connected to each other to a certain extent; you cannot try to destroy or neutralise one of them without paying attention to another. Here, we come to the understanding that there is a 'minimum width' of the offensive strip on the terrain for such activities, where the enemy's forces must be neutralised or destroyed at the same time. This fact is extremely important, as the superiority required on an offensive is usually achieved with the concentration of fire. As the number of weapons in certain units is always limited, it's clear that the part of the enemy's front, where we can achieve the superiority of fire, has practical boundaries in every specific case.

But defenders don't use their automatic weapons solely along the front, but also in deep. Thus, the combinations of fire also have boundaries in depth in addition to the boundaries along the front.

The placement of automatic weapons in the depth only gives the maximum fire effect if all the automatic weapons manage to fire in front of the resistance line. However, such placement of automatic weapons in deep, which is obviously very advantageous for the defender, because it reduces the possibility of getting hit, depends on the ground undulation and the position of objects. If these conditions are not advantageous for the defender and the automatic weapons are placed in deep, the attacker will encounter firepower obstacles that don't have the kind of firepower as in the first case. This makes it clear that in the latter case, it's easier for the attacker to neutralise the defender's automatic weapons than in the first



case; in the first case, the attacker must neutralise more of the defender's automatic weapons at the same time than in the second case.

When automatic weapons are positioned, it's necessary to have the possibility to shoot over the heads of the first line in order to take advantage of the favourable depth. This is extremely difficult to do on a flat terrain. A flat and open terrain allows for wide flanking, but on the other hand makes deep positioning extremely difficult. The situation on an undulating terrain is different (see Figure 2). Shooting over heads is possible when one is positioned on the slope facing the enemy (position 1), but the depth of the positioning is still limited; also, the fire barrier is not at its full strength yet in this case, as it's not possible for some of the weapons to fire into the depression.

However, if the infantry were positioned on the opposite slope behind the crest of the terrain and the terrain behind them was rising like shown on position 2, it would be possible to create a very strong fire barrier, whilst it would be very difficult for the enemy to neutralise the automatic weapons of the defender. Such combinations are possible on an open terrain. Trees, groves, villages, etc. are obstacles to automatic fire, which means that only gradual fire barriers can be achieved on a terrain covered in objects. Each of these cases has its advantages and disadvantages, which must be considered every time, and every position is primarily based on the number of one's automatic weapons.

Theoretically, the attacker must neutralise territorial defence from the first line to the first crest behind it. Looking at the situation from this angle, we also find the rate of obstacles that the attacker must defeat in depth in addition to the minimum of the front of the offensive. It must also be noted here that the attacker's conditions always become serious when they reach the crest, as from this moment onwards in their advance, they may unexpectedly find themselves, in addition to artillery fire, under the destructive fire of the automatic weapons positioned on the opposite slope and the next crest; the fire of the flanking automatic weapons hidden on the opposite slope is particularly menacing. These situations have occurred countless times in war and many offensives have lost momentum when the crest of the terrain was reached. This is not a new phenomenon, but it's almost always forgotten. It's clear from here that the infantry may not continue advancing from the crest of the terrain before it has brought its automatic weapons with it.

Now, to summarise these observations, we can state the following about the terrain in terms of fire:

- the terrain, when observed along the front, presents to us a number of fire zones of different widths; the widths of the fire zones determine the minimum of the front for an offensive in the given direction;
- the terrain, when viewed in terms of depth, favours or prevents the layering of fire measures and their use from the depth.

Based on this point of view, the terrain determines the required depth of neutralisation which is necessary to ensure the superiority of fire.

We carried out our survey in a narrow area, but let's broaden it now. Let's take an area that's 10–12 km along the front and 10–15 km in depth. Let's draw a number of parallel directions and analyse the terrain in every direction, as we did above. We immediately see how the terrain comes alive and starts speaking in front of our eyes, showing us possibilities for firing and advancing. Based on a synthesis of the study on a simple scheme, we also obtain the foundation for our action plan. This may seem difficult to beginners, but with certain practice it's an effective tool in the preparation of an action plan.

In general, terrains can be divided as follows:

- open and flat terrain;
- open terrain with wide ground undulation;
- open terrain with dense ground undulation;
- covered or closed terrain.

Each of them has different tactical qualities in terms of movement and fire.

Open and flat terrain:

- has few vantage points and they are easy to spot and neutralise;
- crossfire is easier, but the depth of the fire is small;
- movement is difficult;
- the positioning tends to become forcibly linear.

Open terrain with wide ground undulation:

- favours the development of fire along the front and from depth;
- fire zones are wide and deep, which usually requires massive forces from the attacker, as it's advantageous to the defender.

Open terrain with dense ground undulation:

- provides good opportunities for fire combinations along the front and from the depth, but requires a lot of automatic weapons;
- the fire zones are narrower and not deep;
- advantageous for operation with small forces.

Covered or closed terrain, especially when it's covered with large forests:

- significantly restricts the firing range of firearms;
- obstructs crossfire and flanking, even making it impossible;
- requires very rapid and heavy fire along the front, because one must act at short firing ranges and without flanking, which reduces the impact of automatic weapons.

A closed terrain requires the use of a linear and denser positioning, which is why infantry wears out quickly and firepower has less value on such a terrain; movement, however, is more hidden and its importance is decisive. Tactics on such terrain is closer to past forms.

2) Terrain and artillery fire

At first glance, it may seem that artillery fire is independent of the forms of landscape considering the present level of materials and firing equipment. Looks like the artillery can hit anything and anywhere, because it can see everything from its vantage points, using modern communication equipment for delivering messages and especially aerial surveillance, and is able to quickly hit the selected targets with its precise shooting preparation.

This is theoretically true at first glance, but in practice, the preconditions required for the achievement of the above are either missing or cannot be realised to the required extent.

Above all, the majority of artillery is equipped with flat-trajectory guns, which means that in practice, the areas not covered by fire are rather large. Furthermore,

the fall of shells on a rising slope in front of us is more accurate and denser, and on the opposite slope the dispersal of shells is much bigger. Also, the opposite slopes, where the effect of flat-trajectory artillery fire is always weaker and sometimes even completely ineffective, are the areas hidden from surveillance from aboveground vantage points. Shrapnel could be used to reduce the effect of dispersal on the opposite slope when firing at open living targets, as the spray of its little bullets provides a bigger assault area on a declining slope, but the effectiveness of shrapnel fire is particularly dependent on surveillance opportunities.

On the other hand, air surveillance is inconsistent and often even impossible; it depends on atmospheric factors and the activities of the enemy's air forces. This means that the activity of the artillery, especially in an area where it has to operate in close connection with the infantry in order to support the latter, is always easier and more effective on the areas of terrain that are well visible from aboveground vantage points.

These circumstances indicate that in order to get a correct impression of the impact of the terrain on artillery fire, we must ascertain and mark on the map the areas that are well visible on the one side and the areas hidden from surveillance from aboveground vantage points on the other side. The more open and visible the terrain, the more effective the artillery fire and on the other hand, the more closed and covered the terrain, the less impact the fire has.

3) Terrain and seasons

The tank is a new battle factor since the middle of the World War. It represents firepower, movement and armour, which makes it purely a tool for the offensive.

A large number of modern tanks will be used in future war; they will always enter the activities on a wide front and layered in the depth. However, the operating possibilities of tanks depend largely on the terrain. The activities of tanks are restricted by forests, swamps, bogs, rivers and streams, wide ditches, steep inclines, etc. This is why tanks cannot operate successfully on any terrain and the threat they pose is not the same everywhere.

When going on the defensive, it's necessary to avoid open areas when choosing positions and instead select defensive positions behind swamps and rivers, in forests, etc., to secure the positions against the possible tank attacks of the enemy. One must also try to channel the activities of the tanks by creating artificial barriers by incorporating natural obstacles. Also, when on an offensive against the enemy who is well equipped with tanks, one must look for areas of terrain where the enemy cannot use their tanks to the maximum.

Roads, the number of roads in the given region, the general direction of the roads and the conditions of the roads depending on the season and the weather, are extremely important in the use of motorised units.

This demonstrates that the terrain has a massive impact on the use of tanks, but also on the organisation of anti-tank operations, indicating the areas of terrain that must be used to one's advantage in one or another case.

4) Terrain and air force

The military activities of the air force are closely connected to the terrain. The terrain can have an advantageous or disadvantageous impact on the activities of the air force. The military activities of the air force are guaranteed from the viewpoint of terrain if the latter favours:

- the establishment of aerodromes and landing places;
- orienteering;
- the execution of combat missions.

In order to be successful in its activities, the air force needs aerodromes and landing places. Aerodromes and landing places may not be located far from the front or the CP of the units in whose interests the air force unit operates, as otherwise the operating range of the air force unit into the depth of the enemy's front decreases, flying to the destination takes more time and communication becomes more difficult. From the viewpoint of air defence, an air force unit must be able to reposition itself on a back-up aerodrome if necessary. As the front shifts, the establishment of new aerodromes and landing places becomes necessary and at least one back-up aerodrome must be acquired for each air force unit in addition to the operating aerodrome. As the preparedness, freedom of operation and speed of an air force unit depend on the network of aerodromes, the issue of aerodromes is of primary importance when the use of air force units in activities is considered.

The establishment of aerodromes usually requires a lot of preliminary work, the performance of which during a war is difficult and time-consuming. The establishment of aerodromes is easier on a terrain with enough fields suitable for landing or areas of land that can be quickly made suitable for landing. The existence of fields corresponding to requirements is mainly dependent on the relief as well as the field crops. Landing places can usually be found in areas where the ground is flat and even, and where larger fields and higher meadows on harder ground are located. On the other hand, it's difficult to find landing places on uneven ground with hills and valleys, where fields and meadows are fragmented with ditches, and the establishment of aerodromes therefore takes a lot of time.

From the viewpoint of orienteering, it's important to the air force that there are enough orientation points. The main points that facilitate orienteering are larger bodies of water (big rivers, lakes, beach), large groves, settlements, railways, main roads, etc. On the other hand, small and closely located rivers, streams and lakes, a dense road network, etc. fragment the general picture of the terrain and require a lot of attention.

Although the terrain does not create any absolute obstacles for the modern air force in its combat mission, it does have strong impact on the results of its activities. The terrain has a big impact on the activities of the air force in terms of aerial reconnaissance and aerial surveillance, because of forests / poolik lause/.

The above explains how the terrain affects the activities of the air force and their results, and how, considering the terrain, the activities of the enemy's air force and the possibilities of paralysing it against the army can be assessed.

5) Terrain and military gas

Military gases are heavier than air and flow into any depressions, mortar craters, trenches, etc. This is why depressions and holes are dangerous when gases are used.

Vegetation (forest, shrub, tall grass, crops) tends to extend the persistence of military gases. The denser the vegetation, the longer the military gas will stay there.

Soil has an impact on military gases as well. The more broken up the soil is, the more it absorbs military gases, which thereby become less hazardous.

The elements and relief of the terrain affect the movement of air masses by changing the direction and speed of wind. Therefore, they disperse the military gases moving with the air and weaken their impact. On the other hand, however, military gas stays longer behind forests, buildings, higher hills and other objects that prevent it from spreading than it does on open fields and in higher spots.

Larger open bodies of water (over 0.5 km) dilute the composition of military gases.

Swampy and snowy ground obstructs the spread of military gases, especially the spread of volatile military gases fired with gas shells and mines. In swampy ground in summer and on snow-covered ground in winter, some of the military gas released by exploding shells and mines is absorbed by the soil or the snow, which is why its effect weakens.

Soil covered with forest, shrubs and larger vegetation is particularly good for spraying with corrosive gases, because degassing in these places is extremely difficult. Such places are therefore particularly dangerous.

In general, it must be said that the terrain and the places that offer cover and protection from firearms are dangerous when military gases are used.

6) Terrain and seasons

Seasons with their different temperatures, winds and precipitation have a very large impact on the terrain and, consequently, to warfare as such.

Roads and the ground are hard in summer, as a result of the high temperature, so that movement is easier not only on roads, but certain troops can also move off the roads. Vegetation creates particularly good conditions for camouflage and concealed approaches. The value of water bodies, especially rivers, as obstacles decreases as there is less water. Swamps and bogs become largely passable.

Roads and the ground itself become soft and slippery in spring, when the snow is melting, and in autumn.

The value of water bodies as obstacles increases. Lower spots are flooded. There are only a few, better roads where cars and armoured vehicles can move without effort.

In winter, frozen water bodies and swampy areas lose most of their importance as obstacles; rivers, however, often become good connecting roads. The road network changes: summer roads become narrower or disappear, new winter roads appear instead of them, which makes orienteering difficult. Deciduous forests and shrubs lose their leaves and no longer offer sufficient cover from surveillance. Snow changes the relief of the terrain and the tactical properties of many natural objects. The ground freezes, which makes soil work and the construction of barriers difficult. The deep snow obstructs the movement of caravans and some types of forces, except for ski units. Blizzards and clouds obstruct surveillance, especially from air.

People use more strength due to the low temperatures in winter and often also on autumn and spring. The cooling water of firearms freeze, oils and greases in mechanisms congeal. Settlements become very important. People must be equipped with sufficient food and warm clothes.

7) Terrain and time of day

Explaining the terrain as an element of the situation, we saw how it favours or obstructs surveillance, the effectiveness of fire, finding cover, movement, etc., i.e. warfare.

Darkness at night makes corrections to the use of the terrain and the assessment of the terrain for night-time activities. The terrain remains the same as it was during the day, but the limited visibility makes orienteering, surveillance

and maintaining direction more difficult and reduces the speed of movement, has a significant impact on manoeuvring by the troops, communication and, in particular, the use and cooperation of the technical forces.

Orienteering at night is difficult not only on unfamiliar, but also on familiar terrain, because even familiar places or objects of the terrain look different at night. Limited visibility makes the use of terrain points and directions for orienteering difficult at night. This is why orienteering at night requires extreme attention as well as special methods and measures.

Surveillance opportunities are limited at night. Artificial light only allows for surveillance over a certain range and usually not constantly.

Maintaining direction is only possible along the most important terrain directions (road, edge of a ditch or forest, riverbank, lake shore, etc.) or with a compass. This is why night-time activities must be simple in terms of direction.

Movement in the night is slower than in the day because of the difficulties in orienteering, maintaining direction and leading, and the speed of a motor-mechanised column decreases by up to 75% in comparison with daytime speed.

The use of firearms at night is also difficult. Firing on target is almost impossible, so the effect of fire is small.

Irrespective of these obstacles, troops are sometimes also forced to operate at night. However, it must be kept in mind that only the infantry can be considered more or less suitable for night-time activities. The operating possibilities of technical troops are very limited at night.

The participation of the artillery in night-time activities requires the preparation of fire plans during the day.

Aerial surveillance is only possible from small heights either with artificial light (lighting bombs, flares, spotlights) or because of a blanket of snow on the ground. Orienteering is difficult. However, flying in regions protected by the enemy's air defence equipment is safer.

For armoured vehicles, it's difficult to find landmarks and to communicate with the infantry and the artillery. Their speed decreases 2-3 times. Overcoming obstacles is considerably more difficult than during the day. The noise of engines and crawlers during movement gives the tanks away from big distances. The number of armoured vehicle accidents increases, but the threat of being hit by anti-tank fire decreases.

Fighting in line is almost impossible for the cavalry.

The troops exert themselves more at night than in the day, which in combination with the darkness causes anxiety, moral vulnerability and faster submission to fear and panic.

This indicates that the decisive factors in night-time activities are not numerical superiority or the multitude of technical measures, but the inner value of the troops, being accustomed to operating at night and the simplicity of the action plan in combination with energetic and decisive leadership. Thus, the numerically and technically weaker side is the one forced to act at night, as despite the numerous disadvantages, night-time darkness reduces the impact of the enemy's fire and surveillance opportunities, guarantees unexpectedness and camouflage, and increases the moral impact of activities, which balances the relationship between the forces.

8) Terrain and fortification

Fortification does not change the forms or general characteristics of the terrain. They reduce the vulnerability of the defender whilst increasing it among the attacker's troops. In terms of aboveground surveillance, the firing range and flanking opportunities, a non-fortified terrain has the same qualities as fortified terrain. Fortification may only introduce smaller corrections to the terrain elements and increase the impact of the natural elements of the terrain. Fortification always takes a lot of time. The time given for fortification determines the extent of the assistance it can provide in increasing the impact of fire. Let's reiterate that fortification doesn't change the general qualities of the terrain, but only helps increase the impact of fire and hinders the movement of the enemy, which means that in each specific case where positions are fortified, i.e. the territory is fortified in a defensive, we must always start the survey by getting to know the qualities of the terrain.

9) Terrain and movement conditions

When we survey the terrain in terms of movement conditions, we must distinguish movement behind the firing line from the movement of the firing line itself.

We've already discussed the impact of the terrain on movement. All that can be added here is that the advance of the firing line is always difficult in the areas that are well visible from the enemy's aboveground vantage points, as the conditions for the cooperation of the enemy's artillery and automatic weapons in these areas are ideal. On the contrary, the advance of the firing line is faster in areas where fire superiority can be achieved, i.e. in areas that are well visible from our aboveground vantage points.

Looking at movement behind the firing line, we must keep two conditions in mind:

- the possibilities of movement off-roads; and
- the possibilities of concealing one's movement from the enemy on land and in the air.

The latter condition means that covered areas must be sought in order to conceal movement, using favourable weather conditions and often only moving at night. It must not be forgotten that when moving in the range of the enemy's artillery fire, one must avoid the areas that the enemy's artillery can easily gas with their fire.

10) Summary of terrain analysis

As casting light on the method of surveying the terrain has taken time, I must now prepare a summary of the above in order to better highlight the questions that such surveys must clarify for us.

A survey of the terrain must show us:

- the main lines of the terrain and the support points on these lines;
- the fire zones where automatic crossfire and mutual support are the most effective;
- the use of armoured vehicles and the conditions of fighting against them;
- the areas that are well visible from aboveground vantage points or protected from surveillance; – the same question from the viewpoint of the enemy;
- the use of air force and possibilities of hiding from aerial surveillance;
- the conditions of approaching the battlefield.

The three main factors of modern tactics have been considered in answering these questions:

- surveillance;
- flanking (fire); and
- movement.

These three factors must be studied in close connection with each other.

The method of surveying the terrain is as follows:

- general survey of the terrain; and then
- surveying the terrain from the obtained viewpoint.

The first question explains the main features of the terrain to us.

The second question is already studied from a certain perspective; it must explain to us the conditions of using weapons and movement in the direction determined with the mission.

V. Analysis of the Enemy

Knowing the enemy is one of the most important factors in a leader's creative decision-making process. The better the leader is informed of the situation concerning the enemy, the more freedom and assurance his mind has when making decisions.

Collecting information on the enemy and interpreting it is one of the hardest tasks of the leadership. We don't know the situation concerning the enemy synthetically, but we have a number of fragmented, incomplete and often contradictory messages, which are often inadequate when decisions have to be made. These messages must be transformed before they can be used. On the other hand, a leader never has enough information and communication measures to be informed fully, and without interruptions, of everything that might interest him. This means that a leader must manage the activities of his information collection bodies correctly from the very beginning.

The activities of the information collection bodies, no matter how well they are organised, never achieve definite and full knowledge of the enemy in a situation of war. The activities of these bodies only instruct the leader accurately about the distance that separates us from the enemy. However, the information they can give about the enemy's forces and their material preparedness for battle is only approximate. Upon the establishment of contact, it's often possible to obtain accurate information on the composition (units and types of forces) and division of the enemy's first line, but the situation concerning the strength and division of the enemy's reserves usually remains unknown or information about it is received late.

The incompleteness of the messages concerning the enemy's situation and activities never justifies inactivity. There is a rule in war: the will to build one's decision on complete and accurate information about the enemy results in delays or inactivity.

Transformation of the collected information, i.e. using it to create a picture of the enemy's situation, demands from the leader knowledge of the enemy's organisation and concept of military activities, skill, and the ability of concentration and imagination. In some people, this ability is better developed than in others, and there are people who don't have this ability at all. A couple of days after 17 April 1809, Napoleon said when assessing the leaders of the Austrians that "the participants in the game are not equal, as one of them (i.e. he) can see the other's game". These factors explain to young leaders the need to develop their ability of

concentration and imagination, but from older and more experienced leaders, they demand constant practice in order to not lose this ability.

So, what do we have to find out about the enemy to make decisions and lead activities?

First of all, we must ascertain the territory conquered by the enemy along the front and, in certain cases, in the depth.

Secondly, we must determine the strength of the elements with which we are in contact, i.e. we must clarify the nature of the contact for ourselves¹⁴, and do it with a battle if necessary.

Thirdly, as we establish contact and assess its nature, we must clarify whether the enemy forces in front of us belong to organisational units. We can obtain the information necessary for this from prisoners and the documents taken from them and found on the battlefield. Comparing the information obtained like this with the information collected in peacetime about the enemy's organisation, composition of units and armament, can give a clear overview of the forces of our enemy.

Fourthly, we must identify the nature of the enemy's activities and possibilities of development of these activities.

Having clarified these questions, it's time to assess the enemy according to the principle that it's not the intent of the enemy that's important, but one has to focus on one's own task and the resulting idea of a manoeuvre as the embodiment of one's intelligence and intent. Additionally, when the enemy forces are assessed, it must always be kept in mind that its forces are also a living body that needs to eat and sleep, that gets tired and is as variable as our own body.

Analysing the enemy is the most difficult and complicated question in the assessment of the entire situation. Only the leader has the competence to assess the situation in respect of the enemy; only the leader has an adequate overview of the entire situation.

Before we start studying this question in greater detail, let's stop briefly by the general principles on which the assessment of the situation in respect of the enemy must be based.

¹⁴ The nature of the contact means the strength of firepower and namely: is there a sparse or strong fire barrier in front of us; is this fire barrier continuous or fragmented, i.e. are the enemy's automatic weapons placed in sparse nests or is it a dense placement; is the enemy's automatic fire barrier supported by artillery fire and how; is the enemy's artillery fire barrier in front of us dense or just sparse. In addition to this, the nature of a contact is also characterised by another circumstance. If the break-in undertaken to clarify the nature of the contact and the subsequent rolling up of the enemy's front for expanding the breakthrough are easy, then it means we're dealing with the advance parties of the enemy. But if this attempt is difficult, then it means that we're facing stronger forces of the enemy.

First of all, an assessment of the situation in respect of the enemy must be free of prejudice.

The received information must be used to study the extent to which the enemy's activities can prevent us from achieving the goal assigned to us with the mission. Although the decision of the enemy is always unknown to us, we do the right thing when we presume that they act tactically correctly.

The overall nature of the enemy's activities may give us hints about their intentions first of all. This general activity only detects the part of the enemy's intention that is already being executed. However, to us it's more important to reveal and penetrate the enemy's intentions.

Constant monitoring of the changes in the enemy's general activities and studying their operating possibilities allow us to do this.

The operating possibilities of the enemy are based on the following:

- the division and positioning of the enemy's forces;
- the time the enemy needs for preparing their operations;
- the situation of the enemy's supplies and distance from the base;
- the qualities of the enemy's leaders and units;
- the terrain.

All of these elements must be analysed in minute detail, and then, using synthesis, hypotheses must be created regarding the possible activities of the enemy without any prejudice.

Consequently, a leader, when preparing an action plan before an operation, must imagine a hypothesis of the enemy's intentions without prejudice and, whilst never losing sight of his mission, foresee measures for obstructing the enemy in their intentions, if necessary, and ensure that irrespective of the obstacles thrown at us by the enemy, we can still complete our mission.

Let's now take a more detailed look at this question.

Above, we explained the need to determine the enemy's forces on the basis of the data at our disposal. Another, even more important question emerges when the enemy's forces are identified, namely how the enemy could use their forces, or in other words, what are their operating possibilities. It's understandable that we cannot expect to gain access to the enemy's secrets but try to determine this on the basis of external signs. This question in its turn divides in two sub-questions:

- 1) does the enemy want to go on the offensive, defensive or withdraw?
- 2) are the enemy's activities aimed at misleading us or are we dealing with their serious and true intentions?

Let's take a closer look at the first sub-question.

Does the enemy want to attack us, defend themselves or withdraw?

If they want to attack us, they will definitely move towards us, i.e. try to advance, move forward; if they want to defend themselves, they will stay put and wait for our offensive; if they want to avoid combat, they will withdraw.

These three facts – the enemy advancing, staying put or withdrawing – are what we call the general activities of the enemy. They are easy to observe. They express the actual intent of the enemy.

Let's now note the first observation of our analysis, i.e. the general activities of the enemy.

We already noted that the three aforementioned facts are expressions of the enemy's actual intent. Changes in the intentions of the enemy and their new intentions are expressed in the change of the general character of activities in the respective moment. For example, the enemy stopped in its advance, put their offensive on hold. This fact can be easily noticed; it speaks of some kind of change in the enemy's intentions and it's important to recognise this at the right time. The interpretation and assessment of this moment is an extremely delicate and significant matter. A detailed analysis of this moment is not a part of our task, we just wanted to show that any such change in the general nature of activities or even the smallest signs of this must draw the leader's most serious attention to themselves. The other sub-question in an offensive or defensive is expressed in the following dilemmas:

- 1) in the case of the enemy's offensive – are we facing the enemy's advance party or are we already dealing with the main forces;
- 2) in the case of action against an enemy on the defensive – are we dealing with their guard or their resistance.

Both of these dilemmas are not easy to solve in practice, because a certain course of action corresponds to each option. They form a conundrum that a leader must resolve when making a decision. However, no matter how difficult the question, the leader must still make some kind of a decision at the right time, must be able to choose one or another hypothesis and start executing activities accordingly.

Now, we can mention the second observation of our analysis, namely considering the nature of the contact and the hypothesis created according to this consideration.

Is the creation of such a hypothesis according to the existing and collected data necessary?

Yes, it is!

It's necessary, because a certain plan of using one's own forces corresponds to each such hypothesis. As we initiate activities according to the created hypothesis, we receive certain information and impressions about the enemy's resistance and the expression of their actual intentions. But that's not enough! We don't just need to know what is going on but foresee what might come.

The situation that must be considered when a decision is made must not be just the actual situation, but rather what it will be at the moment when the execution of the decision starts at full force for the achievement of the established goal. Only a clear understanding of the enemy's general activities and the possible developments of these activities form the correct basis for the creation of a hypothesis about the possible activities of the enemy. Creating a hypothesis about the enemy's activities is difficult, very delicate and full of perilous moments. If the leader does not keep a cool head, the hypothesis in his mind may easily transform into prejudice. A prejudice, however, is extremely dangerous; it develops into an *idée fixe*, and a leader under its influence cannot see anything other than things that are advantageous to his hypothesis.

Thus, every hypothesis is a double-edged sword, and in unskilled hands it does more bad than good. Nevertheless, the method of hypotheses must still be used in the assessment of situations, as there is no other option.

The method of hypotheses is not used in military practice alone. It's common in all experimental sciences and activities. It's a dangerous double-edged sword everywhere. No rules can be issued to regulate its use; it's comparable to diagnosing in the art of medicine. The perils of this method are known, but it's the main tool for the development of experimental sciences.

Using a hypothesis about the possible activities of the enemy, a leader must always keep the following in mind.

Every hypothesis is merely a tool for explaining the developing events. A hypothesis must be maintained for as long as it can be used to explain known facts; as soon as we cannot find an explanation, we must replace the hypothesis.

The value of a hypothesis is that it makes it easier to classify developing events and it draws our attention to the events that do not fit the initial hypothesis.

The following method can be recommended for the creation of a hypothesis. We write down all the enemy's activities known to us in chronological order in such a manner that we get a clear overview of the start of the enemy's activities. Every military operation is not a series of isolated consecutive activities, but a whole where every activity is related to another; this is why a detailed knowledge of the start of an operation can give valuable hints about the possible development

of the operation. Even late messages about this are often extremely important, as by representing the chronological order of the events, they can help us gain a clearer understanding of the enemy's activities and sometimes even cast new light on these activities. This chronological order of events, compared with the activities and counter-activities of the present moment, form the starting point of the hypothesis; the hypothesis itself is an achievement of the leader's imagination and consideration.

An action plan never gets executed from start to finish without any changes. Changes and corrections are natural, as the enemy also has their firm intentions. A leader must use the following method in order to make changes in his action plan at the right time. On the one hand, his assistants must carefully write down all events in chronological order to create a chain of events as they happened and on the other hand, the leader himself must have a clear vision of the possible development of his activities. However, whilst keeping in mind the chain of events in chronological order and his vision of the possible development of his own activities, the leader must compare the envisioned development of his activities with the actual development of activities. This will show him the obstacles to the execution of his will, which the enemy has put in his way. The best moments and conditions for the development of his will at the right time and in the right place will also become clear to him; the need for new information is also clarified and the leader receives hints for the orientation of his measures for the collection of information in order to receive new messages for the development of activities.

When completing the analysis of the enemy as a factor of the situation, it's necessary to draw attention to another circumstance brought to light by the World War that just ended.

The development of weapons technology delivered field guns with a large firing range and automatic weapons for the infantry as well as chemistry – smokeless gunpowder – by the start of the 20th century.

The consequence of both of these factors was the 'emptiness of battlefields' noted after the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War and the Balkan War of 1912. The development of aviation and radio was still in its early stages during these wars. The situation that developed was such that it was almost impossible to penetrate the enemy's intentions. The only measure was espionage, but it only worked very slowly in certain situations. It was impossible to find out when the enemy started executing their intentions in their rear and there was only one option in the case of an engagement – you could simply note the objects that the enemy captured and the strength of their firepower that they developed in the positions.

And that was it!

Anything that happened deeper to the enemy's rear – on the road network, the stimulation of their connections, i.e. the tension of their mental work – remained a secret and was covered with a thick veil of uncertainty. The World War, where the human race brought out the inventiveness of its best scientists and engineers and all of its gold reserves, laid the foundation for the rapid technological development in all areas. At present, the eyes of our aerial reconnaissance staff can see everywhere day or night and when the human eye is too weak to see, help is provided by the developed mechanical eye – the photo. Wireless communication measures developed to perfection; however, the measures to monitor their activities developed at the same time. The use of gases has also developed, and they can be used to turn territories dead for activities for a certain time.

The situation in the early 20th century was such that leaders were required and taught to decide about the enemy *a priori*; looking for and interpreting information for exposing the activities of the enemy tended to remain in the background. And this *a priori* decision-making went further than was necessary and natural.

Now, the situation has changed, and the leader has highly effective measures; he has planes with mechanical eyes that record everything – photos; people simply fly the planes where necessary and record the things that interest the higher-ranked leader. Radio goniometry and other measures allow the leader to observe the tension and excitement of the activities of the enemy's staff, i.e. they give the leader a clear image of the mental work of the enemy's leaders and often make it possible to expose it. Let's take a look at the status of leadership in the Napoleonic Wars once more. Again, the higher-ranked leader was able to survey the battlefield, if not with his own eyes then with a mechanical eye or the eyes of his assistants, and even if he couldn't see activity in one or another part of the battlefield, he would hear or feel the activity of the enemy's leaders. So, studying the situation to make a decision about the enemy has become an extremely important factor again. In the present day, a leader must be extremely interested in and diligently lead the activities of his information collection measures to acquire information about the enemy's activities and answer the question of how the enemy may prevent the execution of the task at hand. Modern technology has made it possible again, as it has turned battlefields into living, vivid images and the 'emptiness of battlefields' has disappeared.

VI. Summary of Assessment of the Elements of a Decision and a Decision

1) General principles

The above analyses of the elements of a situation clearly indicate that the situations in military activities are very diverse; we can definitely say that two situations that are exactly the same never occur in war.

The first conclusion can be drawn from here. Each decision must be made on its own; thinking inside the box is not an option. Each situation requires a special investigation and a corresponding decision. There are no templates or stencils that could be used for several situations in military practice.

The second conclusion. A skilled leader with extensive military experience can undoubtedly act empirically when making decisions and thereby achieve excellent decisions. However, the mind of this leader also takes a certain course, casting light on all of the questions discussed in this study; the difference is that he thinks quickly and firmly, and weighing his options has become intellectually automatic for him. However, it's a different story when a leader is young or when an older leader does not have enough real military experience. A certain method is the best ally for them; it gives them speed and certainty for mental activities and keeps them from forgetting one or another factor. It must be noted that proceeding from the intellectual point of view, a leader of mediocre ability must have a certain method in such a difficult practice as leading military activities. Methods can be different, but the principle is the same – a person of mediocre talent must act methodically.

The full decision-making process includes:

- studying the task;
- studying and assessment of the situation;
- decision-making; and
- expression of the decision – the order (the final decision for execution).

Before we take a closer look at the content of a decision, let's recall the content of the first two questions:

a) Studying the task must clarify:

- the nature of our activities in respect of the enemy;
- the specific limits of activities in time and space; the manoeuvre of the observed unit in the whole;
- special instructions or orders on methods of execution and use of the given measures.

b) Studying the situation includes an analysis of the following questions:

- one's own forces: the relative value of the forces (staff, material part, firepower), preparedness for the execution of the task;
- the terrain with the climatic and time conditions: the general nature of the terrain and the specific features of the relief; the properties of the terrain from the viewpoint of the task and the use of fire (vantage points, concealed areas, fire zones); the climatic and time conditions;
- the enemy (size of the enemy's forces and their actual firepower; nature of the enemy's activities; nature of contact; possible developments of the enemy's activities).

2) Synthesis of the situation

An analysis of the elements of the situation as described above must develop in the leader's mind in such a manner that it would allow the leader to draw simple conclusions about the task.

A synthesis of the first two elements of the situation (one's own forces and the terrain) is not difficult; a comparison of the data obtained from analysis must clarify the specific conditions determined with the task, namely:

- our specific strength in terms of fire (comparison of the number of automatic weapons and guns with the width of the front);
- conditions of a firefight in terms of the characteristics of the terrain (assessment of fire zones and comparison with the number of automatic weapons, conditions of surveillance and use of artillery fire);
- conditions of the activities and use of the staff (conditions of movement as observed in terms of the terrain, the moral and physical strength of the crew, leaders);
- conditions for organising anti-tank activities;
- conditions for use of the air force and the motor-mechanised troops;
- conditions of supply (supply with ammunition: how much is needed and how much we have; how to deliver ammunition during battle; supply with other items, conditions of feeding the crew, helping and evacuating the wounded, etc.).

The synthesis of the situation is not completed after the comparison of the specific conditions of activities with the data obtained from analysing the task. In order to develop a complete decision, it's necessary to make a summary (synthesis) of the data obtained from the analysis of the third element (the enemy).

In the mind of the leader, this summary of the third element must develop into a hypothesis about the possible activities of the enemy. This hypothesis is necessary for completing the development of the action plan. As noted above, creating a hypothesis is not easy; it demands a lot of caution to avoid the development of prejudice. However, the creation of a hypothesis for making the final decision is unavoidable. It's understandable that several hypotheses may develop in the leader's mind on the basis of the information obtained from analysing the enemy. It is a natural phenomenon. However, the leader must be able to select one of them according to the information obtained from assessing the terrain and the nature of the contact. A hypothesis must be selected because it's impossible to organise activities without it. For example, the arrangements and orders of battle, which are appropriate for contacting an enemy who is on the defensive, are not appropriate for use against an enemy on the move; arrangements and orders of battle, which should be taken in a situation when the nature of the contact has not developed yet are inappropriate in a situation where a firm and strong contact has already been established. This means that the leader must interpret the situation in respect of the enemy, must make assumptions about their activities based on the enemy's options, which are positively illustrated by the terrain, the enemy's forces, and the nature of the contact.

Once this has been done, the leader can start making the final decision.

3) Decision

The leader's decision must make it possible to execute the leader's intentions. The decision makes it possible for the staff to prepare orders. Whether verbal or written, it always consists of the following parts:

- a) impression of the enemy;
- b) idea of the manoeuvre;
- c) division and tasks of the forces;
- d) necessary intelligence data.

a. Impression of the enemy

Only the leader has the competence to assess the situation in respect of the enemy; only the leader has an adequate overview of the entire situation.

However, the situation concerning the enemy is never completely clear. There is only certain information about the enemy, their former activities are known, etc. This is why the leader, in order to make a decision, must create some kind of a hypothesis about the unknown element of the situation – the enemy. But that's

not all. The leader must also inform his subordinates about his assessment of the enemy.

Knowing the leader's hypothesis allows the subordinates to establish their own hypotheses about the enemy in the spirit of the leader and to develop their activities according to the will of the leader. A different assessment of an element of the decision inevitably results in decisions that differ from the leader's intentions.

b. Idea of the manoeuvre

The leading, guiding idea of a decision is usually defined in military activities as "the idea of a manoeuvre". It is the leader's guiding, underlying idea that embodies the leader's intelligence and intent. It only covers:

- the conquest or possession of a territory;
- the directions of efforts.

The idea of a manoeuvre may not be confused with the methods of execution – the latter are the outcomes of the idea of a manoeuvre, not the idea itself. However, it often happens that the underlying, guiding idea that embodies the leader's intelligence and intent in decisions, orders and commands – the idea of a manoeuvre – has either not been expressed clearly enough, is congested with the details of execution, or is missing altogether.

In the preparations of the leadership, the main emphasis should be placed on the ability to clearly express one's underlying, guiding idea in decisions, and in the orders and commands that embody the latter. If this has not been done in preparations, then it's impossible to highlight the idea of a manoeuvre clearly enough in difficult situations, which is what military activities are. This creates the kind of situation in leadership that paralyses the biggest guarantee of successful activities, the most important component of the morale of the leadership – initiative, and this results in subordinate leaders acting on their own initiative in rapidly changing situations, especially today.

In his study "Reasons of Victories and Collapses in War 1870", General Voide asks why the Germans, despite being outnumbered at decisive moments and the mistakes made by higher-ranked leaders, still managed to achieve a number of victories whilst the French kept losing. What was the key to the success of the Germans and what were the French lacking? In the case of the Germans, the key to success was the ability of subordinate leaders to act independently. So, what is needed to ensure that subordinate leaders are capable of initiative and acting independently? Is everyday underlining in letter and word enough? How do you raise, train and develop the requirements that "a good army is one where every

officer knows what he has to do in every situation; the best army is the one that's closest to this ideal".

A great military leader answered this question. He demanded that every soldier know his manoeuvre. How can we achieve this? How do you realise the main guarantee of success in military activities, which is that the conscious co-activity of subordinate leaders is also guaranteed in addition to skilful leadership? The only way this can be achieved is if the respective leader manages to communicate the outcome of his creation, the idea of a manoeuvre, to his subordinates clearly, figuratively and vividly. If the subordinates feel the guiding idea of the leader and are carried by his will, they will be able to add to it their own creation, intelligence and intent. This is how the morale of the leadership grows into an unbreakable, unwavering foundation for success. Not only constant reminders, but the actual implementation of these ideas trains and develops initiative and independence in subordinate leaders, disciplines and promotes the development and emergence of independent activities. This means that in all operational and tactical preparations, it's always necessary to demand that leaders of all ranks have an idea of the activities and they are also able to express this.

c. Division and tasks of the forces

The following must then be determined according to the idea of the manoeuvre:

- the division of forces and measures; and
- their tasks for activities.

The division of forces and measures must comply with the assigned task, the prescribed manner of operation and the conditions of the terrain.

It's impossible to be strong everywhere. This is why we must concentrate most of our forces and measures on the direction of our main effort at the expense of passive regions and efforts of secondary importance, so that we can achieve temporary superiority in the direction of our main effort and use it to destroy the enemy.

Contemporary orders of battle are layered in depth; reserves are positioned far away. The enemy has rapidly moving motor-mechanised units and an air force. Linking these orders of battle, paralysing the enemy's manoeuvring capability and pulling the reserves onto us in secondary directions of effort cannot be achieved in contemporary warfare with the measures that we used during the World War. For example, if a unit operating in the direction of a secondary effort manages to pull the enemy's motor-mechanised units onto itself, the enemy may easily reposition them in the direction of the main effort once they identify it. This is why stopping

the deeply layered forces of the enemy in the present day requires, above all and if possible, giving a lot more long-range artillery fire to the unit operating in the direction of the secondary effort and from there, the operation of a relatively strong air force.

The division of forces and measures is expressed in the realisation of the idea of a manoeuvre. There have been so many cases where a good idea of a manoeuvre is spoiled by a bad division of forces and measures. This is why a lot of attention must always be given to answering this question.

Tasks for activities. A task must not determine the manner of activities, but the goal to be achieved.

A task usually includes:

- the nature of the activities in respect of the enemy;
- the part of the subordinate unit in the entire manoeuvre;
- the limits of the activities in time and space (primarily the direction of activities, operating strips or sections, gradual signs);
- if necessary, specific requirements for methods of execution and use of measures.

Above, as we explained how to analyse a task, we took a closer look at the nature of the activities against the enemy, the part of a unit in the manoeuvre as a whole, the limits of activities in time and space, and the requirements for methods of execution and use of measures. I would like to add a few more words about the terms that define the limits of activities, direction of activities, operating strips or sections and gradual landmarks.

The direction of activities is of utmost importance; it determines the task on the terrain.

He shows the subordinate leader not only the point or the region that he must conquer or hold with his forces, but also the main direction of his attention, the axis on or around which the leader must manoeuvre with his main forces, and consequently the general positioning, the tasks and guidelines to the subordinate units, their operating strips and sections, and often their landmarks and method of activities upon contact with the enemy.

A direction of activities is determined as a result of thorough consideration, taking into account the enemy, the terrain and the forces at one's disposal.

The operating strip or section, as the name indicates, is the area of terrain where the leader uses his forces for the execution of the task.

The borders of an operating strip or section mainly depend on two circumstances: forwards, to give the units the battle front and terrain that they need

and that are more advantageous for the implementation of forces and measures upon the execution of the task; backwards, to give the units connecting roads for the performance of the manoeuvre.

The leader determines gradual landmarks for the subordinates, either because they represent the parts of the terrain that the leader wants to gain possession of, or in order to make it possible for himself to change his manoeuvre and order of battle behind these landmarks, reorganise his system of fire or to obstruct the enemy.

A landmark serves its purpose if it allows to conquer or hold a future battlefield in advantageous conditions, make the necessary changes in the order of battle or the system of fire in a satisfactory manner, and obstruct the enemy's activities during the time required for making the necessary changes.

How many landmarks must be determined? In each specific case, this depends on the possible changes in the situation that may occur during the activities, but also on the nature and size of the unit in question. The bigger and more important the changes may be, the closer the gradual landmarks must be to each other.

When gradual landmarks are determined, it must be kept in mind that a large number of landmarks makes the development of activities slow, but if the landmarks are too far apart from each other, we risk losing leadership in certain situations. This issue must be considered separately in each case.

It must be noted that when this part of the decision is finished, it must not only cover the tasks of the battle units, but the leader must also set tasks or, more accurately, requirements for the institutions and units responsible for supplies and evacuation. Success on the front depends on firepower and the moral and physical strength of the staff, but firepower and the morale and physical strength of the crew depend on the activities of the units responsible for supplies and evacuation. This clearly illustrates the importance of the appropriate organisation of supply and evacuation, and their management according to plan. Giving a detailed overview of this is not within the scope of this study. We must note here that when a leader makes a decision, he does not solve details, but sets requirements and gives general instructions for the organisation of supply and evacuation, and determines:

- the branches of supply and evacuation whose activities must be secured first of all; and
- the units whose requirements and needs must be satisfied first.

d. Necessary intelligence data

Finally, a leader must indicate in the decision the kind of additional intelligence data he needs for the realisation of his idea of a manoeuvre. The leader determines the objects, directions and regions whose data he needs and the deadline by

which he needs them. These reconnaissance tasks received from the leader are the basis on which the units organise reconnaissance and on which the bodies of the reconnaissance service (reconnaissance department, reconnaissance office, etc.) prepare the reconnaissance plan and organise the technological leadership of the collection of information.

4) Order

An order is the final verbal or written expression of a decision. Preparing an order in larger units is a task of the staff. Giving technical instructions for the preparation of an order is not in the scope of this study, but as this issue is extremely important, some aspects of the nature of an order must be noted here.

The indeterminate length of orders and commands often tends to prevail in peacetime operational and tactical preparations. However, one must not forget that the main virtue of a written order is its brevity.

The situation during peacetime schoolwork and some operational and tactical drills can be good for reading and studying long orders. However, this is not the case during military activities. Situations develop and change rapidly, the working conditions are far from good, time is more than limited and this is why a long order, a long command, becomes a scourge. It becomes a scourge for the leader's closest assistants, his staff, who tend to be late due to the complexity of their work. It is a massive scourge to the executors, who are in an even worse situation in terms of working conditions, as events develop even faster within the borders of their activities. It's an old truth that the speed of decision-making is particularly important for those ranked lower, as higher-ranked leaders have more time for the work of leadership. But you cannot make a decision if you haven't read the higher-ranked leader's long order and materialised it on the map or the terrain.

A purely psychological misconception also appears in the case of long orders and commands. The idea of a manoeuvre darkens and disappears in the details of long orders, and commands that attempt to explain everything in great detail. This is accompanied by the psychological perception of the subordinate leaders that they are not trusted enough when it comes to details.

This is why everything possible must be transferred to a scheme, such as action lines, strike directions, signs and placements, and the scheme must be enclosed with the command.

The idea of a manoeuvre, the division of forces and the tasks to subordinate leaders will remain the most important parts of an order. If maps can be enclosed with an order, it must be done whenever possible, because a subordinate leader

who receives the idea of a manoeuvre, the task and the forces, takes in the action lines, strike directions and placements on the map quickly and, more importantly, accurately. This method speeds up the work of the persons who give and receive an order. Let's try to imagine the work of the recipient of the order when an attempt is made to describe everything in the directive. In dire working conditions and often under the enemy's fire, he must start picturing everything concerning directions, signs, etc. on the map. How much misunderstanding, how many errors has this caused? All we need to do is recall the experiences of war. However, if a subordinate receives a clear and short idea of a manoeuvre, his task and forces from a higher-ranked leader and all other details are indicated on a map, he will have a lot more time for himself, for thinking about his task. What's particularly important here, however, is that the subordinate understands what is expected of him. How much does this facilitate the work of the assistants of the leader who gives the orders and ensures that the order is given on time! Schemes may and must be used if there are few maps or none at all, or the use of this method in peacetime preparations costs a lot.

Final Words

As I finish my work, I implore the reader to draw their attention once again to the following circumstances.

When making a decision, the leader's mind, depending on the character of the leader's spirit, can of course go down one or another path, but the questions discussed in this study remain unchanged, i.e. one or another method may be used, but none of the questions covered here may be forgotten or left unsolved, as otherwise the decision will not comply with the situation, as the number of surprises in the development of activities increases.

As I've noted above, a number of issues must be considered in decision-making, because the situation needs to be clarified. It must also be emphasised here that the questions and issues may not be solved individually on their own, but it must be done by comparing the circumstances clarified as a result of an analysis of the factors.

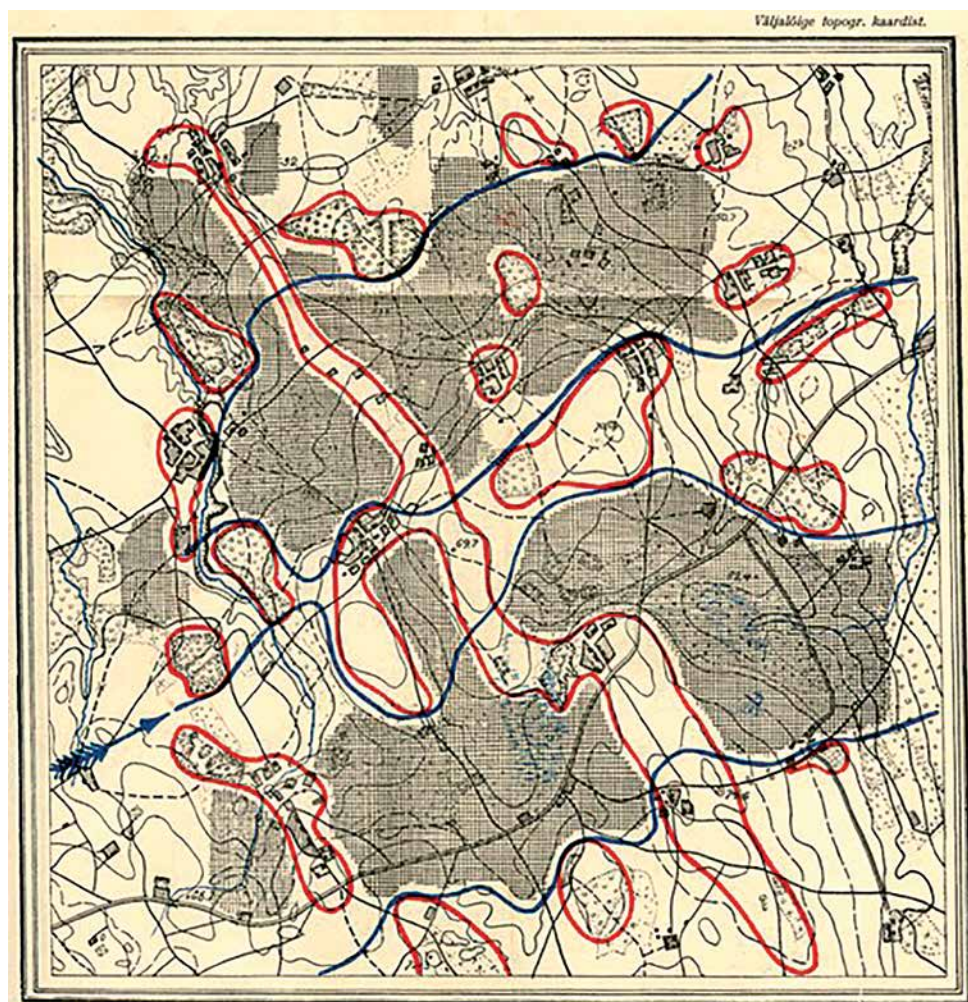
Decision-making is not a simple process. The speed of resolution depends on the leader's intellectual capabilities and military experience. It's not possible to grasp the situation as a whole without considering all of its elements, comparing the elements and identifying their relationships, i.e. an analysis must be carried out first, then a synthesis, and only then can the decision be made.

The ability to assess a situation quickly and correctly and make a decision that corresponds to it must be consistently developed with practical work and field exercises. Studying the activities of great leaders in past wars is a good roadmap in this.

We hope that this study achieves its goal and helps our young leaders in their preparations, especially in tactical exercises.

This hope is the biggest reward of this study.

Annex: Topographical Map





Lieutenant General Nikolai Reek as the Chief of the General Staff in 1939.



LTC Nikolai Reek (right) with commander of the Armoured Trains Division CPT Karl Parts (left) and commander of the 3rd Division MG Ernst Põdder (center) in 1919 during the Estonian War of Independence. Ropaži, Latvia.



The Battle of Cēsis was one of the most significant battles in the Estonian and Latvian Wars of Independence. The defeat of the German Landeswehr made it possible for Latvian forces to gain control of Riga and areas of western and central Latvia.

In this photo, we see Estonian and Latvian commanders together before the battles. The Northern Latvian Brigade was organized in Estonia, and this represents the first real military cooperation between Estonians and Latvians. After this, the units from the brigade saw action in the Battle of Cēsis. It is important to remember the joint efforts and cooperation between these small countries that paved the way for cooperation in the future.

In the centre of the photo in an overcoat is COL Jorģis Zemitāns, head of the Northern Latvian brigade and in the first row on the right is LTC Nikolai Reek.



Ruins of the main building of the Braslava manor (North-Latvia) during the War of Independence, after the manor was conquered by the Estonian 6th Infantry Regiment. Nikolai Reek is in the middle.



Estonian officers and soldiers posing on and beside the plane, which was shot down by 6th Infantry Regiment. Landeswehr reconnaissance plane shot down near Auciems manor and transported to Valmiera. Standing from the left: CPT Karl Parts (with binoculars) and LTC Nikolai Reek.



LTC Nikolai Reek (rear seat right) before driving to the front line. Next to him is Staff Adjutant 1LT Oskar Taft.



MG Johan Laidoner, Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Armed Forces, receiving a parade in Pskov. From the left: Chief of Staff of the Northwestern Army 2nd Brigade COL Stojakin, Commander of the Northwestern Army 2nd Brigade COL Stanislaw Stanislaw Bulak-Balachowicz, Commander of the Estonian Armored Division CPT Karl Parts, Estonian 3rd Division Commander MG Ernst Pödder (behind), MG Johan Laidoner (front), S. Bulak-Balachowicz Adjutant (behind Laidoner), 3rd Division Chief of Staff Lieutenant Colonel Nikolai Reek (behind Bulak-Balachowicz Adjutant), Estonian 5th Infantry Regiment Colonel Siegfried Pinding (front), Commander of the Estonian 2nd Division Colonel Viktor Puskar (front).



Minister of War MG Reek on manoeuvres with Latvian officers in 1927. First from the left is Latvian COL Kristaps Frickauss, Commander of the 7th Sigulda Infantry Regiment (1921–1935), then LTC Aleksandrs Orniņš, Battalion Commander of the same regiment, in the middle is LT Voldemārs Veiss. The first from the right is the commander of the 7th Estonian Infantry Regiment, COL Jaan Kruus. Petseri military camp, 12.07.1927.



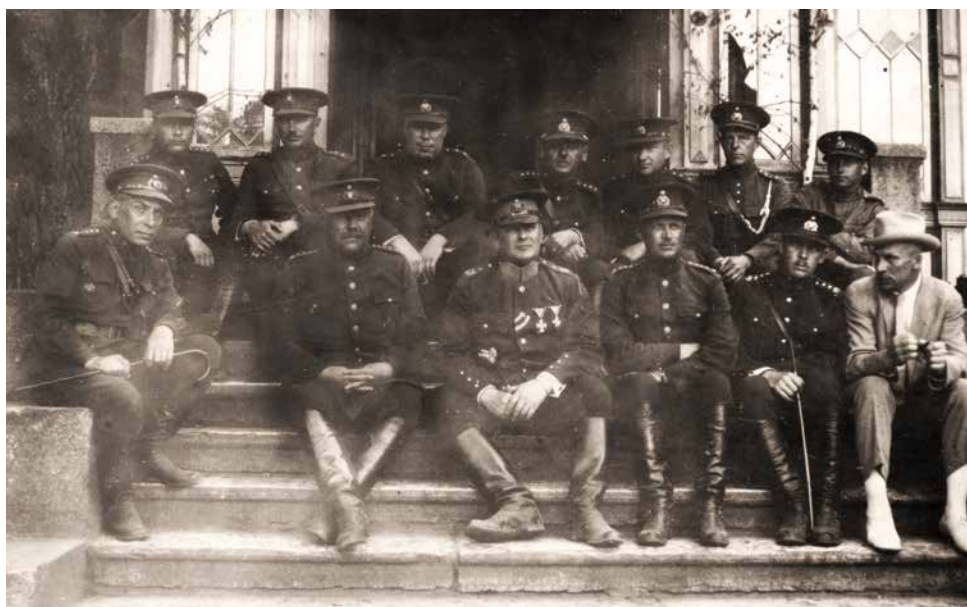
Nikolai Reek immediately after the Estonian War of Independence. It is noteworthy that he has a Imperial Nicholas Military Academy graduation mark on his chest.



Minister of War MG Nikolai Reek (centre) and Commander of the 7th Infantry Regiment COL J. Kruus (left) during the manoeuvres of the regiment.



Commander of the 2nd Division MG Reek with MJR Arthur Stewart-Cox (United Kingdom) during the Estonian army manoeuvres near Petseri in 1928. On the right is MG Paul-Adolf Lill.



MG Reek with artillery officers in front of Jägala manor in 1927. To the left of Reek is Commander of the 2nd Division Artillery COL Georg Feofanov and to the right is Commander of the 3rd Division Artillery LTC Jüri Hellat.

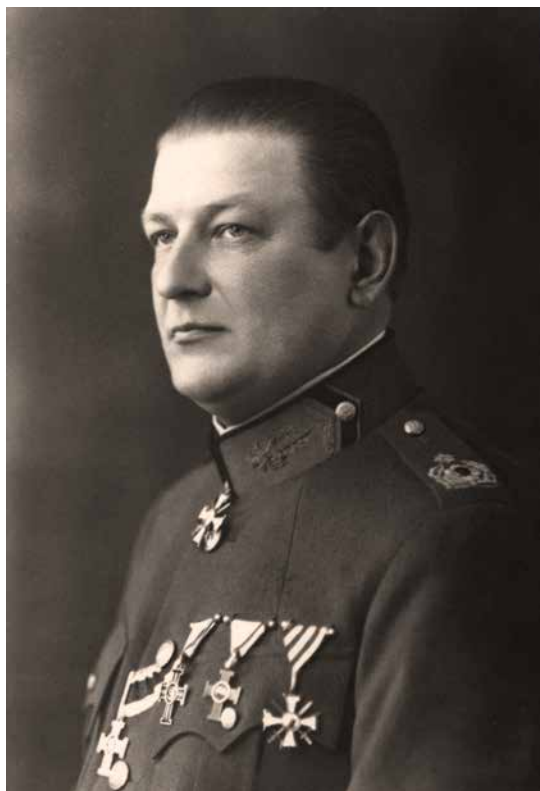


Members of the Board of the Estonian War of Independence History Committee: (from the left) MG Nikolai Reek, MG Jaan Soots (Chairman of the Committee), and Dr. Jüri Uluots, Professor of Law at the University of Tartu. The Estonian War of Independence History Committee operated from 1926 to 1940. The aim of this Committee was to thoroughly study the events related to the establishment of the Republic of Estonia and the War of Independence in 1917–1920. The two-volume “Estonian War of Independence 1918–1920” was published by the Committee. The Committee also intended to publish a scientific collection on the War of Independence, but this was not written due to the outbreak of World War II.



Members of the Estonian War of Independence History Committee: front row (left) MG Nikolai Reek, MG Jaan Soots, Prof. Jüri Uluots; in the back row from the right MG Aleksander Tõnisson, Prof. Hendrik Sepp, and LTC Mihkel Kattai.

Portrait of the newly appointed
Minister of War MG Nikolai Reek in
1927.



MG Reek inspecting courses for staff officers at the Estonian Military Academy in 1935.



The Commander of the 2nd Division, MG Nikolai Reek, inspecting participants of a field exercises in 1931.



Estonian Chief of the General Staff MG Nikolai Reek visited Finland in 1934. From left to right: MG Reek, COL Antero Svensson, and the Chief of the Finnish General Staff MG Lennart Oesch.



LTG Lennart Oesch (on the left) monitors the Estonian army military exercises in October 1938. He also held a meeting with the Estonian General Staff regarding top secret military co-operation between Finland and Estonia. MG Nikolai Reek stands second from the right.



The Chief of the General Staff of Estonian Military Nikolai Reek participates in Adolf Hitler's jubilee celebration, 20 April 1939.

PART II:
GENERAL NIKOLAI REEK
WRITINGS ON OPERATIONS

BACKGROUND OF NIKOLAI REEK'S MEMOIRS OF ESTONIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Andres Seene, PhD

In spring 1919, after the successful counteroffensives of the People's Army of Estonia and the enemy forced outside the borders of Estonia on the Viru front, Lieutenant Colonel Nikolai Reek was promoted from the position of regiment commander to the chief of staff of the 1st Division. At the time, the division headquarters had a considerable need for staff officers with suitable training and service experience. In late March 1919, the 3rd Division led by Major General Ernst Põdder (1879–1932) was formed on the basis of the former 2nd Brigade for better operational leadership of the troops on the Southern Front and Lieutenant Colonel Reek was appointed its chief of staff. The significant contribution of younger chiefs of staff, who had been trained at the general staff academy of the Russian era, was noticeable in the operational leadership of the units of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions in 1919.

Below are the memoirs of Reek during his finest hour as the commander in the position of the chief operating officer of the units of the 3rd Division in the operation against the Landeswehr in summer 1919 (the leader of the so-called Võnnu operation). Although it's known that Division Commander Põdder was in Valga at the time, where he organised the division's rear and delegated the operational leadership to Chief of Staff Reek, who was in Valmiera at the time, questions have arisen as to how exactly the division was led. Almost a decade after the publication of Reek's memoirs, the operational and tactical leadership of the same operation was studied on the basis of the sources that had become accessible at the time by Lieutenant Juhan Karise (1902–1942)¹, who was an external student in the Estonian Military College, and his conclusions correct General Reek's vision of this campaign. According to Karise, Reek assumed at the time that the enemy had more men in its armed forces than there actually were. As Karise's assessment of the forces indicates, the units of the People's Army of Estonia already outnumbered the enemy's forces in the conflict region in the initial

1 See **Juhan Karise**. Battle of Lemsalu-Roopa-Võnnu-Ronneburg (19–23 June 1919) from the viewpoint of operational and tactical leadership. Tallinn 1938. – Leaders and Leadership in the Estonian War of Independence 1918–1920. Compiled and edited by Andres Seene. Estonian Military Academy, 2010.

stages of the operation, and had almost doubled by the time the reserves arrived. Karise also raised the issue of how the operational leadership of the units of the 3rd Division was organised. Although the operational leadership of the division's forces was performed by the chief of staff of the 3rd Division and the division commander was organising the rear, Karise points out that there was a certain dualism of leadership in this operation. As the so-called Võnnu Task Force (3rd Infantry Regiment, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Latvian (Cēsis) Regiment) was directly subordinate to the operation's commander general (Reek), his attention was split between the division's general interests and the interests of the task force. The remaining forces of the division could be used with its commander's approval. The forces of the Armoured Train Division were not directly subordinate to the commander general of the operation. The Commander-in-Chief demanded cutting off the rear connections of the Landeswehr, and the 9th Infantry Regiment led by Lieutenant Colonel Johan Schmidt (1885–1931) set off to do that on the division's right wing on 21 and 22 June. However, the regiment's advance was temporarily stopped on Reek's command on 22 June in order to use its subunits to help the 6th Regiment near Straupe. Because of this, the enemy's withdrawal route was not cut off as ordered by Commander-in-Chief Johan Laidoner (1884–1953) and they retreated to new positions south of the Cēsis Region in the middle of the night, unnoticed by the 3rd Division.

It's obviously understandable that Reek, a rather arrogant officer according to the descriptions of his contemporaries, was not overly impartial in the descriptions of his activities. Irrespective of the criticism, the memoirs of Reek as a leader who participated in the events directly can be considered an important original source of information about the history of the conflict that had an impact on the shared history of Estonia and Latvia. Reek could study and use the memoirs of his opponent, Commander of the 6th German Reserve Corps General Rüdiger von der Goltz (*My Mission in Finland and the Baltic*, 1920²), which had been published by then. The conflict with the Landeswehr mobilised the Estonian society against the so-called historical enemy, i.e. the local Baltic German nobility, and created national excitement. Reek also describes the emergence and escalation of the conflict. It has to be noted here that a more impartial look has been taken at the events in contemporary Estonian historical science and the conclusion is that the general command of the People's Army of Estonia might have intentionally provoked the

2 **Rüdiger von der Goltz.** *Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum.* Leipzig, 1920.

conflict in northern Latvia.³ It must be said that the occupation of northern Latvia by the Estonian Army deteriorated relations with the local population and caused tension and distrust between Estonian and Latvian servicemen. Disputes regarding war debts and, as generally known, state borders lasted for a while. Extracts from his memoirs suggest that General Nikolai Reek was and remained somewhat prejudiced about his Latvian colleagues in the leadership of their armed forces. Later developments suggest that these, obviously mutual attitudes did not benefit the interests of either state or their people. And therein lies the most important lesson for us today – the capability to rise above one's own narrow interests for the benefit of broader strategic interests.

Reek's description of the operation can be regarded as a historical example of an operation at the level of a brigade, where the elements presented include the political level of the conflict, its escalation, and the progress of the ensuing classic manoeuvre warfare from the meeting engagement, defensive activities and a counteroffensive with a flanking manoeuvre.

The political side of the Cēsis operation can be regarded as an event of the anatomy of a relatively modern local military conflict. Both then and now, conflicts develop in multi-ethnic regions where nation-building is still ongoing and where many directly or indirectly related parties try to take advantage of the events in their interests, claiming that they have the legal rights to act on behalf of the local population in political and military issues. We can see that there are quite a few new situations similar to events that have occurred in the past.

3 **Ago Pajur.** Outbreak of the Landeswehr War: The Estonian Point of View. – Tuna. *Ajalookultuuri ajakiri* 2009, 2, pp 51–71.

BATTLE OF LIMBAŽI–STRAUPE–CĒSIS– RAUNA⁴ 19–23 June 1919

Notes and Memoirs⁵

Major General Nikolai Reek

Preface

Ten years ago, taking advantage of the favourable political and military events, we took the decisive step of declaring ourselves independent again.

But right from the start, we also had to defend our independence with weapons. The first years of our independence are years of hard battles and great efforts. The established young defence forces performed their duty with honour – they defended their homeland victoriously. The first years of our independence are heroic years, no less heroic than in ancient times – we were victorious in the War of Independence, but defeated in the ancient times. It's only natural that we recall some heroic pages of our War of Independence to mark its 10th anniversary. It's particularly necessary, since the history of the War of Independence has not been written yet. Work on this is ongoing. These are thoughts that inspired me to go through the notes made in 1920 on our fight with the Landeswehr again.

The fight with the Landeswehr is one of the biggest achievements of our defence forces. The most important episode of this fight is the Battle of Cēsis (Võnnu), or rather the Battle of Limbaži–Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna. It was one of the most important battles in the War of Independence. If we had been defeated in this battle, the consequences would probably have changed the destiny of our nation completely. In any case, our situation would've been extremely difficult if we'd failed to win and it's difficult to say how we would've overcome it. We

4 According to the Latvian and currently used toponymics, the title would be: (Lemsalu–Roopa–Võnnu–Ronneburg) Battle of Limbaži–Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna.

5 Initially published: *Sōdur* No 6/7/8 1928. Pp 139–181. In the original, lists of the members of the defence forces who received the Cross of Liberty or free land for the bravery demonstrated from 19 to 23 June 1919 or for their military service follow on pages 182–187. See the schemes referred to in the text at the end of the text.

won. We beat the backward element of the Baltics and opened the opportunities to successfully continue defending our state against the enemy in the east. In this fight, we also helped our neighbouring nation to its feet. It's therefore understandable that bringing back memories to the people who fought in the battle as well as introducing this important event in our War of Independence to the young generation is interesting.

There is another factor that speaks in favour of us recalling this battle and its most significant moment, the Battle of Võnnu, on the occasion of our Great Day. At the ceremony of the Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation, General Laidoner said in his speech:... "our people are very modest. Modesty is a virtue, but it can be harmful if taken to the extreme. The people of Latvia have turned the battle of Cēsis (Võnnu) into their national holiday. We, however, go past these events in silence..."

Events leading to the Battle of Limbaži–Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna

(See situation schemes no 1–4)

Voluntary military units of the Imperial Germans (*Reichsdeutsche*), Baltic German residents and Latvians emerged in Courland in early 1919 in order to fight against the Bolsheviks, and they had occupied Latvia alongside the City of Riga. These forces had assembled in three larger units: the Iron Division (initially the Iron Brigade), the Baltische Landeswehr and the Latvian volunteers. Other units had also been formed according to the memoirs of General Rüdiger von der Goltz, but I don't have any information about this. All of these units had been placed under the command of General von der Goltz on the request of the Baltic squires. In March, these military units launched their fight against the Bolsheviks under the leadership of General von der Goltz. In the middle of March, they conquered Jelgava. In addition to the German military power, the provisional government of Latvia, which had been formed in Riga in November 1918, was also operating in the part of Courland that had been liberated from the Bolsheviks. The head of the government was Kārlis Ulmanis. As Ulmanis did not support the politics of General von der Goltz, the latter regarded the Latvian government as his enemy and was waiting for the right moment to remove him. The Ulmanis government had no real force for defending its interests. The purely Latvian military units, which were initially led by Major Oskars Kalpaks and later by Colonel Jānis Balodis, were too weak to support the government's demands with force. Compulsory mobilisation of ethnically Latvian citizens had been prohibited by General von der Goltz.

General von der Goltz had received information about our successful operations on the southern front from the representative of our armed forces in Liepāja.

On 10 April, General von der Goltz contacted our general command with the proposal to join forces in the fight against the Bolsheviks. However, new events developed in Courland in the meantime. On 16 April, the stormtroopers of the Landeswehr arrested Dr Walters, the Interior Minister of Latvia, in Liepāja on the initiative of Baron Manteuffel. The other members of the government managed to escape. The Latvian companies were on the front at the time and could not obstruct the activities of the Landeswehr. The German-friendly representative of the Allies in Liepāja, US Colonel Warwick Greene, fully supported the politics of General Goltz, as General Goltz himself proves in his memoirs. A new government with Andrievs Niedra at the head was formed with the support of General Goltz instead of the Ulmanis government.

In early May, the general command of the German Army was informed via our representative in Liepāja that we were going to penetrate further in a southern direction. At first, we had to conquer Gulbene and then the Krustpils railway junctions to cut off the withdrawal route of the Red Army from the Riga–Cēsis–Limbaži region, or at least to force the Bolsheviks to rapidly withdraw from these regions.

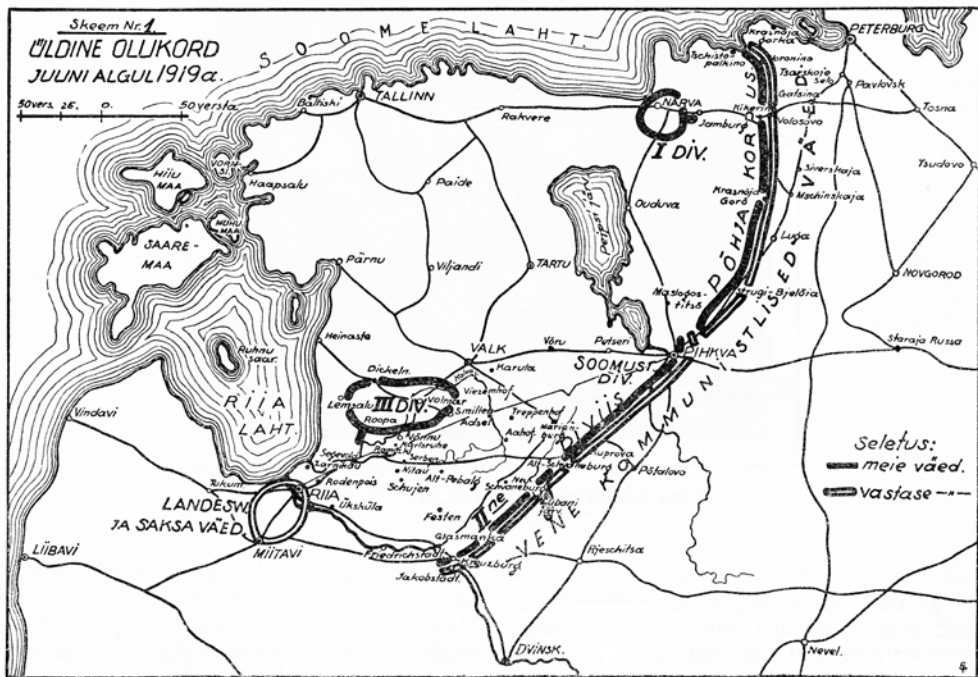
On 23 May, the units of General von der Goltz conquered Riga, and instead of chasing the retreating Bolsheviks the units headed north and northwest. This suggested that the element surrounding von der Goltz was beginning to execute its intentions – to occupy the entire Latvia.

On 30 May, the German Embassy in Liepāja asked the German Embassy in Helsinki to propose to the Estonian general staff to go against the Bolsheviks with the Landeswehr.

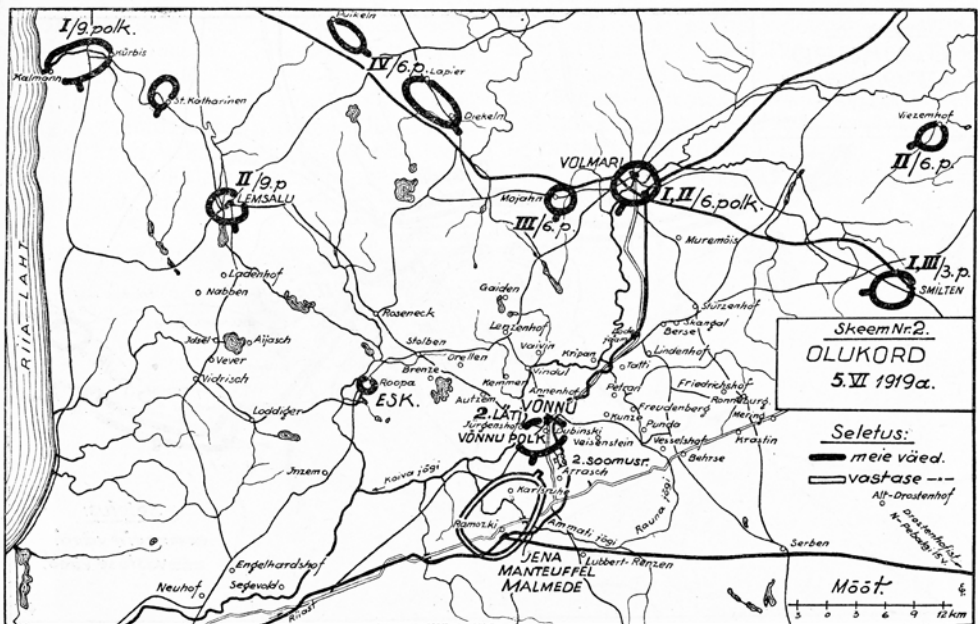
On 30 May, the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment conquered the city of Cēsis with the support of our defence forces. The Latvian Partisan Squad continued moving from Cēsis towards Vecpiebalga–Krustpils.

We let the Latvian units go ahead, because the Landeswehr and von der Goltz recognised the Niedra government as the legitimate government of Latvia and declared to the whole world that the Estonians were fighting against the Latvians and had advanced onto Latvian soil.

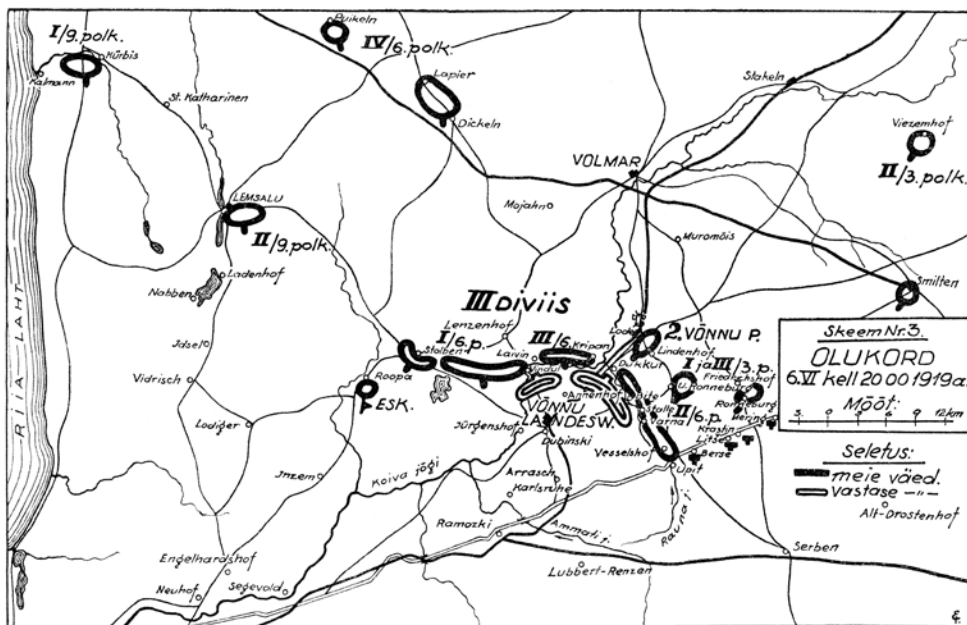
At 00:35 in the night of 2 June, the leadership of the 3rd Division received a directive from the Commander-in-Chief, which ordered the units of the 2nd Division to penetrate further in the direction of Gulbene–Krustpils with the 1st



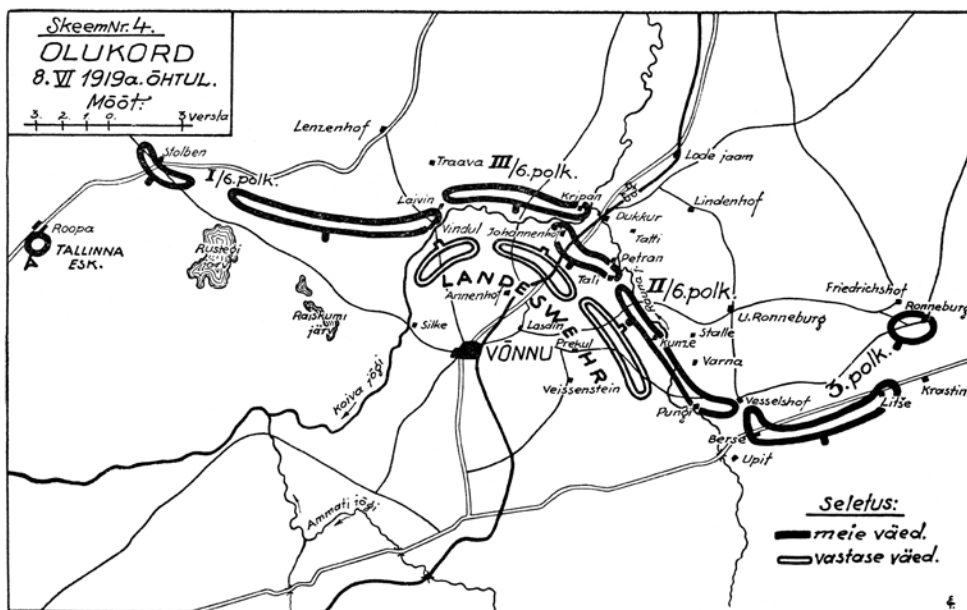
Scheme 1: General situation in early June 1919.



Scheme 2: Situation on 5 June.



Scheme 3: Situation on 6 June at 20.00.



Scheme 4: Situation on evening of 8 June.

Latvian Regiment in order to eliminate the Red Army in the territory of northern Latvia.

The 3rd Division was ordered to support this offensive by moving from Smiltene towards Krustpils.

The general task was to conquer Krustpils and fill it with White Latvians. The development of the plan of the offensive and the selection of the forces necessary for its execution had been assigned to the leadership of the divisions.

The leadership of the 3rd Division appointed the 3rd and 6th Infantry Regiments with Field Batteries No. 1, 3, 4 and 6, which were located in the Dikļi-Valmiera-Smiltene-Vijciems region at the time, to execute the directive. The division commander tasked me with leading the activities of the units.

The aforementioned units had to move towards Gostiņi across Dzērbene-Vecpiebalga-Vestiena to execute the task set in the directive of the Commander-in-Chief.

On 2 June, a telephone call was made from the staff of the Latvian brigade in Cēsis to tell us that the German units had arrived in Ieleriķi and there are messages that the Germans are moving north of Ieleriķi. This was also confirmed by the chief-of-staff of the Commander-in-Chief, who said that a train with Germans had arrived at Ieleriķi. The progress of this train was stopped by our armoured trains.

The leadership of the Landeswehr promised to send an officer to Cēsis on 3 June to clarify the situation.

On 3 June, Colonel Jorgis Zemitāns reported from Cēsis that the units of the Landeswehr and the Germans were moving from Riga in four column formations: the first to Krustpils, the second to Lubāna, the third along the Riga-Pskov road and the fourth towards Straupe-Valmiera. Other messages on the movement of the smaller cavalry troops of the Germans were also received on the same day.

The serious plans of the Landeswehr – to advance into Estonia – were known to us through our army representative, who lived in Liepāja at the time and later in Riga.

On 5 June, the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief reported that the staff of Colonel Balodis was based in Riga, the Latvian cavalry in Carnikava by the Gulf of Riga; southeast of the latter up to Ikšķile (Ūkskūla) – the Landeswehr and the Iron Division. The Germans had allegedly banned Balodis from moving north. The size of Balodis's units was allegedly 333 officers, 360 non-commissioned officers, 1,500 bayonets and 120 swords with 20 machine guns and 44 light machine guns. Mobilisation was allegedly under way in Riga. The situation between Balodis's

units and the Landeswehr was tense. The forces of the Landeswehr and the Iron Division were 12,000 to 15,000 bayonets and swords.

The situation between us and the Landeswehr obviously threatened to escalate into a military conflict, because the Landeswehr demanded on behalf of the Niedra government, which it regarded as the legitimate government of Latvia, that our troops leave Latvia. There was no way our general command could comply with this demand, if only for the reason that we had to protect the front against the Bolsheviks up to Krustpils at the request of the Allies. In order to protect this front, we had to have access to the Ieriķi–Gulbene railway as an important communication line with the rear of the front.

This situation forced me to give an order to my column (6th and 3rd Regiments with batteries) and the 9th Regiment (to the latter on behalf of the division commander) at 08:40 on 3 June, in which I demanded that surveillance and reconnaissance must be strengthened. My order was that if the Germans attempted to approach, our categorical demand to them would be to not come closer to our positions than 15 versts and if they failed to comply with this, to use force.

A similar political and strategic situation had forced the general command to change the directive for the 3rd Division on 2 June.

On 3 June at 17:55, the leadership of the 3rd Division received a new directive from the Commander-in-Chief, where it was ordered to gain full control of the Ieriķi–Gulbene railway. It was noted in the directive that we do not need the Germans north of the line – the Gauja River, from the Gulf of Riga to Sigulda, from there to Nītaure–Vecpiebalga–Jaungulbene – and we shouldn't therefore let them cross this line. The Commander-in-Chief, acting in accordance with the directive of the Government of the Republic, ordered to only support the Latvian troops that recognised the provisional government of Ulmanis in Latvia. This directive was immediately followed by an additional directive in which the Commander-in-Chief pointed out to us that in order to continue fighting against the Bolsheviks in the direction of Gulbene–Krustpils, we needed a broad-gauge railway connection from Valga to Gulbene, which is why the general command had ordered the armoured trains to immediately take control of the Ieriķi. The Commander-in-Chief noted categorically that he cannot allow the Germans or the Landeswehr to penetrate Ieriķi and the aforementioned railway area.

At 18:05, this directive was followed by the order with which I was authorised to explain the situation between the Estonian Defence Forces and the Landeswehr and I left Cēsis on the same day to comply with the order.

The negotiator promised by the Landeswehr did not turn up in Cēsis on 3 June.

I arrived in Cēsis at 23:30 in the night of 3 and 4 June.

When I arrived in Cēsis, I received new messages on the movement of the Landeswehr, which confirmed the previous messages. Colonel Zemitāns explained to me that the German troops, which did not recognise the Latvian government of Ulmanis, were operating south of Cēsis and that he had asked the units of Colonel Balodis to join his (Zemitāns's) units.

As I was the representative of the Commander-in-Chief and familiar with the situation, I telegraphed the Commander of the Baltische Landeswehr, German Major Fletcher, for the execution of the directives and demanded that the units of the Landeswehr move themselves behind the line of the Gauja River, the Gulf of Riga to Sigulda, Nītaure–Vecpiebalga–Gulbene in 12 hours in order to prevent serious incidents until the situation is clarified.

I sent copies of the telegram to the leaders of the nearest German troops, Captain Manteuffel and Captain Jena. I also asked to be informed of the arrangements made.

On 4 June at 09:50, a message arrived from Lieutenant Colonel Voldemārs Ozols that a delegation was going to set off from the German General Staff in Riga in order to establish communication.

On 4 June at 12:50, a directive was received from the Commander-in-Chief, which included the order to inform the Landeswehr units that if they wanted to fight the Bolsheviks, they should turn east, because there were no Reds north of the line from the Gauja River to Sigulda and farther towards Nītaure–Gulbene. The Commander-in-Chief emphasised that the Landeswehr had so far been working against us everywhere and demanded that there shouldn't be a single Landeswehr man north of said line.

This message of the Commander-in-Chief to the Landeswehr that there were no Reds north of the Gauja River–Sigulda–Nītaure–Gulbene line was the response to the fact that von der Goltz and the backward element around him had called us the Reds in front of the whole world and the Allies.

The demand of the general command was particularly important because our operation in the direction of Krustpils was still ongoing and we needed the Ieriķi railway junction and the broad-gauge Ieriķi–Gulbene railway as a communication line.

Late at night on 4 June, at 23:00, German Lieutenant Schiemann and von Sievers, who was dressed as a Russian officer, arrived from Riga to Cēsis. They were not authorised to negotiate.

I asked the gentlemen to go back to fetch their authorisations and also gave them the following letter no 710 of 5 June 1919, to be delivered to the commander of the Landeswehr: ... *"I, the representative of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Republic of Estonia, Colonel Reek of the General Staff, sent a request to the Commander of the Baltische Landeswehr in my letter no 705 of 4 June this year, asking him to move the Landeswehr troops behind the Gauja River–Sigulda–Nītaure–Vecpiebalga–Gulbene line determined by the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Republic of Estonia. The deadline for responding to the letter expired at 24:00 on 4 June. I have still not received a response from the Commander of the Baltische Landeswehr, either in writing or through persons authorised to do this.*

If the German or Baltische Landeswehr troops are still seen north of said line at 12:00 on 5 June, they will be treated as enemy units. In order to initiate negotiations, please send over representatives with the required authorisations after the German and Baltische Landeswehr has moved behind the determined line..."

I also added another letter to the first one:

... *"I as the representative of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Republic of Estonia, hereby protest against the activities of the Baltische Landeswehr, which is penetrating northern Latvia, shooting people and sacking the country. I protest against shooting the employees of the local Latvian Commandant's Office, the destruction of the Ieriķi Station and the beating of local residents. I inform you that the North Latvian Brigade under the leadership of Colonel Zemitāns belongs under the leadership of the Estonian Army and a mobilisation has been carried out in northern Latvia with the consent of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Republic of Estonia and the provisional government of Ulmanis, which is why the prohibition of additional mobilisation is a violation of the rights of the Ulmanis government and the Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian armed forces."*

The last letter was written as a result of the message of Colonel Zemitāns that the men of the Landeswehr were killing, sacking and beating, and that mobilisation in northern Latvia was prohibited on behalf of the Niedra government with the order given by Major Fletcher to "the Latvian people".

The deadline by which the Landeswehr had to finish its movement behind the determined line lapsed at 12:00 on 5 June.

No messages on compliance with the orders of the Estonian Commander-in-Chief by the Landeswehr were received by this time.

In order to check on site whether the Germans had left Ieriķi, I boarded armoured trains N2 and N4 to Ieriķi at 13:45.

At the moment of departure, I was informed that the railway between Cēsis and Ieriķi had been destroyed. At the same time, I was informed by telephone that the entourage of the Commander of the Landeswehr, Major Fletcher, had left Riga for Cēsis by car and he was requesting a meeting near Āraiši. I replied by telephone to Ieriķi, from where I was informed about the entourage and that there were not going to be any negotiations before the Landeswehr has left Ieriķi.

This response complied with the directives of the Commander-in-Chief.

The representative of America, who had travelled to Cēsis to find out what the political situation was like, wanted to travel with me. I was pleased to satisfy his request.

As the infantry units placed under my command were located north of Cēsis, which meant that no support was coming their way, it was necessary to secure the movement of the trains from the rear as well. For this purpose, Captain Jaan Lepp divided the armoured trains into four groups: the assault unit of armoured train N2 moved in the front, followed by the landing crew of armoured train N4 and the landing crews of both armoured trains with a marine gun 1/4 versts behind it.

At the crossing on the Riga-Pskov stone road, we saw a guard in German uniform, who ran away when he saw us.

About 4–5 versts from the Amata bridge, I stopped the train and ordered Captain Jaan Lepp to send out scouts to check the bridge.

At 19:00, the Germans opened fire at our scouts, who had got to the bridge by that time, from the forest on the other side of the bridge.

A quarter of an hour later, the German formations came out of the nearby forest and started encircling the landing platoon of the armoured train. I ordered Captain Lepp to open fire at the enemy. After the Germans had been fought off and the scouts, who'd had a second engagement with the Landeswehr where Deputy Officer Kontus was killed, were picked up by the train, I travelled back to Cēsis.

This event was a clear sign of the hostility of the Landeswehr.

I got back to Võnnu at 20:00, where I found the following letter waiting for me:

"To the representative of the Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian armed forces.

The response of the Commander-in-Chief of the Landeswehr to the demand of the Estonian Commander-in-Chief and the conditions on which the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers would agree to hold negotiations with the Estonian Commander-in-Chief, have

been written down and will be handed over to the authorised person at Ieriķi Manor at 8 pm (at 20:00) of 5 June. The representative can travel to Cēsis by the Ieriķi stone road. When approaching the leading element of our forces, he must have a white scarf in his hand. If nobody turns up to collect the letter at 08:00 on 5 June, we will conclude that the Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian armed forces is not interested in our conditions and we will therefore be taking the necessary measures. Representative of the Prime Minister of Latvia and the Landeswehr Julius Schiemann. At 12:00 on 5 June 1919."

After the incident near the Amata bridge, there was no way I could've gone to the "Latvian Cabinet of Ministers" in Ieriķi to collect the written conditions, because the leadership of the Landeswehr failed to comply with the categorical demand of our Commander-in-Chief – to withdraw behind the aforementioned line – by the deadline determined by me.

I reported all this to the Commander-in-Chief.

In response to my report, I received the directive of the Commander-in-Chief at 21:40 in the evening, where he emphasised again that we must gain control of the Ieriķi railway junction and the Ieriķi–Gulbene railway line, because it would otherwise be impossible for the units of the 2nd Division to fight bravely and strongly against the Bolsheviks near Krustpils. In order to execute this task, the Commander-in-Chief authorised the leadership of the 3rd Division to take any measures necessary, including immediate military action. The Commander-in-Chief's order was to do all this cautiously, but firmly, and put the biggest emphasis on the communication so that none of the individual units would be defeated by the enemy. We were also ordered to look for connections with the units of Balodis.

On the night of 5 and 6 June, the leadership of the 3rd Division ordered the launch of military activities against the Landeswehr troops after the engagement on 5 June in order to execute the directive of the Commander-in-Chief.

At 03:30 in the night of 5 and 6 June, the Landeswehr units launched an offensive on Cēsis with the support of artillery fire, attacking the city on two sides. The leadership of the 3rd Division received the message about the German offensive on Cēsis at 11:10. Put under pressure by the enemy, the units of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment quickly withdrew from the city at 15:00 whilst the Germans managed to surround our armoured trains, which were standing south of Cēsis, and destroy the railways behind them. After the railroad was bravely repaired whilst under fire, the armoured trains managed to get themselves out of danger and retreated behind the Rauna River. The enemy units, which had attacked the armoured trains, suffered great losses under our fire. The leadership of the 3rd Division received the news that the city of Cēsis had fallen at 19:00. The

message was late, because communication with the Latvians had been broken and the armoured trains were not under the command of the division leadership.

After receiving news of the Landeswehr's offensive and taking to the division commander, I ordered all the units under my command to quickly execute all orders and move towards the advancing enemy.

The directive of the Commander-in-Chief, with which the armoured trains operating under Ieriķi and the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment went under the leadership of the 3rd Division, was received at 13:25. The order to gain control of the Ieriķi junction was given in the same directive. The 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment was also placed under my command by the division commander.

Due to the lack of space and time, I cannot describe the first battles with the Landeswehr in detail. They were very interesting, but the purpose of this paper is to describe the Battle of Cēsis. Therefore, a brief description of these events.

By the moment of the Landeswehr's offensive, the 6th and 3rd Regiments and their batteries under my command were positioned on a wide front, one to two days' journey from Cēsis. 6 and 7 June were spent in movement, assembly and creation of communication, and by the evening of 7 June we were ready for the offensive. On 8 June, the units of the 6th Regiment and armoured trains started the offensive to take Cēsis. This offensive was unsuccessful, mainly due to the weakness of communication with the 3rd Regiment. The 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment did not participate in this offensive. It was in the Liepa Manor, recovering after the strike it had sustained. The light battery of this regiment supported the activities of the 6th Regiment with its fire. On 10 June, I intended to continue with the offensive, but the enemy got ahead of me and the offensive against the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment started at 02:00 on 9 June. It was a foggy night. The enemy forced the battalion to leave its positions. They advanced up to the Rauna bridge and put the assault units of the armoured trains in a very precarious position. The crew of our 4th battery (the old 3.43-inch guns of 1895) abandoned the battery. After learning about this, I categorically ordered the commander of the 6th Regiment to regain the positions and bring out the battery. In the meantime, the situation of the armoured trains became even more precarious. However, the assault units of the armoured trains bravely went on the attack, regained control of the bridge and got out again. The units of the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment brought out the guns. The battalion got in new positions behind the Rauna River. The Rauna bridge remained between the two lines. During the day, the enemy made several attempts to break through the new front on the Rauna River but failed each time.

The following telegram signed by the Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief arrived in the morning of 9 June:

"The English, American and French representatives want to negotiate with the commander of the Landeswehr and ordered the English representative to go to Cēsis via Riga in addition to the commander of the Landeswehr. I sent these representatives out by special train today at 09:00. Colonel Jaan Rink will travel with them as our representative. When they get to you, have them continue their journey by car, which I will send to you. I will also ask Colonel Zemitāns to send his representative and urge the Allies to allow him to join the negotiations as well."

This telegram was followed by another one in the evening:

"Please inform our leading element that when people come from Cēsis who carry white and English or American flags, they must be allowed through to meet the committee where Colonel Rink is."

In the evening, when it was already dark, the representatives of the Allies and Lieutenant Colonel Jaan Rink went to Valmiera and from there by car to Cēsis. At night, the representatives returned and at 04:30 on 10 June, the Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian armed forces announced that an armistice had been made and that the negotiations in Cēsis will continue.

The first battles under Cēsis on 8 and 9 June can be called battles of the vanguards, where both sides were checking each other out. Our offensive on 8 June failed, but Landeswehr's also failed on the next day. These battles also revealed that we were technically better equipped than the Landeswehr. The main reason why our offensive on 8 June failed was the lack of communication between the units. Also, the enemy was stronger than the Reds in terms of skill and resistance.

The time of the armistice is very interesting, mostly from the political point of view. The committee of the Allies made every effort to prevent any major fighting and to use the Landeswehr in the activities against the Reds. The negotiations on 10 June brought no clarity or solutions.

Irrespective of the armistice, the enemy carried out aerial reconnaissance in the region of the 6th Regiment on 10 June.

This forced me to issue orders for strengthening surveillance and being ready for battle. I also categorically prohibited any contact with the German soldiers and the other persons in the Landeswehr forces.

On 11 June, another directive of the Commander-in-Chief arrived: *"Although negotiations on the southern front are ongoing and an armistice has been made, I point out that our troops must be ready to launch military action against the Landeswehr momentarily at any time when I give the respective command. We cannot let the Landeswehr, which is*

hostile towards us, go to northern Latvia. I insist that the Landeswehr must withdraw south of the Gauja River on the Sigulda–Nītaure–Vecpiebalga and Jaungulbene line. The chairman of the representatives of the Allies certainly supports the same demands in this matter.”

The Commander-in-Chief of the German armed forces was also sent the following telegram by our general command: *“For as long as the Landeswehr, which you command, does not end its military activities under Cēsis against the Estonian-Latvian armed forces under my command, any negotiations of a joint fight against the Reds will be impossible. For as long as the Estonian and Latvian troops under my command are fighting against the Red Army on the Krustpils and Alūksne line on the border of Latvia, I am also forced to secure my rear, i.e. northern Latvia. Armoured trains are essential for defending the Krustpils–Gulbene line and move towards Pytalovo. They can only be sent via Ieriķi, as the Valka–Alūksne railway is narrow-gauge.”*

The new negotiations with the Landeswehr were supposed to take place on 13 June. Lieutenant Colonel Rink of the general staff was appointed our representative. During these negotiations, the commander of the Landeswehr Major Fletcher explained that he was not a subordinate of General von der Goltz and that the demands of General Hubert Gough did not concern him, and he was not going to comply with the orders of the English general without the consent of the Niedra government, so he asks for the negotiations to be postponed so that he could go to Riga and speak to the Niedra government.

The armistice was extended during these negotiations.

On the same day, the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief reported that the following telegram had been received from General von der Goltz: *“According to the information known to us, the Commander-in-Chief (read – Colonel Zemītāns. N. R.) is using a large number of the Reds in the fight against the Landeswehr, i.e. the German armed forces, in Northern Livonia and this is why I have to regard his units as the Reds, i.e. my enemies, and act accordingly.”*

As the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief informed us of this, he added: *“Based on this telegram, we can expect an offensive from the German troops and the Landeswehr at any time.”*

The new directive of the Commander-in-Chief arrived at 15:15 on 17 June and read as follows: *“The final negotiations of whether there will be war or peace with the Landeswehr will be held in Valga on Friday, 20 June. Until then, the armistice will have to last.”*

This was followed by the next telegram from the commander of the Administration of the General Staff, which was addressed to me: *“The armistice*

between us and the Landeswehr is ongoing. The next negotiations between our representative and the Landeswehr will be held at 12:00 on 20 June in Valga. Make the arrangements, so that a private train (a locomotive with a carriage) will be ready at 03:00 on 20 June at the Lõde station to bring the representative of the Landeswehr to Valga and that rooms suitable for the negotiations are ready in Valga."

However, the mood in the Landeswehr seemed to be different, as indicated by the radio of Major Fletcher: *"As the Reds are threatening Latvia again, I now demand, on behalf of the Government of Latvia (read – the Niedra government, N. R.) immediate consent for emptying Latvia, as suggested by the Allies in Cēsis on 10 June. This is the only way we can keep Bolshevism out of Latvia. This is the only way we can act. I will be waiting for a response until noon on 18 June. In the case of rejection or non-compliance, the Government of Latvia reserves the right to act at its own discretion."*

This radiogram revealed that:

1) Major Fletcher was speaking on behalf of the Niedra government as the commander of the troops of this government. However, our government did not recognise the Niedra government;

2) it was clear that Major Fletcher was ignoring General Gough completely and this suggested that the negotiations planned for 20 June in Valga were not going to happen;

3) the radiogram could be interpreted as an open declaration of war on our government.

A similar view was also held by our general command, who responded as follows: *"You radio no 25 has been received. Until now, the Estonian-Latvian troops under my command have defended the border of Latvia against the Reds. I advise you to send your Landeswehr from Cēsis, where you have no reason to fear the Reds, to Krustpils near the border of Latvia where to fight the Reds."*

On 18 June, our general command and General Gough received another radio from Major Fletcher: *"Sending the troops to the Krustpils–Lake Lubāna front is impossible before the Estonians have started emptying from Latvia. The Landeswehr categorically demands quick action so that the liberation effort made thus far would not be completely destroyed. I have to regard the compulsory mobilisation carried out under the defence of Estonia in northern Latvia and the acceptance of members of the Red Guard to the army as a hostile activity, because it increases the danger. Negotiations with the Latvian government are currently possible only on the following conditions: 1) full agreement with the proposal made by the Allies in Cēsis on 10 June. The current Estonian front must be fully moved back by 10 km at 08:00 on 19 June. The technical aspects of the further emptying of Latvia and the proposal of the Allies made on 10 June must be negotiated with*

me on the same day at 18:00 in Cēsis; 2) the full consent of the Estonian general command to this proposal must be delivered to me by 22:00 on 18 June. Otherwise, the armistice will be terminated by me on 19 June."

The directive of the Commander-in-Chief was received at 20:40 on 18 June and it read: *"We cannot back down on our demands. We cannot allow the hostile Landeswehr to move to northern Latvia, behind our troops. This is why I order all of our troops to be ready on the southern front for the moment when the Landeswehr terminates the armistice and initiates military activities, so we can respond to them with military force."*

In addition to this directive, another one was received at 22:00 in the same evening: *"We must be ready at all times for the Landeswehr calling off the armistice and attacking us. We will not initiate military activities. However, if the enemy does, don't forget that the Landeswehr, i.e. the Baltic barons, are our bitter enemies against whom we must defend ourselves with all our might. The Landeswehr is well equipped, which means we must be cautious with them. Don't forget that advancing further is the best defence. So, don't hold back!"*

This is a brief description of how the political events unfolded.

On 10 June, we received confirmed messages from reconnaissance and local residents that the Landeswehr was assembling its forces and relocating. The surveillance units informed us about the moves of the Landeswehr's reconnaissance patrols. The Landeswehr tried to establish contact with the command of the Russian Northwestern Army. On 11 June at 18:00, the enemy was performing aerial reconnaissance. All of these messages, which told us that the Landeswehr was preparing for military action, were passed on to the general command and, on the other hand, precautions were taken and the reserves of the division were moved closer.

On 15 June at 21:00, the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief telegraphed: *... "This is why I order, on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief, to keep all units in the front ready for battle and group them in a manner that is the most beneficial for their activities."*

In my report to the division commander on 11 June, I emphasised that our forces operating against the Landeswehr are weak in numbers and asked the general command to create a stronger reserve.

This claim was later confirmed in the directive of the general command.

On 17 June at 13:30, the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief telegraphed the commander of the 2nd Division that, in light of the important task the 2nd Division had been assigned, it's necessary to strengthen it with the addition of artillery and the 2nd and 5th Batteries of the 3rd Artillery Regiment therefore had to be returned to the 3rd Division.

The 2nd Battery (two 6-inch guns) arrived at the front fighting against the Landeswehr with the Kuperjanov Battalion and stayed with them until the end.

The 5th Battery didn't show up at all.

On 18 June at 20:30, we received the directive of the Commander-in-Chief which ordered the command of the armoured trains to help the 3rd Division with as many forces as possible, and the command of the 2nd Division to give the 3rd Division no less than one infantry and two cavalry regiments with batteries for assistance as soon as the Landeswehr launches military action. In the same directive, the command of the 1st Division was ordered to send the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment with a battery to the Commander-in-Chief's reserve in Valga at 12:00 on 18 June.

The following of the units specified in this directive arrived to assist the 3rd Division during the Battle of Cēsis: 1) Kuperjanov Battalion with the 2nd Battery on 21 June at 06:00; 2) the Battalion of *Kalevlaste Malev* on 22 June at 03:00; 3) Armoured Train N2 on 22 June; 4) two armoured cars *Estonia* and *Toonela* on 21 June at 10:00. Both battalions and the armoured train became immediately subordinate to the commander of the Armoured Train Division, who reported to the leadership of the 3rd Division in this operation.

The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment of the 1st Division with a battery arrived on 22 June on 04:00.

No units from the 2nd Division turned up. After long negotiations and the pressure applied by the general command, the 2nd Infantry Regiment turned up on 23 June in the region of Dzērbene – so, outside the area of the historical battle and at the end of the battles.

The aforementioned directives of our general command and the radiograms of General Fletcher cast light on the political situation before the Battle of Cēsis and also make it easier to understand the nature of the impending battle. They explain the nature of our tactical activities. They show why the battle of Limbaži–Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna developed tactically into a typical meeting battle, where the activities of the enemy were tenaciously resisted until the reserves arrived, after which a general offensive was launched and the enemy was defeated. When we look at the directives sent by our general command on 18 June, with which the Commander-in-Chief responded to the radiogram sent by Major Fletcher on 18 June, which included an ultimatum, we see **two** underlying factors:

- 1) we cannot back down on our demands, i.e. we cannot allow the Landeswehr to enter northern Latvia;
- 2) we will not initiate military activities.

The radiogram from Major Fletcher, however, includes a categorical demand to agree to the proposal made by Colonel Greene on 10 June in Cēsis, i.e. to leave northern Latvia under the control of the Landeswehr. Major Fletcher states directly that in the event of non-compliance, he will end the armistice on 19 June.

Let us also recall that final negotiations between the Allies were supposed to take place on 20 June in Valga, where they were expected to decide whether there was going to be war or peace with the Landeswehr.

Then, we saw that Major Fletcher, who presented himself as the representative of the Latvian government (the Niedra government) in his radiogram of 17 June, was rushing to launch military activities. He doesn't have the patience or the desire to come to Valga. He was ignoring the requests of the Allies.

His actions are explained by General von der Goltz himself in his book *"Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum"*, where he writes: *"To the surprise of the Niedra government, the chairman of the Allied committee General Gough turned up instead of the American Colonel Greene on 16 June, and he decided in favour of the Estonians... This meant that the Niedra government was prohibited from taking northern Latvia under its control. Since negotiations with General Gough were seemingly only held to win time and there was no hope that they would succeed, the **Baltic people** and governments **wanted** the unavoidable warfare for as long as the Germans were still in Latvia. They asked the Germans for help."*

Based on the data received from several sources, it was also clear to us as the people on site that Major Fletcher, or more accurately, the Landeswehr, were only trying to win time for gathering their forces. We, however, were not allowed to take military action. We responded by strengthening surveillance and drawing our reserves closer.

This makes one ask about the reasons why it was insisted that the general command be prohibited from launching military action. These reasons were purely political. In his telegraph call with Hughes at 14:20 on 12 June, the Commander-in-Chief clearly concedes: *"Although the people are not pleased with the armistice, we must accept it, as it's the wish of our Allies and we cannot go against them. We have to do what they want."*

The provocative content of Major Fletcher's radiograms must be added to this wish of the Allies. We saw that Major Fletcher was speaking on behalf of the Niedra government, i.e. the government that was not recognised by our government. Secondly, the ultimatum to our general command with the threat to launch military activities was sent by Major Fletcher, not by General von der Goltz.

However, the chairman of the Allies General Gough recognised General Goltz and considered Major Fletcher his subordinate.

This clearly illustrates the intentions of the element that had assembled around General von der Goltz: Major Fletcher was appointed to lead the Landeswehr, he was allowed to speak on behalf of the Niedra government and make the impending engagement look like a war between Estonia and Latvia. We would've obviously never been forgiven for an engagement like this. This is why our general command tried to make the committee of the Allies see that this is not an engagement between Estonia and Latvia, but an extensive action led not only by the direct commander of the Landeswehr, but by General von der Goltz himself.

This claim is proven by the following circumstances: the first battles under Limbaži (Lemsalu) and Straupe on 19 and 20 June, and under Võnnu on 21 June had already been fought when the telegram of the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief arrived at 23:05 on 21 June, which said: *"Please immediately send proof by courier that the units of the Iron Division are also fighting on our front in addition to the Landeswehr, because they are internationally very important."*

On the same day at 10:00, the division commander telegraphed a copy of his telegram to the Commander-in-Chief to me in Valmiera, and it said: *"The representative of the state of Germany has informed the Government of the Republic that the soldiers of General von der Goltz and the subordinates of the state of Germany are not participating in the war between us and the Landeswehr. However, this proof does not correspond to the actual circumstances. We've received politically extremely important proof from prisoners that the soldiers of Goltz and the subjects of Germany are fighting against us alongside the Landeswehr."*

Extracts from the announcements of the staff of the Commander-in-Chief about 19 and 20 June are also interesting in this context: ... *"The rumours about the start of military activities between the Landeswehr and us must be deemed premature, because according to the proposal and agreement of the Allies themselves, the representatives of the Allies and us on one side and the representatives of the Landeswehr on the other side are supposed to meet at the front today, on 20 June, and clarify the situation."*

As we can see below, a serious engagement under Limbaži had already occurred on 19 and 20 June and the Germans also went on the offensive in the direction of Straupe on 20 June.

A radiogram from Riga to the German Ambassador in Tallinn had also been intercepted on 19 June, which stated: *"We've heard rumours that the Estonians are afraid that the Germans and the Balts are planning a military campaign to Estonia. In Riga, this is used to explain the fact that the activities of the Estonians in northern Latvia*

are impossible to understand. Nobody in Latvia is even thinking about an offensive against Estonia. Any information about this is false and nothing but malicious slander, aimed at making Ulmanis the head of government."

All of the above clearly indicates that politically, even if our forces had assembled by 19 or 20 June, i.e. if the promised reserves had already arrived, we couldn't have launched a general offensive on 19 or 20 June, especially because the activities of the Landeswehr in these days, as we can see later, were not to attack on the entire front, but every day in one direction only. As we can see later, this was based on the general action plan of General von der Goltz, but could've also been explained as an engagement of the advance parties, as a misunderstanding. In addition to these political reasons, there were also the purely military reasons why we couldn't immediately go on a counteroffensive ourselves on 20 and 21 June, as the Commander-in-Chief ordered in his directive. The first thing we see in the directive of the Commander-in-Chief is: *"The Landeswehr is well equipped, which means we must be cautious with them."* This makes it clear that the best moment for a general offensive was the one when the forces assembled, i.e. when the promised reserves had arrived. We already saw above that these reserves started arriving at 06:00 on 21 June. This means that we had to resist tenaciously for two days until their arrival. In military terms, this of course meant giving the initiative to the enemy, as was demanded by the political and military situation. However, this initial defence couldn't do us much harm from the psychological viewpoint. We also had hope and faith in the resistance of our soldiers in the battles against their bitter enemies, as the Commander-in-Chief also emphasises in his directive. On the other hand, we had information that the morale of the purely Imperial German soldiers was not the best. They were mercenaries. We caused considerable losses among these mercenaries with our tenacious resistance, which made their morale deteriorate even further. We can find proof of this claim again in General von der Goltz's book, where he is very annoyed with the German soldiers who, as he puts it, didn't understand their interests. He wrote the following: *"It became evident that the leaders didn't actually know their crews fully, although every German soldier, weapon in hand, could've created himself a future here. Despite this, the propaganda of the Ulmanis government fell on fertile ground in the heart of the German soldier by claiming that the German soldier was letting himself be killed for the benefit of the "barons"... These "barons" definitely emphasised that they will give some of their land to the German soldiers and even started making good on their promise... These German soldiers who refused to fight in the first battles dug the graves of their own future."*

So, all of these writings illustrate the political and military conditions that forced us to enter the battle of waiting, which is what the most important and the biggest battle of our War of Independence turned out to be.

Assessment of terrain, plans and forces of the enemy

(See Scheme No 5)

Keeping an eye on the development of the events described above and seeing that a battle was going to be unavoidable, I travelled all across the region of the units under my command on the day of the armistice in order to get a clear understanding of the terrain. I travelled through the Straupe, Lode and Rauna regions. On these trips, I realised that the flanks of the region under my command, i.e. the *Murjāņi* (*Neuhof*)-Straupe-Rubene (*Pappenhof*)-Valmiera direction, in other words the Riga-Valmiera road and then Rauna uplands, i.e. the direction of the Riga-Pskov stone road, will become the most important battle environments. If the Germans had succeeded in breaking our resistance in the Stalbe-Straupe-Auciems region, the road towards Valmiera would have been open. We would have been cut off from the 9th Regiment, which was positioned in the direction of Limbaži and would've opened the way towards Rūjiena (*Ruhja*) behind us. As I understood, this was the most dangerous direction for the 3rd Division. Losing the Rauna uplands wouldn't have been so dangerous to the 3rd Division as losing the Straupe-Stalbe-Auciems region, but it was extremely dangerous for the units operating under Krustpils. However, losing the Rauna uplands would've forced the 3rd Division to withdraw deep towards Valmiera, because the uplands prevail in the terrain spanning towards Valmiera. I wasn't particularly worried about the enemy breaking through the middle of our front, because the Gauja River on one side and the Rauna uplands on the other side restricted this kind of a breakthrough in terms of width. Stopping any gaps here was easier and the progress of the Germans towards Valmiera would've been easier to prevent. We were also technically well equipped here with our armoured trains. The reserves could also arrive easier and faster in this direction. I reported my impressions to the division commander and emphasised that we should focus on securing our rear. I also asked him to consider a new line of resistance in the case of failure. The general command suggested the following strategic line: Salacgrīva-Lake Burtnieks-Strenči Station-Gauja River-Vijciems-Gaujiena uplands.

Our initial action plan, prepared as a result of the political situation, which gave the initiative to the enemy, was based on tenacious resistance in the directions of Straupe-Valmiera and Rauna on one side and Limbaži on the other side. I was hoping that by the time the promised support arrives, I would have an adequate picture of the development of the enemy's activities to choose the direction of our strike accordingly.

So, what was the enemy's action plan like? We learned that much later, when we read General von der Goltz's book. I'm going to share this with you now to make some important moments in this historical battle easier to understand for the reader. In brief, the action plan of General von der Goltz was the following, as he describes it himself (p 204, 205):

"So, the decision was made to defeat the enemy's forces decisively near Cēsis without the Bolsheviks being able to interfere in the battle from the south. It was only possible to envelop the enemy from the left. There was no point in trying to carry out the envelopment across Limbaži, as no major forces were expected from there. The decision was to send the main forces across Straupe and cover them from Limbaži's side. However, we still had to be prepared to carry out the envelopment across Limbaži as well if bigger forces appeared there. We had to rush to penetrate the enemy, who was assembling its forces, but not ready for action yet. The following orders were given to this end:

1) To secure the flank of the main forces in the direction of Limbaži with a battalion, a squadron and a battery. This squad will be sent to Biriņi Manor first. If we don't meet any strong enemy forces there, the leading element of our main forces will start moving towards Straupe. However, should the enemy be strong in the direction of Limbaži, the main strike must be guided through Limbaži. (This side defence of the main forces was led by Captain Blanckenburg.)

The Iron Division will start moving on 19 June and penetrate across Straupe with 4 battalions, 2 squadrons and 4 batteries.

2) *The Landeswehr, whilst keeping its left flank back, will penetrate across Rauna with the assault battalion led by Major Böckelmann to attack the enemy, who will try to envelop the Landeswehr from the east. The other two column formations of the Landeswehr, one led by Captain Jena, will penetrate towards the Lode station and the other, led by Captain Malmede, towards Stārte Manor. General von der Goltz then writes in his memoirs that the main forces of the Iron Division under the leadership of Major von Kleist organised their activities according to the information received from Captain Blanckenburg and that the activities of the main forces of the Iron Division were largely the result of the development of the activities of Captain Blanckenburg's column formation. On the other hand, the activities of Major Böckelmann against*

our left flank were again the result of the success of Major von Kleist's activities and thirdly, the activities of the two central column formations of the Landeswehr were caused by the activities of Major von Kleist on the one hand and Major von Böckelmann on the other hand.

When we take a closer look at General von der Goltz's action plan, we see that the activities of one leader were fully connected to those of the other. A dependence like this made an offensive on a front as wide as this one difficult and required good communication between the column formations. This plan shows that my assessment of the terrain was correct. The strikes were aimed in the directions that we considered the most important.

The command of the 3rd Division was based as follows for the impending battle: the staff of the division with its main part and the division commander were in Valga. Communication with the 9th Regiment took place across Valga. Communication with Limbaži from Valmiera via civil lines was also established with some effort. The reason why the staff of the division and the division commander were positioned in Valga was the need to organise the rear, accelerate the arrival of the reserves and to maintain communication with the 2nd Division and the Commander-in-Chief. The centre of the communication between the main forces of the division was in Valmiera. This is why I was in Valmiera with two officers of the staff of the division, using a part of the staff of the 6th Regiment.

Staying in Valmiera allowed me to maintain in close contact with the commanders of the regiment and leadership of the armoured trains and monitor the development of the events on site. I had the full trust and authority of the division commander for the immediate resolution of any operational issues. The 6th and 3rd Estonian and the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiments with the Estonian 1st, 6th, 3rd, and half of the 4th Battery, two Latvian batteries and the Tallinn Independent Squadron formed the so-called Cēsis group and were led directly by me. They were managed directly from Valmiera as the most central and optimal place in terms of location.

Balance of power for the impending battle

The enemy:

(According to the information and documents at our disposal.)

1. Iron Division – five battalions, three squadrons, five light batteries. Composition of the battalion: *ca* 450–500 bayonets, 10 heavy machine guns, 18 light machine guns. There were *ca* 100 swords in the squadron and four light machine guns. In total, the Iron Division had *ca* 2,250–2,500 bayonets, 300 swords, 50 heavy machine guns, 90 light machine guns, 20 light guns. In addition to this, the Iron Division was supported by heavy 6-inch batteries, mortars, armoured trains, armoured cars, planes, etc., the number of which is unknown to us.

2. The Baltische Landeswehr consisted of:

a) Captain Jena's unit, which consisted of the battalions of Malmede, Raden, Kleist, and Medem, two squadrons, three light batteries.

The battalions consisted of two to three infantry companies, each of which had three heavy machine guns and six light machine guns. There were *ca* 60 men in the squadron and four guns in the battery.

b) Manteuffel's assault troop – 2,000 bayonets, 120 swords, 30 heavy machine guns, 80 light machine guns, 12 light guns.

The total forces of the Baltische Landeswehr were 3,500 bayonets, 240 swords, 70 heavy machine guns, 140 light machine guns, 24 light guns.

3. The Imperial German (*Reichsdeutsche*) military units that supported the Landeswehr:

a) Petersdorff's unit (*"die bewährte Abteilung Petersdorff"*) – 1,000 bayonets, 60 swords, 20 heavy machine guns, 40 light machine guns, eight light guns.

b) Böckelmann's Baden assault battalion – 450–500 bayonets, 60 swords, 10 heavy machine guns, 18 light machine guns, four light guns, plus armoured cars.

In total, the support of the Imperial German units to the Landeswehr consisted of 1,450–1,500 bayonets, 120 swords, 30 heavy machine guns, 58 light machine guns, 12 light guns.

Our enemy's total forces in the battles on 19, 20 and 21 June were as follows:

7,200–7,500 bayonets, 660 swords, 150 heavy machine guns, 288 light machine guns, 56 light guns. Another three battalions, three light batteries or 900–1,000 bayonets, 30 heavy machine guns, 54 light machine guns and 12 light guns of the Iron Division arrived on 21 June.

The total forces of the enemy against us in the battle of 22 June were: 8,100–8,500 bayonets, 660 swords, 180 heavy machine guns, 342 light machine guns, 70 light guns. In addition to this, our enemy had heavy 6-inch guns, mortars, armoured trains, armoured cars, planes, etc., the number of which is unknown to us.

The Iron Division as well as the Landeswehr were very well equipped both technically and in terms of the personal equipment of soldiers. The big number of mortars of the Germans and the Landeswehr was a particularly big concern for us. The Iron Division had been formed of the volunteers of the German 8th Army. They were well trained soldiers with experience of a long war. In addition to the ordinary soldier's wages, they were paid an additional wage of 4 marks per day. They were promised land and full citizenship in the Baltics (Goltz p no 133, 218). There were many local squires and citizens of German origin in the Landeswehr. They also included Imperial German volunteers. In comparison with the units of the Iron Division, the training of purely Landeswehr soldiers was weaker, but they formed the enemy's best assault unit because of their inner value (Goltz p 137).

So far, I have made no mention of Prince Lieven's unit, which was also under the leadership of the general command of the Landeswehr. It had been formed from the Russian officers and soldiers taken prisoner by Germany in the World War. It consisted of one battalion (three infantry and one artillery company), squadron, light battery communications company and supply convoy. The total combat power was *ca* 500 bayonets, 100 swords, nine heavy and six light machine guns and four guns.

In addition to this, there were the purely Latvian units under the command of Colonel Balodis. According to the information known to us, they have four battalions (*ca* 2,000 bayonets, 27 heavy and 24 light machine guns, 250 swords and two 6-inch guns). Although the units of Price Lieven and Colonel Balodis did not participate in direct military activities, they were still at the disposal of the enemy's command and operated in the rear, which allowed the Germans to assemble almost all of their forces against us.

The activities of Price Lieven's and Colonel Balodis's units south of our left flank were a source of concern for the division command on several occasions.

I personally was unsure about the loyalty of these units, especially that of Prince Lieven's squad. Messages about the activities of these units concerned me during the battle. The messages given by the staff of Colonel Zemitāns were particularly uncertain and always full of concern.

Our forces:

Our forces in the first days of battle, i.e. on the 19 and 20 until the arrival of the supporting units, were:

In the direction of Limbaži:

9th Regiment – 926 bayonets, 19 light machine guns, two heavy machine guns.

4th Battery Platoon – two 18-pound guns.

In the Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna region:

6th Regiment – 1,987 bayonets, 29 light machine guns and 11 heavy machine guns.

3rd Regiment – 1,241 bayonets, 14 light machine guns and 17 heavy machine guns.

Armoured Train N1 (*Kapten Irv*) – 195 bayonets, four light machine guns, 17 heavy machine guns, one gun.

Armoured Train N3 – 171 bayonets, five light machine guns, 16 heavy machine guns, three guns.

Crew of the narrow-gauge armoured train *Heinaste* – 40 men with four heavy machine guns.

Tallinn Independent Squadron – 65 swords.

1st Battery – two 48-line guns.

6th Battery – four 18-pound guns.

3rd Battery – two 42-line guns.

4th Battery Platoon – two 18-pound guns.

Armoured car *Vanapagan*.

Latvia had the following in this battle:

2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment – 1,430 bayonets, 32 light machine guns and 12 heavy machine guns, two 6-inch heavy guns, four 18-pound guns.

The Latvian Squadron, which left Balodis on 2 June and disappeared on 20 June – *ca* 60 swords.

Our forces in total: 5,990 bayonets (1,430 of them Latvian), 65 swords, 103 light machine guns, 79 heavy machine guns, 22 light and heavy guns, two armoured trains, and one armoured car.

On 21 June, the Kuperjanov Partisan Battalion arrived – 249 bayonets, six light machine guns, six heavy machine guns.

2nd Battery – two 6-inch guns.

Our forces did not increase after the arrival of the partisans, as according to the messages of our unit commanders, only 500–600 bayonets from the 2nd Latvian

Cēsis Regiment remained in place for the battle held on the morning of 21 June, whilst the others scattered, so that our forces on 21 June were smaller in numbers than on 20 June.

On 22 June, the Battalion of *Kalevlaste Malev* arrived – 316 bayonets, seven light machine guns, six heavy machine guns.

2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment – 504 bayonets, 14 light machine guns, four heavy machine guns.

Armoured Train N2 – 130 bayonets, eight light machine guns, 15 heavy machine guns, four guns.

1st Battery of the 1st Artillery Regiment – four 18-pound guns.

Two armoured cars (*Toonela* and *Estonia*).

When we add them all up and do a comparison, we see that in the battle on 19 and 20 June:

The Landeswehr had 7,200–7,500 bayonets, 660 swords, 288 heavy machine guns, 150 light machine guns, 56 light guns plus 6-inch batteries, mortars, armoured trains, armoured cars and planes, the number of which was unknown to us.

We had 5,990 bayonets, 65 swords, 103 light machine guns, 79 heavy machine guns, 24 light and heavy guns, two armoured trains and one armoured car.

In the battle on 21 June:

Landeswehr numbers remained unchanged.

We had 5,500–5,600 bayonets, 65 swords, 109 light machine guns, 85 heavy machine guns, 24 light and heavy guns, two armoured trains, and one armoured car.

In the battle on 22 June:

The Landeswehr had 8,100–8,500 bayonets, 660 swords, 342 light machine guns, 180 heavy machine guns, 70 light guns.

We had 6,889 bayonets (to my knowledge, not all of the men of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment who had departed had returned by this day), 65 swords, 138 light machine guns, 110 heavy machine guns, 32 light and heavy guns, three armoured trains, and three armoured cars.

The number is important in military terms, but it's definitely not all, there are also other factors that largely determine the value of the number. These factors are – the morale, which is rooted in mental and physical fitness, training, weaponry, technical and personal equipment. From the psychological point of view, the morale of our men for the impending battle was good, but we must keep in mind that we were already mentally exhausted, and the promised supporting units were physically exhausted. We must not forget that the moral and physical efforts

of our defence forces on the southern front in the fight against Bolshevism had escalated significantly on 13 May. On this day, the commander of the armoured train division reported to the Commander-in-Chief that the condition of the units of the 2nd Division was critical, the defence of the eastern part of the southern front was very questionable and the rapid arrival of larger reserves was our only way out. Kuperjanov's partisans, scouts and members of the *Kalevlaste Malev* were also too exhausted (the partisans and the *Kalevlaste Malev* formed the main forces of the support that had been promised and also arrived; the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment was fresh). On the other hand, we must immediately emphasise that irrespective of a similar picture, the offensive launched by us on the southern front in the middle of May was a success, and in this sense our units were feeling victorious despite feelings of exhaustion. The 6th and 3rd Regiments launched their offensive from 8 to 18 May. As a result of this offensive, we took Valmiera on 26 May, Limbaži on 27 May, and our 2nd Division took Alūksne on 29 May, and Gulbene on 30 May. The period of the armistice was the time when our 3rd and 6th Regiments and armoured trains could rest. The 9th Regiment was fresh.

However, when it comes to the equipment of our defence forces, it was all over the place. We also had a uniform, but not enough for everyone – many men were wearing their civilian jackets. The shortage of clothes was considerable. For example, the chief of staff of the Commander-in-Chief promised us additional trained men for the units on 14 June, yet warned us that they would arrive with incomplete equipment. The shortage of footwear was particularly bad, but the nice summer made it easier to overcome. The soldiers were wearing English, Russian and Estonian uniforms, and some were in their civilian clothes.

There weren't many cartridge pouches for carrying cartridges. There were soldiers who carried the cartridges in the pockets of their trousers and jackets. There were no shovels. There were no harnesses, which meant that almost all of the equipment was carried in caravans. This is why our caravans were massive during the War of Independence. There were no gas masks. There were very few hand grenades. Many rifles were missing bayonets. We had rifles of several systems. Most rifles were Russian. We had automatic weapons of several systems. There were Russian Maxims (the majority) as well as German Maxims and Colts. We had light machine guns of the Lewis, Madsen, and Bergmann systems (relatively few of the latter). This diversity made the supply of ammunition difficult. Our artillery used the Russian and English systems. Battery No 4 was equipped with the 3.42-inch guns of the old Russian system of 1895 (it received the new 18-pound English guns during the armistice). The mechanisms of many Russian guns were not in

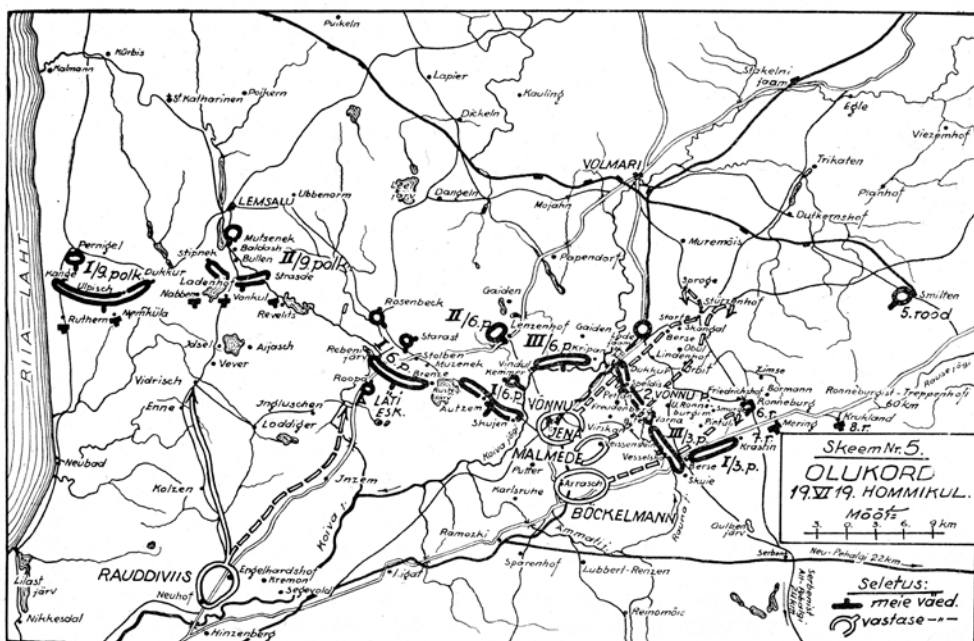
full working order. There were almost no munition crates. Almost all charges were transported in ordinary carts. This made it difficult for batteries to manoeuvre off the roads and supplying ammunition was difficult. There were few of the optical tools required for aiming the fire of batteries; some batteries didn't have any at all. The batteries also had few communication devices. We had no planes to use during the Landeswehr operation. The armoured cars we had were technically weak. The armoured car *Vanapagan* was extremely heavy and manufactured by our own means in Pärnu. There were few maps, even some company commanders didn't have any. There were few field telephones and not enough field cable. Wall-mounted devices and all kinds of uninsulated wiring were used for communication (I even saw barbed wire used on a couple of occasions). The wall-mounted devices were taken here and there from cities and manors. Transporting them was very cumbersome. It was difficult to protect them from the impact of the weather and damage during transport. Establishing communication with these devices required a lot of time and effort. However, the hard work and skills of our soldiers always helped us out, whatever the difficulties. Our sanitary situation was bad. There were only a few doctors. For example, there were days when there wasn't a single doctor in the 9th Regiment. (Telegram of the commander of the 9th Regiment sent at 11:20 on 21 June.) There were also few field surgeons. Some companies didn't have any of them. There were very few bandaging options. The doctors also didn't have the necessary medical instruments. The evacuation of the wounded was difficult and irregular. There was an instance when the division commander had to organise the evacuation himself. I already mentioned that the caravan was too big. For example, I found a caravan of 100 carts in a battalion. The caravan was so big because the soldiers had no backpacks.

We didn't have proper military caravans or caravan harnesses. Our caravans were ordinary carts and horses requisitioned from the local people. As our caravans weren't meant for military purposes, the way that items were packed in the carts was also not regulated. This made the caravan bigger. The transport of machine guns, communication devices and ammunition were particularly cumbersome and difficult. Transporting the aforementioned combat and communication equipment in ordinary carts not built for this purpose broke and damaged it.

The soldiers were 17 to 36 years old. Most of our soldiers had been trained in the Russian army and gained battle experience in the fight against the Bolsheviks. The lack of non-commissioned officers and officers was very acutely felt in some areas. As for the morale of our leaders and team, then it was very good despite the moral and physical exhaustion due to the ongoing fight against the Bolsheviks.

It should also be mentioned here that most leaders and soldiers had participated in the World War and experienced the shocks of the Russian revolution, as well as the hardships of the German occupation, but when it came to the impending battle, we were certain that... "Estonia, the spirit of your men is not dead yet..." Although we were technically weaker, we certainly had the upper hand mentally. Even General von der Goltz recognised this; in his book (p 203), he writes, among others: *"We would've won the battle, if our troops, the Germans and the Balts, had clearly understood the importance of the moment and fought accordingly, and if the Estonians had demonstrated as little military value as became apparent in their fight against the Reds."*

The placement of our units in the morning of 19 June was based on the orders of caution and preparation, which had been made during the armistice, and it was as follows (Scheme No 5):



Scheme 5: Situation on the morning of 19 June.

The 9th Regiment was located by the sea on the Dunte skola–Stiene–Dukuri line; one of the companies of the 1st Battalion was in reserve in Liepupe, surveillance barriers on the Dunte–Menkuli Manor line; the 2nd Battalion was positioned on the Stipneki–Lāde–Strazdi line; there was also a company in reserve in Mucenieki and

surveillance barriers on the Nabe–Vankuļi–Rāvlicas line; one platoon from the 4th Battery – two 18-pound English guns – were positioned near the Limbaži rectory.

Location of the 6th Regiment: the 4th Battalion from Riebiņu Lake to Brenči, which is next to Ungura Lake, two companies on the front line and two in reserve in Rozula and Vecstarasti. The reconnaissance cavalry of the 6th Regiment and the Latvian Squadron (this squadron disappeared on 20 June and we have no information on them) were positioned in Straupe in front of the battalion's region. The 1st Battalion was positioned from Ungura Lake to River Gauja – on the Brenči–Auciems–Skujēni line whilst one of the companies was in reserve in Ķēmeri. The 3rd Battalion was based on the right bank of the Gauja River up to Kripēni Farm.

The 2nd Battalion was in the reserve of the main forces near Lenči Manor.

The 6th Battery, four 18-inch guns, one verst north of Lenči Manor; the 1st Battery, two 48-line guns, was based in the region of the Gaidēni Farm.

Two armoured trains with landing companies, which guarded the railway, we positioned near Lōde station.

The 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment was located on the right bank of the Gauja River up to the Vārnas Farm with the following batteries: heavy – English 47-line, two guns and light: English 18-pound and four guns.

The 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Regiment was based next to the Rauna River from Vārnas Farm to Skujas Manor, i.e. with the front towards the west; the 1st Battalion on the Riga–Pskov stone road from Bērzkrogs up to Krastiņi Farm with the front to the south. The 6th company and the infantry reconnaissance commando from the 2nd Battalion in reserve near Rauna; the 7th and the 8th Companies on the Riga–Pskov stone road in the Mieriņi and Krūklanta Manors and the 5th Company in Smiltene.

This placement of the 5th, 7th, and 8th Companies by the commander of the 3rd Regiment was probably the response to the alarming information received from the Latvians about the appearance of the units of Prince Lieven and Balodis in the surroundings of Dzērbene–Vecpiebalga–Jaunpiebalga and Trapene Manor, and based on the need to protect the fully open left flank and the rear. The Tallinn Independent Squadron, with the support of the 7th and 8th Companies, was constantly on alert around Vecpiebalga–Jaunpiebalga–Dzērbene and in the direction of Trapene Manor.

The 3rd Battery, two 42-line Schneider guns, was based on Strīķeļi Farm and part of the 4th Battery – one platoon, two English 18-pound guns, were based on Pintuļi Farm near the Riga–Pskov road. The Tallinn Independent Squadron was in reserve in Rauna.

In addition to the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment, I had the armoured car *Vanapagan* and the crew of the narrow-gauge armoured train *Heinaste*, about 40–50 men with four machine guns, in reserve.

This shows that my most important precautionary measure during the armistice was grouping the 6th Regiment west of the Gauja River and the establishment of a reserve in the direction of Straupe–Valmiera, for which the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment was pulled out from between the railway and the 3rd Regiment and replaced with the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment. The 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment was placed in the middle as a result of my claims about the importance of the flanks. The placement of the young and recently formed 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment in the middle was not a reason for fear. The armoured trains that were extremely strong morally, with their heroic landings, were in the vicinity of the railway. On the stone road in the left was the tough 3rd Regiment, which was respected in the defence forces for its tenacity and led by Captain Jaan Kruus – a cold-blooded, experienced and stubborn warrior, who had passed the long and arduous journey of a simple soldier in the big war for which he had been awarded four Crosses of Saint George. The Tallinn Independent Squadron moved from the right flank to the left, under the command of Captain Kruus, because we kept receiving messages on the movement of the enemy's squads from the south to our left flank.

The battle

At 12:15 on 19 June, the German units started forcing the scouts of the 9th Regiment towards Limbaži. The scouts of the 9th Regiment initially repelled the first and second (at 17:00) offensives of the German advance parties. At 23:00, the Germans launched another offensive with a company supported by artillery fire and after half an hour of combat managed to force the reconnaissance patrol of the 9th Regiment out of Vidrižu Manor. The scouts retreated to the graveyard north of Vidrižu Village. According to the received messages, three companies of Germans with machine guns and four guns came to the Vidrižu Manor.

The front of the main forces were quiet at the time when units of the Iron Division were forcing our advance parties towards Limbaži on our right flank. Only in the evening did the German scouts tried to cross the Gauja River in the region of the 3rd Battalion of the 6th Regiment, but were forced to withdraw under our fire. There was also an engagement of scouts south of Straupe Village on the same day. In the evening of 19 June, the scouts of the 9th Regiment reported that

they had met a German cavalry troop by the Inciems Manor, which was moving towards Straupe, at 08:00 in the morning. They had also heard from the locals that cavalry troops were moving across the Gauja River. The locals said that the Germans were bringing more and more troops across the Gauja River. Late at night, we received another message from the chief of staff of the North Latvian Brigade that their agency messages talk about the Germans assembling in the direction of Straupe. The commander of the 2nd Latvian Regiment sent agency details about the movement of an enemy battalion at 20:00 on 18 June opposite our centre in Priekuļu Manor, in the direction of Tati Farm. A message on the assembly of the Germans around the Veismaņu Manor was received from the 3rd Regiment, stating that they had brought six guns, and that two planes were also standing there.

The events of 19 June, i.e. the Germans pushing our scouts and the repositioning of the German troops, could be fully deemed the start of hostile activities, but not to the extent that we could've launched active operations on the entire front. There are two things that must be kept in mind here. Firstly, we could not launch military activities ourselves because this was the demand of our allies, who were expecting the representatives of the Landeswehr to arrive for negotiations in Valga on 20 June. Secondly, the support we'd been promised had not arrived yet and I personally had no idea of their movement and arrival times.

Thus, the division command took the 'wait and see' approach.

The received messages confirmed to me that we could expect pressure in all four directions, in the direction of Limbaži and Straupe on one side as well as against the left flank and middle from the other side. However, it was certainly not clear yet where the enemy was intending to put the emphasis of its efforts. However, if we recall the action plan of von der Goltz, we see that the activities of the Germans on 19 June went exactly according to his plan, but the withdrawal of the scouts of the 9th Regiment misled him. Let's recall that he said about the Limbaži direction that if no strong enemy forces were met there, the leading element of the main forces will start moving towards Straupe. He then says: *"The side defence of the Iron Division (i.e. the column of Captain Blanckenburg) forced the weak enemy forces behind Lāde and, feeling strong enough, went beyond the scope of his passive task, but fell into a trap."* The last sentence describes the activities on 20 June. More of that later.

So, we can see that the withdrawal of our scouts on 19 June led General von der Goltz back to his initial variant, i.e. directed the strike of his main forces at Straupe.

On 20 June, the activities when viewed left from our right wing, developed as follows:

At 12:00 on 20 June, the Germans launched another offensive, with three companies supported by artillery fire, in the direction of Limbaži (Captain Blanckenburg went beyond the scope of his passive task) and forced the advance parties of the 9th Regiment to withdraw from the Igate–Aijažu line to the Nabe–Vankuļi line. At 20:00, the Germans managed to force the units of the 9th Regiment out of Vankuļi and take Lāde Manor to break through the 9th Regiment's line of resistance. The enemy's advance parties continued forcing their way north of Lāde Manor and made it to Paldaži Farm, i.e. behind the main line. The details of the battle in this direction are as follows. Supported by artillery fire, the main forces of the enemy descended on the trenches near Lāde, which was only defended by three platoons, forced them out of there, enveloped a unit of the 5th Company of the 9th Regiment in the Buļļu Manor from the lake side, thereby opening themselves the way to Limbaži. The 4th Battery that supported the 9th Regiment was forced to abandon its positions and withdraw. This was a critical moment and the enemy's advance parties were already arriving on Paldaži Farm. But then, a sudden break occurred. The first to fight back against the enemy near this village were Commander of the Reconnaissance Commando Cadet Reinhold and Commander of the 2nd Battalion Lieutenant Karl Laurits with about a dozen soldiers, and killed individual men of the enemy with their revolvers. The reserve platoon of the reconnaissance commando and the 6th Company led by Lieutenant Paul Lilienbladt (Lilleleht), which had been in reserve, arrived in the meantime. The latter had been ordered by the regiment commander to force the enemy back at any cost. Taking advantage of the valley, the company managed to move behind the enemy that had entered Buļļu Manor and attack the enemy from 30–40 steps. This sent the enemy's soldiers into disarray, the Germans started fleeing in panic and hiding in the rye. The company continued its offensive. Commander of the Reconnaissance Commando Cadet Reinhold was lethally injured in this first counterstrike. His deed was an act of heroism right before the arrival of the 6th Company (According to the description of the history of the 9th Regiment.). Revolver in hand, he faced the Germans with the words: "No further from here". Cadet Reinhold killed three Germans but was also hit by a bullet himself. In this counterstrike, we gained eight machine guns, *ca* 100 rifles and, according to the military activity logbook of the 9th Regiment, the enemy left behind 19 killed men and took 38 killed and 30 injured men away with it. Before the enemy could recover from the first strike, commander of the 2nd Battalion Lieutenant Laurits organised a continuation of the counteroffensive with the 5th and 6th Companies and a reconnaissance commando. The enemy's

resistance was broken for good with an energetic attack and Vankuļi was taken back.

This was the trap that Captain Blanckenburg fell into and that General von der Goltz writes about.

General von der Goltz describes the engagement as follows: *"Captain Blanckenburg went beyond the scope of his passive task but fell into a trap. The brave captain was thereby fatally wounded and his units, left without their leader, first escaped to Lādezers and then back to Bīriņi."*

The successful action of the 9th Regiment had a strong impact on the activities of the main forces of the Landeswehr. We'll discuss this later.

At exactly the same time, 12:00, the Germans also started attacking us from Inciems towards Straupe. The Latvian Squadron and the reconnaissance cavalry of the 6th Regiment (this Latvian Squadron was from Balodis's unit and joined Zemītāns on 2 June) were based in Straupe Village. The enemy launched an offensive with the support of artillery fire and armoured cars and forced these units out of the village. The commander of the 6th Regiment issued a command that Straupe Village must be taken back with a counteroffensive. The units of the 6th Regiment launched the counteroffensive at 13:00 and managed to move close to Straupe, where they were hit by heavy gun and mortar fire and could not advance further. The Latvian Squadron, which was supposed to attack the enemy in Straupe from behind, disappeared altogether and we didn't hear anything about this squadron again until the end of the Landeswehr war.

That day, there was no engagement in the middle and on the left flank of our main forces.

Reconnaissance and agency messages on the activities of the enemy on 19 and 20 June and the events of 20 June near Limbaži and Straupe forced the command of the 3rd Division to issue an order at 18:30 on 20 June – to launch military activities against the Landeswehr – and this was also reported to the general command.

The situation in the evening of 20 June was as follows:

The enemy had been forced to flee on the front of the 9th Regiment. On the right flank of the main forces, the enemy had succeeded to force our advance parties out of Straupe. Our counteroffensive failed and the units of the 6th Regiment took the position of defence on the selected line. Messages arrived from the left flank of our main forces, which suggested that the enemy was going to strike in the direction of Rauna.

So, what was our intention for 21 June? None of the promised support had arrived yet. The enemy's activities were also not adequately developed yet. After

talking to the division commander on the phone, I made my suggestions about our action plan on 21 June. The decision made following the discussion was to remain on the defensive on the line of the division's main forces, whilst also aiming to expand the success achieved by the 9th Regiment. Therefore, the 9th Regiment was instructed to put pressure on the retreating enemy and, covering itself from the Lādezers side, move towards Lēdurga Manor to put pressure on the left flank and rear of the enemy forces moving towards Straupe, thereby making it easier for the 6th Regiment to defend its positions on the one hand, and on the other to help it launch the decisive strike in case it was attacked.

In the same evening, I gave two companies from my reserve (the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment) to the command of the commander of the 6th Regiment in order to strengthen the right flank. These companies were positioned in the surroundings of Stalbe Manor, so that six companies were assembled for the protection of this important road junction. I also ordered the placement of two guns from the 6th Battery in the Stalbe region. All of these orders I gave were based on my hunch that the enemy will increase its pressure in the region on 21 June. I received agency messages, which confirmed the assembly of the Iron Division's forces on my right flank opposite Straupe. At the time, I thought that the Iron Division was stronger than the Landeswehr, both technically, as well as in terms of skills. This large unit had been formed from the brave, experienced men of the German army and led by able and experienced officers. If we recall the action plan of General von der Goltz again, we see that this is the direction in which the activities of the main forces of the Iron Division (three battalions, two squadrons, four batteries) led by Major von Kleist developed.

On 21 June, activities developed as follows:

At 01:00, the enemy crossed the Gauja River by the bridge on the Straupe road and the Vindeles ferry, but were repulsed and scattered with a counteroffensive supported by the fire of the 1st Battery.

At 02:25, a message was received from the commander of the 3rd Regiment that the enemy launched an offensive with bigger forces towards the Jaunrauna-Veselava Manors and along the Riga-Pskov stone road, supporting its activities with armoured cars. At 03:30, the commander of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment reported that his scouts had spotted enemy movements in the surroundings of Vaive watermill and Virskūnas farms, and that half of a company had been sent out to gather information on their status and the battery had been ordered to open fire. If we recall the plan of General von der Goltz again, we see that the activities started developing exactly according to his plan: the Baden assault battalion led

by Major Böckelmann was to launch an offensive against our left flank before the column formations of Captain Jena and Captain Malmède attacked our centre.

At 04:00, the commander of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment reported that the enemy was attacking strongly on the left flank of his regiment and the 1st Battalion of his regiment had launched a counteroffensive to improve the situation.

At 05:45, the commander of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment reported again that the enemy was attacking on his flank also in the direction of Vagaļi and Spelģis farms and that the enemy was firing at the railway near Spelģis and Ūdris farms. He launched a counteroffensive here as well.

We can see from the reports of Captain Johannes Poopuu and the commander of the 3rd Regiment sent by 08:00 how the efforts of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment ended.

So, the enemy started its operations from our left flank and developed its offensive on the entire front between the Gauja River and Riga–Pskov stone road.

The activities of the 6th Regiment at the time were expressed in a shootout between the advance parties.

At 07:15, the commander of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment reported that his 1st Battalion have taken back Vārnas Farm and established communication with the 12th Company of the 3rd Regiment (the right flank of the 3rd Regiment).

At 08:00, however, the situation for the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment changed drastically. The communication between the regiment's companies and with the regiment's commander and the 3rd Regiment was broken under the enemy's artillery fire. The regiment's companies lost their leadership as a result of this and started to withdraw. The withdrawal soon became quick and disorganised and an opening that was 6 versts wide appeared in the middle of the front of our forces, i.e. in the region of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment, between 08:00–09:00 o'clock. The enemy's forces poured into the opening and split into three. One launched an offensive at Lode station, the second immediately moved forward towards Skangāļi Manor and the third started enveloping the right flank of the 3rd Regiment, forging their way towards Baives watermill–Jaunrauna. A desperate fight started in the region of Lode station and Liepa Manor, and on the right flank of the 3rd Regiment near Jaunrauna.

My head was full of sombre thoughts and I had a bad feeling in my heart when I weighed the situation. The question was, how are we going to get out of this perilous situation? What about the arrival of the promised support, won't things go wrong before they join the action? I was woken from these thoughts by a telegram from Captain Poopuu (commander of staff of the Armoured Train Division),

where he informed me about the situation on the railway at 08:00. The subsequent events were as follows. After sending the Latvians into disarray and making them withdraw, the Landeswehr managed to make its way behind the armoured trains (No. 3 and *Kapten Irv*) battling near the Rauna bridge. The enemy was about to start attacking Lode station. They had already set up a battery, which was firing at the armoured trains from the side. Partisans had arrived at Lode station by that time. They immediately jumped off the train and under the skilled leadership of Captain Jaan Unt (commander of the battalion) launched a counterattack and started successfully moving towards Liepa Manor. At the same time, the answer of the commander of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment to my question (communication had been re-established) arrived, informing me that his batteries, the heavy and the light one, had positioned themselves north of the Lode River and were engaged in a successful shootout with the enemy's batteries. He didn't have detailed information on the units of the regiment, however. This message from Captain Poopuu made me feel better in my heart again. The situation near the railway seemed to be under control.

The commander of the Armoured Train Division Captain Karl Parts stopped by between 10:00–11:00 in order to discuss the situation. He said that the partisans were continuing the attack and he was waiting for the *Kalevlaste Malev*. Captain Parts also said that he intended to take the *Kalevlaste Malev* to Lode station under the protection of the armoured trains so that it could attack the enemy on the flank in the direction of Liepa Manor. By this time, I had already received a message from General Ernst Pödder in Valga, where he said that he had asked the Commander-in-Chief to give him the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment and that he will send the battalion to my command as soon as it arrives in Valga. I informed Captain Parts about this and told him that his plan was suitable, and I intend to send the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment with a battery and the armoured car *Vanapagan* in the direction of Starti Inn–Rauna Village with the task to join the right flank of the 3rd Regiment and strike the enemy together in the direction of Jaunrauna–Vaive watermill. So, the jointly created counteroffensive plan was ready. Namely, armoured train units on an offensive in the direction of Liepa on the one side, and the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment and the units of the 3rd Regiment on an offensive in the direction of Jaunrauna to surround the enemy. I told Captain Parts that I could use all of my influence and authority to keep the 3rd Regiment on the Rauna uplands, and that I can use my reserve, the 2nd Company of the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment, the landing of the narrow-gauge armoured train Heinaste and the two armoured cars coming from Valga, Estonia and Toonela, in

the direction of Straupe, where the situation was going to heat up in my opinion. I said that I was going to coordinate the activities of the 9th and 6th Regiments in this direction in order to not only repulse the enemy, but to crush them.

We had this discussion whilst standing up and it lasted about 15 minutes.

After the departure of Captain Parts, I thought about the plan again, as some questions were still up in the air. Namely, would the 3rd Regiment be able to stay on the Rauna uplands, and how far can the enemy move in the direction of Skangāļi Manor? How will the activities develop on the front of the 6th Regiment, where I was still expecting the situation to heat up? Will the final part of the plan, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment, arrive on time? I knew by the time that its first echelon was about to reach Valga.

So, how did the situation on the front of the 3rd Regiment develop after the rapid withdrawal of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment?

The 3rd Battalion on the left flank of the regiment resisted strongly for three hours until the withdrawal of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment. After the withdrawal of the Latvians, the enemy started enveloping the battalion's flank. The situation of the battalion became more difficult. The fight around Veselava Manor and Bērzkrogs Inn, where Baden's men launched their attack, was going on with varying degrees of success. The 11th Company of the 3rd Regiment, which was in reserve at Veselava Manor, repulsed Baden's men and took some spoils. The 9th Company by the Riga-Pskov stone road repulsed all offensives, went on a counteroffensive and forced the enemy to withdraw behind the Rauna River. However, the situation on the regiment's front in general was getting worse. The enemy, chasing the Latvians retreating near Jaunrauna, enveloped the right flank of the 3rd Battalion deeper and deeper. As a result of this, the commander of the 3rd Regiment ordered the 3rd Battalion to initially withdraw to the Vēģeri – Ķemēļi – and Pakodes line. The 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Regiment re-established communication with the Latvians on the Meisliis-Smurģis line, where the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment stopped. However, the enemy continued moving forward and now started enveloping the right flank of the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment.

The enemy also tried to attack the left flank of the 3rd Battalion several times. The Germans attacked the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Regiment from the south, but they were decisively repulsed in both directions. General von der Goltz himself describes how tenaciously the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Regiment resisted. He writes (page 205): *"Böckelmann's column formation broke through the enemy units as a result of the hard battles of the brave Baden men "unter schweren, tapferen Kämpfen der Badener")."*

Actually, there was no breakthrough in this region. As I said, the battles around Veselava Manor went on with varying degrees of success, but the 3rd Regiment firmly maintained control over the Rauna uplands.

At 11:00, events started developing also in the direction of Straupe. At this time, the enemy started attacking Stalbe Manor from Straupe with the support of artillery fire and attempted to envelop the manor from both flanks. Schoolchildren from Viljandi defended the manor.

Armoured cars *Estonia* and *Toonela* had arrived in Valmiera by this time, where they were placed at my disposal. I immediately sent them to support the right flank of the 6th Regiment near Stalbe Manor and they were accompanied by the narrow-gauge armoured train *Heinaste*. The enemy, attacking in the direction of Stalbe Manor, tried to cross the Gauja River on the front of the 3rd Battalion of the 6th Regiment, but the Germans were repulsed here. The first battery noticed the enemy's armoured train and two armoured cars near Paeglītis Farm, opened fire at them and forced them to withdraw towards Cēsis. Our armoured trains also fired at the same armoured train. A couple of minutes later, the same battery noticed a battery of the enemy by Ģibolas Farm, and it opened fire on our armoured trains. Our 1st Battery opened fire at the enemy's battery and forced it to go quiet. The units of the 4th and 2nd Battalions of the 6th Regiment repulsed all attacks on Stalbe Manor and started preparing a counterattack with the support of the armoured cars.

The 9th Regiment, having received a command and organising communication, launched an offensive in the direction of Vidrižu and Lēdurga Manors at 13:00. North of Vidrižu Manor, the 9th Regiment met the enemy, who had moved into the old Russian trenches from the World War. Fierce combat started, lasting until the evening to no avail.

In the meantime, the situation of the 3rd Regiment became difficult. The enemy continued enveloping its right flank. As a result of this, the 3rd Regiment and the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment retreated to the Baižkalna Manor–Rauna - Mieriņi line by 14:00. The 4th Battery platoon moved to Cimza Manor and the 3rd Battery to Bormaņi.

The combat on the front of the 3rd Regiment became particularly fierce at 16:00.

Between 16:00–17:00, commander of the 3rd Regiment Captain Kruus informed me by telephone that the regiment's situation had become unbearably difficult. My answer to him was: *"I'm planning to launch a general offensive tomorrow and we must therefore keep the Rauna uplands in our possession at any cost. We must not*

withdraw before that. Do everything you can, everything." The response was: "Yes, Sir". And that was the end of the discussion.

In the meantime, at around 16:00, an event occurred on the bank of the Gauja River, which had a major impact on the course of the battle according to the memoirs of General von der Goltz. Namely, the soldiers of the 2nd Company of the 6th Regiment, who were based by the Gauja River, undressed themselves and rushed, stark naked, across the Gauja River near the Vindele ferry at 16:00, forced the enemy to flee, capturing a machine gun, and continued combating the enemy fiercely in the forest on the enemy's side of the river. We will recall this episode, which seems insignificant at first, later on, as it had a massive impact on the use of the Landeswehr's reserves.

At 16:00, I learned from the 3rd Regiment and the locals that one of the enemy's battalions (probably the column formation of Captain Malmede) has taken over the road junction neat Stārte Inn and its cyclists had already reached Mūrmuiža, which is 7 versts south of Valmiera. The latter circumstance made the situation extremely serious, because Valmiera, where my communication switchboard was based alongside the central command, was in serious danger. The enemy's breakthrough was becoming way too deep. I didn't have any more reserves in Valmiera. In order to block the Valmiera-Mūrmuiža road and win time until the arrival of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment, I sent the old armoured car Vanapagan under the command of Captain Peeter Feofanov with the support of the sapper commando of the 6th Regiment (14-15 men), which was my last reserve, to Mūrmuiža with the order to force the enemy's advance parties out of Mūrmuiža and stop the enemy's progress. I gave my last communication tools to Captain Feofanov, so that he could inform me about the situation.

In the meantime, let's take a look at the activities of the partisans in the direction of Liepa Manor. On the Skangāļi-Valmiera line, the partisans met the enemy at 1130 and stopped its progress with rifle and machine gun fire. Fierce combat started, lasting all day. The partisans fought with the support of their 6-inch battery, armoured trains, and the heavy and light batteries of the Latvians. They managed to break the resistance of the Germans and forced them to withdraw by the evening, gaining control of Liepa Manor that had been the base of the Germans. The partisans captured machine guns and a battery in the combat between Lode station and Liepa Manor. According to the detailed descriptions of the commanders of the partisan companies, the combat went as follows:

The commander of the 2nd Company writes: *"When we arrived at Lode station in the morning of 21 June, the Latvian troops were retreating, partly past Lode station*

towards Valmiera. In order to stop the withdrawal, we were forced to go to battle straight from the train without any preparation or information. The 2nd Company moved along the road left of the station, from Lode station to Liepa Manor uplands at 54.2 (the definition of items is not accurate. N.R.), picking up the escaping Latvians and forcing them back into battle. The barons opened machine gun and rifle fire when our formations got to the uplands. The company positioned itself by the windmill, along the road to the pub, and from there at an angle along the road leading to Lode station up to the left flank of the 4th Company, which was to the right of us. On the right flank, there was a platoon from the first company under the command of acting officer Niit, and the Latvians from the 2nd Cēsis Regiment under the command of the commander of the 3rd Battalion Captain Bērtelsons. The Germans had gained control of the forest, which was 300–400 steps away in front of Liepa Manor and the chapel and tried to move past our left flank and envelop us, keeping our formation under constant artillery fire. Soon, we launched a counteroffensive, which wasn't an immediate success because of the flat field, but with our battery fire we took Liepa Manor under our control after a day of combat and penetrated further across the uplands 53.0. We took rifles and hand grenades as spoils. We stopped for the night: the 2nd Company at Liepa Manor, the platoon of the 1st Company by the windmill near the manor, and the Latvians on the uplands 53.0."

The commander of the 3rd Company describes: "When the company reached Lode station, the men jumped off the train and stopped by the railway for some rest. About half an hour later, the Latvian units started fleeing from the forest in panic and reported that the Germans were on their heels. The company immediately moved into formation on the left side of the railway and started moving towards Cēsis in the direction of the railway under the leadership of the company's officers. The formation moved out of the forest and into an open field. Suddenly, the enemy opened fire with machine guns and rifles from the forest. The formation stopped by the edge of the forest. A shootout started and went on without a break until the evening. In the evening, we and the armoured train landing ran forward towards the railway line with the support of heavy artillery fire, right at the positions of the enemy in the forest. The enemy retreated from its positions whilst we moved forward in the forest, finding the dead bodies the enemy had left behind. When we reached the Silla Farm line, the enemy suddenly fired at us from six to seven machine guns from a distance of 30 to 40 steps. After a battle of about an hour and a half, the enemy retreated across the Rauna River. We spent the night in the forest with the 3rd armoured train landing.

The commander of the 4th Company Second Lieutenant Piip describes the offensive of his company as follows: "The 4th Company, in close contact with the other company, made its way to the open field. In the field, we saw a few of the Latvians who had

escaped. There was a path in the forest right in front of the companies' front, which cut through the road. Some kind of movement could be seen on this path – it was probably a caravan trying to escape from the company. As soon as our formation was spotted in the forest, we could hear shots fired from that direction. There was chaos on the road in the forest and we could see that something was being reversed. Soon, we heard gun fire and realised that it wasn't a caravan in front of us, but a battery in which a gun was visible. The enemy thought that we were retreating under their well aimed fire. The company suffered losses immediately after the first shots. Our machine guns opened fire. At first, when we not able to determine the correct distance yet, the enemy tried to drive our machine guns away with rapid and accurate fire. A shootout between a gun and a machine gun at 1000 steps started. Our machine gun, which was controlled by Lieutenant Piip himself, soon malfunctioned and the spring snapped after a couple of more shots. Lieutenant Piip gave the order to bring in the second Maxim but was wounded by a grenade fragment and couldn't continue controlling the machine gun, as his head was bandaged up. Ensign Narits was seriously wounded by the same grenade. Lieutenant Piip asked the commander of the 2nd Company to send Second Lieutenant Pedak as replacement. At 18:00, Lieutenant Pedak took over the companies and continued fighting with the battery. We'd captured one of the enemy's guns by the evening."

The success of Kuperjanov's partisans had a positive impact on the situation of the main forces' front and gave them some reassurance that the enemy's progress at the site of the breakthrough was not particularly fast.

At 20:00, armoured car Vanapagan reached Mürmuiža and Captain Feofanov established telephone communication with me. This way, I could be informed of any unexpected events in this direction. I asked Captain Feofanov to assemble the men of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment they encountered and use them to form a unit to strengthen the sapper company.

At 20:00, our gunfire hit the enemy's plane near Auciems Manor, which was captured in full working order. The enemy's pilots managed to escape into the nearby forest after a shootout with our soldiers.

At 23:00, the commander of the 3rd Regiment reported that all of the enemy's attacks on his new line had been repulsed and he was staying on the Baižkalns Manor–Rauna –Mieriņa Farm line on the Rauna uplands.

A directive of the Commander-in-Chief arrived in Valmiera at 15:30 on the day, which read: *"The German Landeswehr have started advancing on the entire Cēsis front. I order the 3rd Division and the armoured trains to launch a counteroffensive against the German Landeswehr. I order the 2nd Division to assist in the execution of these instructions (see the Commander-in-Chief directive received at 23:00 on 18 June. N. R.) –*

the 2nd Cavalry Regiment will be placed at the disposal of the 3rd Division." (I had no information about the cavalry regiment on that day).

This directive was given to me from Valga for execution on the order of the division commander according to the situation. As I've already said prior, my plan for an offensive was ready and I was only waiting for the arrival of the reserves promised to me.

All in all, the situation by the end of this important day was as follows. The advance of the 9th Regiment towards Lēdurga Manor was not yet felt by the enemy, who was advancing in the direction of Stalbe Manor. As the aerial reconnaissance activities of the enemy suggested, they were already worried about the Limbaži-Lēdurga direction, because the enemy's planes circled above Limbaži-Lēdurga three times on 21 June.

The 6th Regiment remained firmly in its place, stopping the enemy's advance. As a result of the quick and disorganised withdrawal of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment in the middle, the enemy managed to penetrate deep into our front. Here, the enemy's units reached Lode station-Skangāļi Manor-Stārte Inn and its advance parties managed to get as far as Mūrmuiža, but the timely arrival of Kuperjanov's partisans and their skilful strike stopped the enemy's advance in this direction. The partisans' strike from Lode station in the direction of t Liepa Manor hit the flank of the enemy's units that had just broken in and threatened to cut off their closest connection with the rear. The advance of the units of Captain Jena's column formation came to a halt after the partisans took over Liepa Manor. The armoured trains held the enemy back in the direction of the railway. The 3rd Regiment was forced to withdraw as a result of the rapid disintegration of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment, because the enemy was attacking the right flank after breaking through, but strong resistance allowed the 3rd Regiment to keep the Rauna uplands under its control during the day.

The battle subsided when darkness fell.

Between 23:00 and 24:00, operations adjutant Lieutenant Taft informed me on the order of the division commander that the echelon of the *Kalevlaste Malev* was going to be on its way and that the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment had assembled in Valga and will board the train to travel to Valmiera where it would be under my command. This message and the resistance of the flanks of the main forces calmed me down at first.

It was interesting to get a picture of what the enemy was doing on this difficult day of combat. General von der Goltz wrote in his memoirs: *"Major von Kleist, having initially received positive messages about the development of Captain*

Blanckenburg's activities, launched an offensive in the direction of Straupe and got as far as Straupe Village, but here they were pulled into combat that progressed very laboriously. His left flank ended up in a very perilous situation as a result of the failure of the side defence. The column formations of the Landeswehr were ordered to launch an offensive as a result of the pilot's incorrect message that Major Kleist's advance was successful and that his units had reached Lenči across Straupe."

This is a description of the events on 20 June.

On 21 June, the combat in the middle progressed as follows according to the description of General von der Goltz. *"Both column formations (i.e. Captain Jena's and Captain Malmede's – N. R.) fell into a trap after initial success, whilst panic gripped one of the squadrons that consisted of Imperial Germans and had been moved to the front, which also paralysed the other units, so that both columns barely managed to withdraw by fighting hard. Major Fletcher, who led the activities of the Landeswehr columns, stepped up as a brave soldier and managed to restore the situation and the morale in the central column, so that the column continued fighting.*

This account tells us how the strike by the partisans affected the units of Jena's column formation as well as the ones of Malmede's column.

"The situation under Cēsis," writes von der Goltz, "was worse, because Vönnu itself was under threat due to the recklessness of the younger leadership and the inadequate defence of the bridges. The situation was barely kept under control with the help of the caravan's defence crews. This is why the higher command was forced to use the reserve of the corps, which had been designated to defend the left column formation (i.e. Jena's column – N. R.), to defend Cēsis. This reserve also had to help the column formation of Major von Kleist from the other side if necessary. Three of the four battalions left near Ogre-Valle at the start of the operation were moved under Cēsis to replace the used reserves."

This illustrates the importance of the small episode, where the 2nd Company of the 6th Regiment undressed and went on a reconnaissance mission near the Vindele ferry at 16:00 on 2 June, in the progress of the battle from the enemy's point of view.

According to the description of General von der Goltz, a similar situation developed by the evening of the 21st among the enemy's troops.

We obviously knew nothing about it at the time. Of course, it would've spared me a lot of heartache and moral stress and tiredness had we known what was going on. Once again, an old truth was proven – when you're struggling in battle, it isn't easier for the enemy either, but unfortunately we only see our own struggles. The reports of the regiment commanders during the day only spoke of hardships.

The difficult events of the day, especially the moral effort that was necessary because of the failure of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment, exhausted me completely by nighttime. The situation in the direction of Starti remained critical, even though the activities of the partisans managed to stop the advance of the enemy temporarily. The enemy may have had reserves that it could've used to end the success of Kuperjanov's partisans, maybe even repulse them, and then continue its movement towards Valmiera at the place of the breakthrough and envelope the 3rd Regiment. The question was, when would the Battalion of the *Kalevlaste Malev* and the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment arrive?

I ordered Second Lieutenant Jaan Luukas to stay on guard by the telephone and sometimes make calls to ask about the situation, but primarily maintain communication with the division staff and make sure he knew exactly how the echelons were moving. I hit the sack as I was, fully clothed and with my boots on, and immediately fell into a deep sleep. Second Lieutenant Luukas woke me at 04:00 on 22 June and told me that nothing much had happened on the front in the night – only reconnaissance efforts had been made. There had been engagements between our and the German scouts throughout the night. A major engagement occurred on the front of the partisans, where the combined reconnaissance patrol of the partisans and the armoured train landings attacked the German reconnaissance cavalry, who fled in panic. Then, Second Lieutenant Luukas reported that the Battalion of *Kalevlaste Malev* had arrived on the front at 03:00 and was unloading 2 versts north of Lode station, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment had just arrived at Valmiera station and Colonel Otto Heinze was waiting for my instructions on further action. Second Lieutenant Luukas added that a car was waiting outside to take me to the station. I jumped into the car without even washing myself and was taken to the station. It was a nice sunny morning. The arrival of the reserves, the good weather, the short sleep – they all made me feel fresh and positive again. I remember well that I was in an exceptionally good mood. When I got to the station, I met Colonel Heinze, who was walking in front of the station and was also in a good mood. The unloading of the battalion was led by its commander Captain Aleksander Schervel (Selvet). Colonel Heinze told me that the battery was going to arrive with the next echelon.

I immediately started solving the situation. I described the state of affairs to Colonel Heinze, introduced the plan of the counterstrike made on 21 June and requested that a company be left in the reserve for me until the arrival of the battery. After the arrival of the battery, I will send both the company and the battery to him and ask him to immediately start moving towards the Stārte Inn across

Mūrmuiža after the unloading is completed. I asked him to take the armoured car Vanapagan with him from Mūrmuiža, then take the Starti road junction under his control and look for contact with the Battalion of the Kalevlaste Malev on this line. After this, move forward towards Jaunrauna and look for communication to the left with the 3rd Regiment in the direction of Smurģi Farm. I added that as soon as communication to the left and the right has been established and I've spoken to the division commander, I intend to launch a counteroffensive according to the directive of the Commander-in-Chief. I introduced the initial plan of the counteroffensive to Colonel Heinze. According to this plan, the counteroffensive was to be carried out in three groups. The right group, the 9th and 6th Regiments with their batteries, had to act under my direct command. The second group, in the middle, the armoured trains with the partisans and the Kalevlaste Malev unit, under the command of Captain Parts. The third, the left group, the 3rd Regiment, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment, and if communication can be established, also the 2nd Cavalry Regiment under the command of Colonel Heinze.

The coordination of the operative activities of the groups until the full development of success was supposed to be left to me at first. I intended to keep the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment in reserve.

After the discussion, I went back to Valmiera and called General Pödder to inform him about my plan. He answered that everyone agreed with me and that I would be left in charge of the general coordination of the operations.

Activities developed as follows in the middle, where Kuperjanov's partisans and the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment had to join forces to crush the enemy that had managed to break through:

Unloading finished, the Kalevlaste Malev started advancing in the direction of Skangaļi across the Lizītes Farm. The landing of Armoured Train N2 assault unit joined the Kalevlaste Malev near Lizītes Farm. Between Lizītes Farm and Skangaļi, the advance parties of the Kalevlaste Malev met the enemy's battery with a caravan. The Germans, finding themselves in a difficult situation, tried to get out of it by deceiving the Kalevlaste Malev: they waved a white flag and asked to send representatives for negotiations, saying that they were going to surrender. However, when our and the German representatives approached each other, a Landeswehr officer demanded that the men of the Kalevlaste Malev give themselves up as prisoners. The Kalevlaste Malev responded to this impudence by opening fire. The Landeswehr battery also opened fire and fled in the direction of Skangaļi. The men of the Kalevlaste Malev quickly chased the enemy and broke their resistance attempt in Skangaļi Manor. At 06:30, the 3rd Company of the

Kalevlaste Malev and the armoured train landing charged into Skangali Manor, where they took two 3-inch guns as war spoils. The 1st and 2nd Companies of the Kalevlaste Malev, which moved across Silmatuļi Farm, were fired at from the side and stopped to figure out the situation. It became evident that this was a misunderstanding with the Latvians, who 'welcomed' us with fire. At the time when the 1st and 2nd Companies of the Kalevlaste Malev stopped, the enemy attacked the men of the Kalevlaste Malev and the armoured train landing who had broken into Skangali Manor. Confusion followed and we lost Skangali Manor. After gaining control of Skangali Manor, the enemy opened heavy machine gun and mortar fire from there. A battery from the direction of the Stārtes Inn supported the enemy's activities. The company that was kicked out of Skangali Manor joined the 1st and the 2nd Companies. Captain Jaan Riesenbergs (Riisenbergs) took charge of all three companies and launched a new attack. The Latvian battery supported his activities. The first attack ended in failure. At 13:00, the men of the Kalevlaste Malev attacked Skangali Manor again and managed to take it. The war spoils included one of the two guns they had taken the first time but were then forced to leave behind. Other spoils included eight Maxim machine guns, two light machine guns, a lot of ammunition and other supplies. The Landeswehr left 60 dead soldiers behind. The Kalevlaste Malev lost 62 soldiers, who were killed, wounded or concussed. When we consider the relatively small number of men in the Kalevlaste Malev, we can definitely say that the fiercest battle of the day was the one near Skangali Manor. It was also the decisive moment.

At 06:00, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment, the 5th, 6th and 7th Companies and the scout commando left Valmiera to execute the task they had been assigned. When the battalion arrived at Sproģi Farm, they found out that Landeswehr's scouts had already been there. The battalion ran into the enemy as it left Sproģi Farm. A heavy shootout started. We see that the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment arrived at the site of the breakthrough at the moment when the men of the Kalevlaste Malev were being forced out of Skangali Manor. It was around 09:00 o'clock. At this moment, Captain Riesenbergs arrived on the order of the chief of the Kalevlaste Malev to get the latter organised again. The 5th Company of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment advanced towards the enemy seen in the direction of Rauna. The 6th Company tried to envelop the enemy from the west and the 7th Company from the east. The scouts were in the battalion's reserve. The battalion's advance was supported by our light and the Latvian heavy battery. Armoured car Vanapagan also helped the advancing companies. Between 12:00 and 13:00, i.e. at the moment when the Kalevlaste Malev was launching a new offensive on Skangali, the 2nd

Battalion of the 1st Regiment under the direct command of Captain Schervel broke the enemy's resistance with a courageous attack. The enemy started withdrawing. At this moment, the Kalevlaste Malev, with Captain Riesenbergs at the front, charged at Skangaļi. According to the description of Captain Riesenbergs, the attack was carried out perfectly. Captain Riesenbergs writes: *"It was a proper charge. I was about 10 steps ahead and the men followed me in perfect formations. Nobody lagged behind. Even the wounded crawled forward. So, we covered 700 steps of an empty field in one go whilst under the constant heavy fire of the Germans, but unfortunately only two of us were killed during this charge. We had some strange kind of luck! The Germans resisted until the last minute. I remember one of them, he was still firing his machine gun without lifting his glance when I got to him. I snuffed out his life with a revolver bullet."* (The units here were purely Landeswehr ones, which according to General von der Goltz's memoirs were the strongest in terms of morale. N. R.) Captain Riesenbergs goes on: *"Some of the Germans made it out of the manor, some fled into the cellars and barns, and lobbed hand grenades at us from there. We had to take building after building, and everyone inside got killed. The enemy had 40 dead on the site. In addition to them, many of the enemy's men fell behind the manor. Speaking of the men's morale, I can say that they were extremely belligerent. They couldn't wait to get in the battle."*

At 14:00, the withdrawal of the Landeswehr units fighting against the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment turned into an escape. This happened because the Kalevlaste Malev had taken control of Skangaļi Manor.

The Starti Inn was taken over by the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment between 14:00 and 15:00. The spoils taken here included five machine guns, a lot of ammunition and other supplies. The Germans left 31 dead on the battlefield here as well. The documents that were found revealed that in addition to the Landeswehr units, the Petersdorff unit of the Iron Division, which General von der Goltz calls *"die bewährte Abteilung Petersdorff"* in his memoirs, also fought against the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment.

It was becoming evident that the time was right for a general offensive after Skangaļi Manor and the Stārtes Inn had been taken over.

Now, let's take a look at what was happening on the left flank of our main forces. On the front of the 3rd Regiment, the enemy started to advance towards Baižkalns Manor and Rauna, and along the Riga-Pskov stone road in the direction of Krastini Farm, at 06:30. The enemy advanced with the support of two armoured cars on the Riga-Pskov stone road. The enemy's activities against the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Regiment became particularly fierce under Baižkalns Manor and Rauna. The enemy attacked the battalion several times from 06:30 until noon, but

was repelled every time with the fire of our guns and machine guns. In order to slow down the attack and the enemy's advance, the commander of the battalion Captain Paul Triik, taking advantage of the terrain, ordered a small squad with light machine guns led by Lieutenant Jõgevest to attack the advancing enemy from behind. This bold move was highly successful. The squad skilfully sneaked behind the enemy and spread terror in the enemy's caravans. The enemy's drivers started fleeing towards Veselava Manor with their carts. At this very moment, the Rauna Rectory, where the enemy's battery and mortars were based, went up in flames as a result of our fire. The enemy escaped from the manor. All of this made the situation easier for the 3rd Battalion.

All of the enemy's offensives in the region of the stone road were repelled.

So, what was happening in the region of the armoured trains at this time? Kuperjanov's partisans also launched an offensive in the morning when the Kalevlaste Malev started advancing and forced the enemy to withdraw. The partisans continued their advance towards Jaunrauna Manor, trying to cut off all of the withdrawal routes of the enemy fighting under the Stārtes Inn and Skangaļi Manor that would've allowed them to move to Cēsis, and to get behind the enemy that was attacking the 3rd Regiment. The trap set by me and Captain Parts for the enemy that had penetrated between 10:00 and 11:00 on 21 June was completely in place. The units of Captain Jena and Captain Malmede walked straight into the trap and suffered great losses.

Now, let's take a look at the battle on the right flank. As I already mentioned, the units of the 9th Regiment encountered the enemy on 21 June in the trenches by Vidrižu Manor and did not gain any ground until the evening. The units of the 9th Regiment continued their offensive at dawn. At 13:20, the commander of the 9th Regiment reported that the units of the regiment had gained control of the Vidrižu and Lēdurga Manors after a fierce battle and that he intended to advance in the direction of Englārte. This intention went against my plan in every way possible and moreover, I believed that such deep advancement was extremely dangerous as the 9th regiment was weakened due to the small number of men and the lack of communication equipment. I asked the division commander to change the direction of the 9th regiment's movement and aim all of his forces at Lēdurga Manor to help the 6th Regiment launch a strike under Straupe. I also ordered the commander of the 6th Regiment Captain Karl Tallo to contact Captain Johan Schmidt, the commander of the 9th Regiment. Captain Tallo telegraphed the following message to Captain Schmidt: *"The regiment is fighting by Stralbe Manor north of Straupe for the second day. All of the enemy's offensives have so far been repelled. Our offensive here has*

also failed. Please put a section of our troops in the front near Vidrižu and launch a heavy strike on the enemy from behind along the Lēdurga–Straupe road.”

I sent the following order to Captain Schmidt on behalf of the division commander: *“I read that in order to secure the situation, it would be important to implement the proposal of the commander of the 6th Regiment made in his telegram number 652. Roopa should be taken in the night of 22/23 June if you manage to make it there in time. No offensive may be launched at Englārte before Straupe has been taken. Please let me know how you could help us take Straupe”* (I sent the telegram at 17:26). Now, let’s take a detailed look at the course of the battle on the front of the 6th Regiment. The enemy’s offensive on the front of the 6th Regiment started particularly fiercely in the direction of Stalbe Manor. The farms around this manor changed hands several times.

In the region of the 4th Company of the 6th Regiment near Silke, the enemy attacked us with great force several times during the day, trying to cross the Gauja River. All the offensives were repulsed. During the day, the enemy made several attempts to break through the regiment’s front at the centre of the 6th Regiment in the direction of Mucenieki Farm. The enemy managed to advance to the Stalbe–Cēsis road several times, but every time they were repulsed with a counterstrike supported by the armoured cars Toonela and Estonia, which kept moving along this road. The cooperation of these two armoured cars in battle was exemplary. The 6th Regiment held its front firmly. The time for a counterattack seemed to be right here as well, especially because the 9th Regiment was so successful.

At 14:00, as we can see, the time was finally right for a general counteroffensive. I informed the division commander in Valga about this and after getting the consent and having a discussion with Captain Parts, I issued the following order to Colonel Heinze and Captain Kruuse on behalf of the division commander at 14:52: *“The commander of the 3rd Regiment must inform the commander of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (communication with the commander of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was established between 07:00 and 09:00 on 22 June), that he must immediately move to the left flank of the 3rd Regiment.*

The 3rd Regiment, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, the 3rd and 4th Batteries from the 3rd Artillery Regiment and the 1st Battery from the 1st Artillery Regiment create a group with Colonel Heinze, whose task is to repulse the enemy and to take Cēsis with the armoured train units, whereby the 2nd Cavalry Regiment must cut off the enemy’s rear with a courageous strike.”

At 21:00, the enemy once again attacked Stalbe Manor with big forces, but was forced to escape, leaving two machine guns behind. At 22:25, the commander of

the 9th Regiment reported that his advance parties had taken Biriņi Manor under its control and taken three machine guns as spoils. A little later, a new telegram from Captain Schmidt arrived in response to my aforementioned order: *"In order to implement the proposal of the commander of the 6th Regiment, I will send two companies to Straupe. I don't know if we can execute this task tonight, because an enemy squadron stands in the former world war trenches 6 versts from Lēdurga towards Straupe. This position must be taken from the enemy beforehand. It's very difficult to go behind Straupe, because we would have to cross the river, but this doesn't scare us much."*

At 23:55, General Pödder telegraphed from Valga that the destroyer *Vambola* would arrive at the Ainaži (Heinaste) Harbour in the morning of 23 June and it will support the right flank of the 9th Regiment.

The situation at the centre and on the left flank by the evening was as follows. In the railway region, the armoured trains fought the enemy all day, but didn't make it across the Rauna River on that day. The advance parties of the partisans fought the withdrawing enemy and made it to the line of the Rauna River. Following the enemy who had been crushed near Skangāli Manor, the Kalevlaste Malev made it to the line of the Obuļi – Irbītes Farms by the evening. The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment also made it to the same line. It was near Rauska Farm at 22:00. The battalion had dispatched the armoured car *Vanapagan* for communication with the 3rd Regiment, which bravely drove into the midst of the withdrawing enemy, scattering the men around and capturing three machine guns, horses and carts as spoils. The 3rd Regiment repulsed all the offensives of the enemy and, after receiving the order, launched a counteroffensive and forced the enemy to withdraw in disarray. Up to 100 of the enemy's men were killed on the front of the 3rd Regiment on 21 June (military activity logbook of the regiment). According to the explanations of the locals, large caravans moved towards Riga to carry away the wounded.

All in all, the Landeswehr had been trapped and crushed by the evening. General von der Goltz himself admits this when speaking about the entrapment of the column formations of Captain Jena and Captain Malmede, which managed to find a way out after a difficult battle (*"So dass beide Kolonnen sich nur mühsam unter schweren Kämpfen nach rückwärts durchschlagen konnten"*). The second trap for the Iron Division on the right flank was also almost ready. Another trap was waiting for Böckelmann's column formation on the left flank. Here, everything depended on the skills and efforts of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

The units of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment were more than mere onlookers during the battle on 22 June. The units of this regiment, mixed with our units,

participated in the general counteroffensive. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of this regiment, about 25 officers and 350 bayonets, acted between the armoured train units and the 1st Battalion, about 150 bayonets, was on the right flank of our 3rd Regiment. The Latvian batteries, which were initially based around Jaunzemis Farm and later joined us, fought well. The Latvian artillery units were morally above their infantry units. The commander of the Latvian light battery demonstrated particularly firm leadership (unfortunately, I don't remember his name). I executed my plan to take the Latvian units in reserve already on 23 and 24 June.

As I summarised the situation and discussed it with the division commander, I issued the following directive at 23:17: *"We cannot give the enemy the opportunity to regroup after the blow delivered to them in the two-day battle. We must continue crushing the enemy and take Võnnu.*

Taking Cēsis will be the task of the armoured trains and their assault units.

The group of Colonel Heinze must attack alongside the assault units of the armoured trains, with their left flank, in the direction of Veselava-Ieriķi and gain control of Ieriķi, whilst the 2nd Cavalry Regiment must be sent behind the enemy. The offensive must start at 03:00. The 6th and 9th Regiments will continue their operation to take Straupe Village."

This is how the decisive day of the historical battle ended. The enemy had been beaten at the centre, right where their best forces had been. The momentum of their offensive at other places had been broken. A lot of spoils had been taken during the day. Our men were exhausted, but this did not dampen their joy over the victory.

On 23 June at 05:00, the units of the 6th Regiment started advancing towards Straupe, but the enemy was gone from there. They had withdrawn in the night. The activities of the 9th Regiment were effective. At 09:00, the 5th and 6th Companies of the 9th Regiment under the command of Captain Kolts arrived in Straupe. The latter and his company broke the resistance of the cavalry troop of von Pahlen (two squadrons) near Juglas Manor in the night battle, thereby executing his task extremely well. At 05:00, the 1st Battalion of the 6th Regiment advanced across the Gauja River with the support of the 1st Battery's fire; the armoured trains with the landing units advanced across the Rauna River and we took Cēsis at 07:30. Here, our spoils included three damaged heavy guns, one locomotive, 102 carriages with military supplies, lorries and cars, machine guns, light machine guns, ammunition and other supplies.

At 09:15, I called the division commander about this and he reported the events to the general command at 10:20.

The enemy was withdrawing in all directions. In order to chase the withdrawing enemy, after discussing this with the division commander, I wrote the following directive at 10:00: *"We took Cēsis. The enemy is fleeing. We must not give the enemy the opportunity to regroup for a counteroffensive. Therefore, I order:*

"The 9th Regiment with the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 6th Regiment and two armoured cars must take Inčukalns, advance to the Riga-Pskov stone road and cut off the enemy's withdrawal route. The 3rd and 4th Battalions of the 6th Regiment will stay in my reserve in Straupe.

"The commander of the Armoured Train Division with his units will advance towards Riga to help the 6th and the 9th Regiments."

"Colonel Heinze will advance in the direction of Veselava-Ieriķi with his group and take control of the Ieriķi railway junction whilst the 2nd Cavalry Regiment must take the Nītaure road junction."

The right group, which was extremely important in the situation and also had to make great efforts, remained under my command.

Chasing the enemy started with this directive. Our men had to exert themselves to the maximum. We had to keep the terrain in mind and not allow the enemy to regroup for a new resistance effort. Therefore, it was extremely important to conquer the positions on the Englārte-Inčukalns line used in the World War as quickly as possible. The memoirs of General von der Goltz indicate that his intention was to put up resistance here by keeping both banks of the Gauja River under his control. The terrain was in his favour, as trenches with wire barriers from the World War were there. It can be said that the situation for this was ideal. It was necessary to strike quickly, but also cautiously.

In the evening of 23 June, the 9th Regiment already had contact with the enemy in their secured position in Englārte. The hot-headed regiment commander did not follow my directives to the letter and without waiting for the arrival of the 6th Regiment or for me getting there, launched an attack on the position already at 18:00 on 23 June. Almost the entire Iron Division had also assembled on a narrow front here. The bold attack wasn't fully successful, but it completely destroyed the morale of the enemy. The night attacks of the 9th Regiment created panic not only amongst the crews of the Iron Division, but even more so among its leadership. General von der Goltz himself confirms this in his memoirs.

I arrived at Englārte in the morning of 24 June and rushed the movement of the 6th Regiment on the one hand and the movement of Colonel Heinze's group on the other hand.

On 24 June at 10:00, our units forced the enemy's rearguard out of Murjāņi (Neuhof) Manor. The main forces of the enemy had already withdrawn from the Englārte position in the morning. By noon, our advance parties had reached the northern bank of the Gauja River. In this rearguard battle, the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment captured three guns, three mortars and two machine guns as war spoils.

Kuperjanov's partisans took Sigulda by the evening of 24 June after having an engagement with the enemy's rearguard

At 16:30, the following directive of the Commander-in-Chief was delivered to me from Valga on the order of the division commander: *"The next task of the 3rd Division and the armoured trains is to throw the German Landeswehr behind the Gauja River-Sigulda-Nītaure line and, if there's any strength left, move forward and also chase the German Landeswehr out of Riga across the Daugava River."*

I spent the whole night of 24/25 June on travelling. Namely, I and Captain Parts called at the staff of Colonel Heinze that night and also visited the staff of the commander of the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment. Namely, I ordered the 2nd Latvian Cēsis Regiment to leave Cēsis with its batteries and organise its movement in such a manner that they would be at Līgatnes station by 14:00 on 25 June. The regiment moved at night.

On 25 June, we started pushing the enemy on the secured position at Inčukalns. As a result of the combined activities of the 6th and 9th Regiments and Kuperjanov's partisans, the enemy was forced out of the secured position in the morning of 26 June.

The first part of the Commander-in-Chief's directive had been executed by the morning of 26 June.

The enemy withdrew to the secured Jugla River position of the World War. The rear had to be organised in order to take Riga. This was a very difficult task, as the bridge across the Amata River by Āraiši was completely destroyed. The division commander told the commander of the Administration of the General Staff in the Hughes telegraph call at 12:00 on 26 June the following: *"Our troops are advancing from Englārte and Sigulda towards the Inčukalns station. The advance is seriously hindered by the establishment of communication and feeding the men."* When the commander of the Administration of the General Staff asked: *"When do you expect to get to Riga?"*, the division commander replied: *"We can go to Riga only after the men have been properly fed. At present, they are starving, because the food cannot catch up due to the lack of horses. When they get food, they will go to Riga."* The division commander didn't say yet that they were also running out of ammunition. The

division commander was right and leaving the entire chasing operation to me to organise, he put all his energy into organising the rear and preparing for the offensive on Riga. Indeed, I had companies that hadn't eaten or slept for two days. They'd covered a lot of ground. The division's staff was still in Valga.

The entire chasing operation, especially the battles on the secured Engläarte-Inčukalns line, was tactically very interesting, but I cannot go into detail due to the lack of space and it's also outside the scope of the task.

The first half of the Commander-in-Chief's directive had been fully and brilliantly executed when the Engläarte-Inčukalns position was conquered and the Battle of Straupe-Cēsis-Rauna had been ended in the manner it deserved. The leaders and the crews demonstrated extraordinary sacrifice and effort.

So, what were the main factors of our victory?

History must assess the steps taken by the central command. It's not up to us to do this. Let others assess us. We can assess our subordinates.

In this sense, it has to be said that the main reasons were our men's desire to fight, and persistence, and the immense selflessness of our leaders and crew. I haven't seen this kind of selflessness in the War of Independence before or after the Landeswehr operation. The morale of our leaders and team was excellent and in this sense, we really had a massive advantage over the enemy. Only the purely Landeswehr units could measure up to us to some extent. The units of the Iron Division and the Imperial Germans in the Landeswehr units had the mindset of mercenaries. Von der Goltz himself admits that the morale of some of his units was low. In his book (p 212), he says that he's aware of four instances where the units were gripped by catastrophic panic, so that the higher leadership was forced to order them to withdraw.

The second decisive factor in our victory was the cold blooded nature, persistence, strong initiative and personal bravery of our leaders.

The third factor was that we didn't underestimate the enemy and organised our combat activities accordingly. The demand for strong communication runs through everything like a red line, starting from the Commander-in-Chief. There were no interruptions in communication on the hardest day of the Straupe-Cēsis-Rauna battle. Looking for communication and establishing communication was the first concern of the regiment commanders. For example, on the initiative of the commander of the 3rd Regiment in the Cēsis-Rauna battle, I had three cables to use for communication with him, which had been built in three directions, so that I could communicate with the 3rd Regiment until the end, despite the enemy's activities. We could see that the enemy underestimated our capabilities and was

therefore not cautious enough. Irrespective of their great technical abilities – planes, telegraph (radio communication), a big number of cars – the lack of communication in their activities is obvious.

The fourth factor – it can be said that the mental connection between our leaders in this operation was excellent. Personal meetings were held before battle when there was no technical communication, especially when there were decisive moments in battle and during the chasing period after battle. There was uninterrupted communication between the leaders of the two groups, i.e. Captain Parts and myself, at the time of combat. Sometimes, harsh words were uttered at meetings, but the issue was always immediately clarified, and we parted with a handshake having full faith in one another.

Fifthly, our action plan was simple. The idea to launch activities on a wide front at the same time runs like a red line. Our situation was more difficult than General von der Goltz's. General von der Goltz himself writes that to his forces, the combat under Cēsis was an operation on internal lines in a narrow space. It was correct, but only for the Landeswehr. The Iron Division was already rather far. It had its own direction and it was important, but communication with the units of the Iron Division was not exemplary.

Sixth. The leaders of both groups firmly believed in each other at the most critical moment of the battle, at 10:00 on 21 June, when they developed the plan for destroying the Landeswehr and both of them stuck to it irrespective of the critical situation on 21 June. This faith and certainty was passed on to the regiment commanders, which is proven by the actions of Captain Kruus.

Seventh. The quick action of the general command in sending the reserves.

Eighth. The rapid and orderly organisation of the rear. This factor must be considered extremely important because our morale and material possibilities for battle depended on it.

Our losses

In the Battle of Limbaži–Straupe–Cēsis–Rauna from 19–23 June 1919.

Fell in the 3rd Division

Date	Flag unit	Rank, surname, first name	Unit	Region where fell
19 June	—	—	—	—
20 June	9th Infantry Regiment	Cadet Reinhold, Friedrich	Commander of the Reconnaissance Commando	Limbaži
20 June	9th Infantry Regiment	Private Vekram, Georg	5th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	Private Pörk, Nikolai	10th Company	Near <i>Bērze</i>
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	Private Raudsepp, Mihkel	10th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Kopruska, August	10th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Raudsepp, Rudolf	10th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Võik, Johannes	11th Company	Rauna–Veselava Region
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Tamm, Aleksander	11th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Erilane, August	11th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Pruus, Karl	11th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Vaena, Paul	12th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Trossik, Albert	12th Company	
21 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Pokal, Paul	12th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Matson, Georg	9th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Sagar, Johannes	9th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Tilkson, Jakob	9th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Matson, Eduard	9th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Tiido, Artur	9th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Leppik, Karl	9th Company	

Date	Flag unit	Rank, surname, first name	Unit	Region where fell
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Kruuberg, Johannes	9th Company	Rauna-Veselava Region
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Mikk, Johannes	10th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Palos, Johannes	10th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Paidrov, Eduard	10th Company	
22 June	3rd Infantry Regiment	PVT Mustson, Jaan	10th Company	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Ensign Kõks, Mihkel	7th Company	Near Stalbe Manor
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Junior Non-commissioned Officer Piir, Jaan	7th Company	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	PVT Roosa, Jaan	7th Company	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	PVT Tomson, Ado	7th Company	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	PVT Soots, Hendrik	7th Company	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Sergeant Major Kaigas, Aleksander	Company of School Students	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Sergeant Major Kabel, Aleksander	Company of School Students	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Ensign Peelberg, Jaan	Narrow-gauge Armoured Train N4 landing	
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	PVT Vaks, Johannes		
22 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Orderly Konks, Jaan		
22 June	9th Infantry Regiment	Ensign Koger, Juhan	Commander of 8th Company	Near Limbaži
22 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Kirkmann, Otto	8th Company	
23 June	6th Infantry Regiment	PVT Vihman, Jakob	Company of School Students	Near Straupe
23 June	6th Infantry Regiment	Sergeant Major Turu, Arnold	Company of School Students	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	Corporal Mitt, Peeter	3rd Company	Near Englärte
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Enn, Mihkel	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Juurikas, Harald	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Kärstna, Johannes	3rd Company	

Date	Flag unit	Rank, surname, first name	Unit	Region where fell
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Kulbok, Hans	3rd Company	Near Englärte
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Lilienthal, Aleksei	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Poot, Hendrik	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Schvalbe, Maks	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Tamm, Aleksander	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Veeber, Aleksander	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Verbak, August	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Lentsment, Peet	3rd Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Kiling, Voldemar	7th Company	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	Corporal Lind, Juhan	Machine Gun Commando	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Tõke, Juhan	Reconnaissance Platoon	
23 June	9th Infantry Regiment	PVT Mangelson, Heinrich	Reconnaissance Platoon	

Fell in Armoured Train Division

Date	Flag unit	Rank, surname, first name	Unit	Region where fell
19 June	—	—	—	—
20 June	—	—	—	—
21 June	Armoured Train Kapten Irv	Ensign Künnapuu, Johan		Near Lõde Station
21 June		Private Kiik, Voldemar		
21 June		PVT Kuus, Voldemar		
21 June		PVT Pärn, Magnus		
21 June	Armoured Train N3	Senior Non-commissioned Officer Raun, Otto		
21 June		PVT Kuusik, Otto		
21 June		PVT Katvelt, Ado		
21 June		PVT Mägraken, Ernst		

Date	Flag unit	Rank, surname, first name	Unit	Region where fell
22 June	Armoured Train N2	Ensign Vares, Boris	Landing	Near Skangali Manor
22 June		PVT Kuldvere, Eduard	Landing	
22 June		Orderly Böckler, Karl	Landing	
22 June	Kuperjanov Partisan Battalion	Junior Non-commissioned Officer Väljaots, Johannes		Near Lõde Station
22 June	Battalion of <i>Kalevlaste Malev</i>	Acting Officer Vildevink, Johannes	2nd Company	Lõde - Skangali Region
22 June		Senior Non-commissioned Officer Priggo, Paul	1st Company	
22 June		PVT Eller, Oskar	1st Company	
22 June		PVT Treiman, Heinrich	1st Company	
22 June		PVT Sassi, Oskar	1st Company	
22 June		PVT Veevald, Voldemar	1st Company	
22 June		PVT Kärner, August	1st Company	
22 June		Junior Non-commissioned Officer Riiberg, Eduard	2nd Company	
22 June		PVT Räbin, Eduard	2nd Company	
22 June		PVT Laupa, Priido	2nd Company	
22 June		PVT Vain, Aleksander	2nd Company	
22 June		PVT Bauman, Aleksander	2nd Company	
22 June		PVT Kannof, Villem	2nd Company	
22 June		Junior Non-commissioned Officer Vaher, Bernhard	Work Company	
22 June		PVT Andresson, Johannes	Work Company	
22 June		PVT Sirts, Abel	Work Company	
22 June		PVT Evert, Johannes	Work Company	
22 June		PVT Soopik, Aleksander	Work Company	

OUR LOSSES

In the Battle of Limbaži-Straupe-Cēsis-Rauna 19-23 June 1919

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*) No data

Summary of losses

Missing men are included among the fallen

19 and 20 June

1 officer 1 soldier killed

1 officer 32 soldiers wounded and concussed

21 June

2 officers 35 soldiers deceased

3 officers 90 soldiers wounded and concussed

22 June

4 officers 41 soldiers deceased

3 officers 118 soldiers wounded and concussed

23 June

26 soldiers deceased

2 officers 30 soldiers wounded and concussed

Total: 19-23 June

7 officers 103 soldiers deceased

9 officers 272 soldiers wounded and concussed

Enemy's losses

According to the reports of unit commanders, the number of the enemy's men killed in battles from 19 to 23 June 1919 was 274.

Spoils of war

According to the reports of the commanders of units, our spoils in the battles from 19 to 23 June 1919 were: 127 rifles, 39 heavy machine guns, eight mortars, two planes, one motorcycle, one light and two heavy trucks, one locomotive, 102 carriages with military equipment. In addition to this, ammunition, horses, carts and other equipment was taken from the enemy, the exact numbers of which are unknown.

Names of the senior leaders under whose leadership the Limbaži-Straupe-Cēsis-Rauna battle was won:

Commander of the 3rd Division Major General **Ernst Pödder**, general commander of the Landeswehr operation.

Chief of Staff of the 3rd Division Lieutenant Colonel of the General Staff **Nikolai Reek**, direct commander of the group of main forces of the division in

the battle as authorised by the Division Commander with the right to approve the operational activities of all groups on site.

Commander of the Armoured Train Division Captain **Karl Parts**, commander of the armoured train group.

Commander of the 1st Regiment Colonel **Otto Heinze**, commander of the left group after 23 June.

Commander of the 3rd Regiment Captain **Jaan Kruus**.

Commander of the 6th Regiment Captain **Karl Tallo**.

Commander of the 9th Regiment Captain **Johan Schmidt**.

Commander of the Kuperjanov Partisan Battalion Captain **Jaan Unt**.

Acting Commander of the *Kalevlaste Malev* Battalion Lieutenant **Otto Tief**, 19 to 23 June – Battalion Commander.

Commander of the 2nd Latvian Võnnu Regiment Colonel Krišjānis Berķis.

THE DEFENCE AND CONQUEST OF SAAREMAA IN 1917

Lieutenant-General N. Reek

Translated by Lieutenant R. J. Kokk, Estonian Navy

A. Arrangements for the Defence of the West Estonian Archipelago in the Great War

I. Strategic Importance of the Islands, their Characteristics and Assessment of the Geographical Situation

1. Strategic Importance of the Islands

The West Estonian Archipelago are the islands which lie off the western coast of mainland Estonia, i.e. Saaremaa, Muhu, Hiiumaa, and Vormsi, together with the neighbouring smaller islands. Those islands are separated from the mainland by the Suur Strait, Väinameri Strait¹, and Voosi Strait. Situated close to the mainland, and at the same time in direct contact with the open sea, these islands form an intermediate link between the open sea and the mainland. Easy connection with the mainland and direct contact with the international traffic arteries on the Baltic Sea enables the use of the West Estonian Archipelago as a favourable base for access to the mainland from the sea and vice versa. In appreciating the value of the West Estonian Archipelago from the viewpoint of overseas communications, we can see that the principal sea trade route from the West to the East passes near to these islands; this route divides into two branches before reaching the islands, one leading to the Gulf of Riga and the other continuing to the Gulf of Finland.

North-west of the West Estonian Archipelago, a third route branches off towards the north to the Gulf of Bothnia. Thus, a very important junction of sea communications is situated in the immediate vicinity of the West Estonian Archipelago, with two routes branching off to the East, one to the West, and one to the North. Owing to their favourable position, the West Estonian Archipelago

¹ Muhu Strait is older name version for Väinameri Strait (editor's note)

completely commands the Gulf of Riga, because who is master of the West Estonian Archipelago commands the only two entrances to the Gulf of Riga, i.e., the Irbe Strait and the Suur Strait.

As they are also situated very near to the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, these islands further afford control of the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, thus representing one side of the system of defences of the Gulf of Finland. Finally, the position of the West Estonian Archipelago enables it to exert a considerable influence on the defence and control of the Gulf of Bothnia.

Description of the West Estonian Archipelago.

The area of the West Estonian Archipelago equals 3972 sq. kilometres or 8 percent of the territory of Estonia. The largest of the islands is Saaremaa with an area of 2714 sq. kilometres. Saaremaa is also the biggest island in Estonian territorial waters. The islands of the West Estonian Archipelago, lying very close to each other, separated only by narrow straits, form a semi-circle off the western coast of Estonia. In addition, Saaremaa and Muhu Island are connected by a 3.5 km long causeway that crosses the Väike Strait. The large area of the islands and the fact that they have a number of peninsulas (Sõrve, Undva, Kõpu and Tahkuna) reaching far out to sea enables to create a powerful defensive system with a large effective radius based on the West Estonian Archipelago. The scope they afford for manoeuvre allows extensive operations with considerable forces. The Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga are deep enough for navigation by every kind of warship. Especially important for operations in the Gulf of Riga is the 28-kilometre-wide Irbe Strait as the principal (western) entrance to the Gulf and its connection with the open Baltic Sea.

The Muhu Strait, surrounded by islands, is an independent watercourse. Owing to its shallow waters it is navigable only by smaller craft. The Russians dredged channels in the Muhu Strait to enable larger ships pass as well. They also dredged Soela Strait to make it passable for torpedo boats. Muhu Strait is connected:

- with the Baltic Sea through the Hari Strait and the Voosi Strait to the north, and through the Soela Strait to the west,
- with the Gulf of Riga through the Suur Strait to the south.

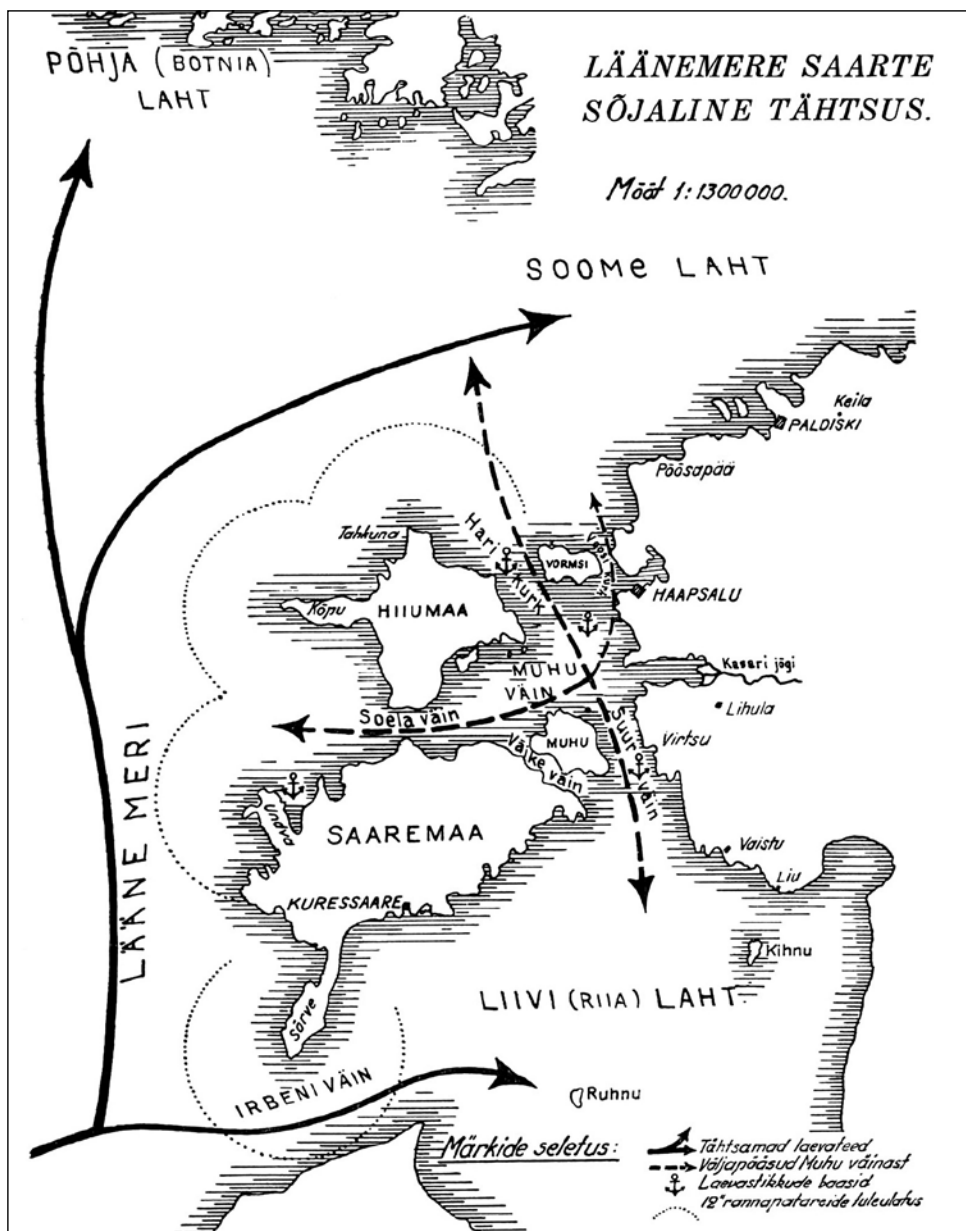
A situation can be visualised in which the entrances to the Gulf of Riga and to the Muhu Strait are blocked, with an attacking fleet having its main base in the Tagalaht Bay on Saaremaa Island, whilst the smaller ships of the defenders will be based in the Muhu Strait, with larger vessels operating in its southern and northern entrances. In such a case the channels, one of which connects the mouth of the Gulf of Finland with the Gulf of Riga through Muhu Strait, and the second provides

an outlet for smaller vessels straight west – to the open Baltic, would gain special importance. The effective defence of these channels by coastal artillery is essential in order to deny their use by the enemy.

Ice conditions in waters around the islands vary greatly – the Baltic is frozen on very rare occasions, and solid ice off the western and north-western coasts of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa rarely lasts longer than 20 to 40 days. The Irbe Strait also covered by ice for no more than 40 days on average, while the central part of the Gulf of Riga freezes up only in exceptionally severe winters and for a short time. The Muhu Strait is covered with ice for an average of 4 months. The ice appears usually in December or January and disappears in the second half of April. Activity by fleet units is impeded by ice for a lengthy period only in the Muhu Strait. The average of foggy days in the West Estonian Archipelago is 40–60. The fog comes mainly in autumn and in spring when the ice is forming or melting. The amount of rain fluctuates between 500–600 mm. The biggest amount is usually in September and the smallest in February. The fog, as well as the rainfall, are not a hindrance to fleet activity, but do aggravate it. Air force activity is often made more difficult by fog.

Summing up, we can see that the surrounding waters of the West Estonian Archipelago enable both the attacking and the defending fleet favourable conditions to build up their military capabilities. Estimating the West Estonian Archipelago in general from a strategic viewpoint, we can say that these Baltic Sea islands are very important strategic factors due to their favourable position and the possibility of organizing a powerful defensive system with sufficient naval bases.

The great strategic importance of the West Estonian Archipelago has been apparent since the remote past. The interest of foreign nations in the islands is evident in Estonian folklore where we can find that the mythical hero Suur Tõll continually fought against an invading enemy. The military conflicts are developing naturally where certain interests are involved. More detailed information about attacks by other nations on the islands is available from the 13th century when the main objects of interest for invaders were Saaremaa and Muhu Islands. The campaigns and raids by Danes, Germans, Swedes and Russians illustrate the fact that the West Estonian Archipelago was not of interest to only one nation, but that these islands were already at the time the collision point of the interests of many nations. This can be explained by the fact that, at the time, the West Estonian Archipelago performed an important part in controlling the sea communications, and that the possibilities of holding contacts and trade between the West and the East depended on it. The number of strongholds and fortified castles, particularly in Saaremaa, is a proof of the efforts required to hold an area of such strategic value.



Schemes can be found online: <https://www.baltdefcol.org/files/nikolaireek/>
 Scheme 1: The military importance of the Baltic islands. The map shows the most important marine lines of communications, the exit from the Suur Strait, fleet bases, and the range of 12" batteries.

Legend: Tähtsamad laevateed / Most important marine lines of communications
 Väljapääsud Muhu väinast / Exits from the Väinameri Sea (Muhu Väin)
 Laevastikkude baasid / Naval base
 12" rannapatareide tuleulatus / Range of 12" coastal batteries.

Understanding of the importance of the islands also continued in the recent past when they were already under the Russians. So, the British Fleet used the Muhu Strait as a base during the Anglo-Swedish and Russian War in 1809. During the Crimean War, the Muhu Strait was the anchorage for the British Fleet, while stores, hospitals, etc. were installed in the region of the Tagalaht Bay in Saaremaa. The Russians made their first attempt to fortify the West Estonian Archipelago as early as in 1836 when Kuressaare was established as a Baltic fortified outpost. Later, at the end of 19th century the building of a base for the Russian Navy in the Muhu Strait was discussed, but finally this was given in favour of Liepāja. During the Great War the importance of the West Estonian Archipelago surfaced again because

- the defence of the mouth of the Gulf of Finland,
- the defence and the command of the Gulf of Riga and
- partially the defence of the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia.

could be based in the West Estonian Archipelago.

The defence of the mouth of the Gulf of Finland also defended the capital of the Russian Empire from the sea; the defence and command of the Gulf of Riga would guarantee the security of the front and the rear, whereas the defence of the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia, which was of lesser importance, would maintain communication with the neutral Scandinavian states. Considering their own deficiency in naval power, the Russians decided at the beginning of the war to relinquish all other tasks of the naval forces, and to defend only their capital from the sea. Due to the scantiness of their forces, they did not dare to take the defence to the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, but the main resistance was to be put up on the Tallinn-Porkkala line, which is the narrowest part in the Gulf of Finland where their Main Position was organized. The Muhu Strait and Irbe Strait, which are the only entrances to the Gulf of Riga, were decided to be blocked only with mine fields. Later, when the passivity of the Germans on the Baltic Sea was evident and the Russian naval forces were increasing, the defence of the Gulf of Finland, i.e., the defence of the capital, was moved further forward. The so-called Advanced Position was formed in the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, while the Tallinn-Porkkala line remained as the Main Position (the so-called Central Position); in the Finnish Archipelago between the Central and the Advanced Positions, the Cross Position was formed. At the same time, the West Estonian Archipelago was fortified, and the so-called “Muhu Strait Fortified Position” was constituted there. A harbour and a base were built in Rohuküla; the fairways in the Muhu Strait were deepened; a part of the fleet was dispatched there, and the number of minefields in the Irbe

Strait was increased. The Russians decided to put up tenacious resistance to the enemy's invasion of the Gulf of Riga with all the forces they could concentrate into the Muhu Strait and the Gulf of Riga and, in case the enemy still succeed in forcing the gulf, to frustrate their operations there with all the means.

The necessity of the defence of the Gulf of Riga was increased by the situation on the land front. For a long period, the land front had already been, in general, along the Daugava River, while the Russian right flank had been able to hold on as a semi-circle south of Riga. In the first days of September 1917, the Germans succeeded in forcing their way to the Daugava River, to capture Riga, and to throw back the Russian right flank up to the Gauja River. While the Russians commanded the Gulf of Riga, the Russian right flank of the land front was protected from the sea, while the situation for the Germans was relatively difficult, because their left flank, ending on the coast, was constantly under danger of being attacked from the sea.

To eliminate this danger from sea, the Germans had to obtain control of the Gulf of Riga. Thus, it was necessary to be the master of the two entrances to the Gulf of Riga, i.e., of the Irbe Strait and of the Suur Strait. The control of the above straits was enabled by Saaremaa and Muhu Islands. Because of the above-mentioned strategic considerations, German High Command decided in the middle of September to take control of the Gulf of Riga in order to protect the left flank of their army on the mainland. They decided to capture Saaremaa and Muhu Islands with a combined attack of land and naval forces and to block the Suur Strait against the enemy's naval forces. This shows the great strategic importance of the West Estonian Archipelago during the Great War, especially in autumn 1917, for the Russians as defenders of the islands on one side, and for the Germans, as attackers from the sea, on the other side.

2. The Characteristics of the Terrain of the Islands as assessed by the Russians and the Germans

Before starting the description of the arrangement for the defence of the islands, it would be interesting to look at how the Russians and the Germans characterized and assessed the geographical conditions of the islands, from the viewpoint of both attacking and defending them. Our present views may differ from the perceptions then, but to understand the situation correctly, it is important to examine them, as they dominated the thoughts of these opponents during the Great War.

The assessment of characteristics of the terrain by the Russians is reflected in Adjutant General Ivanov's² report of 19 May 1916. According to this report,

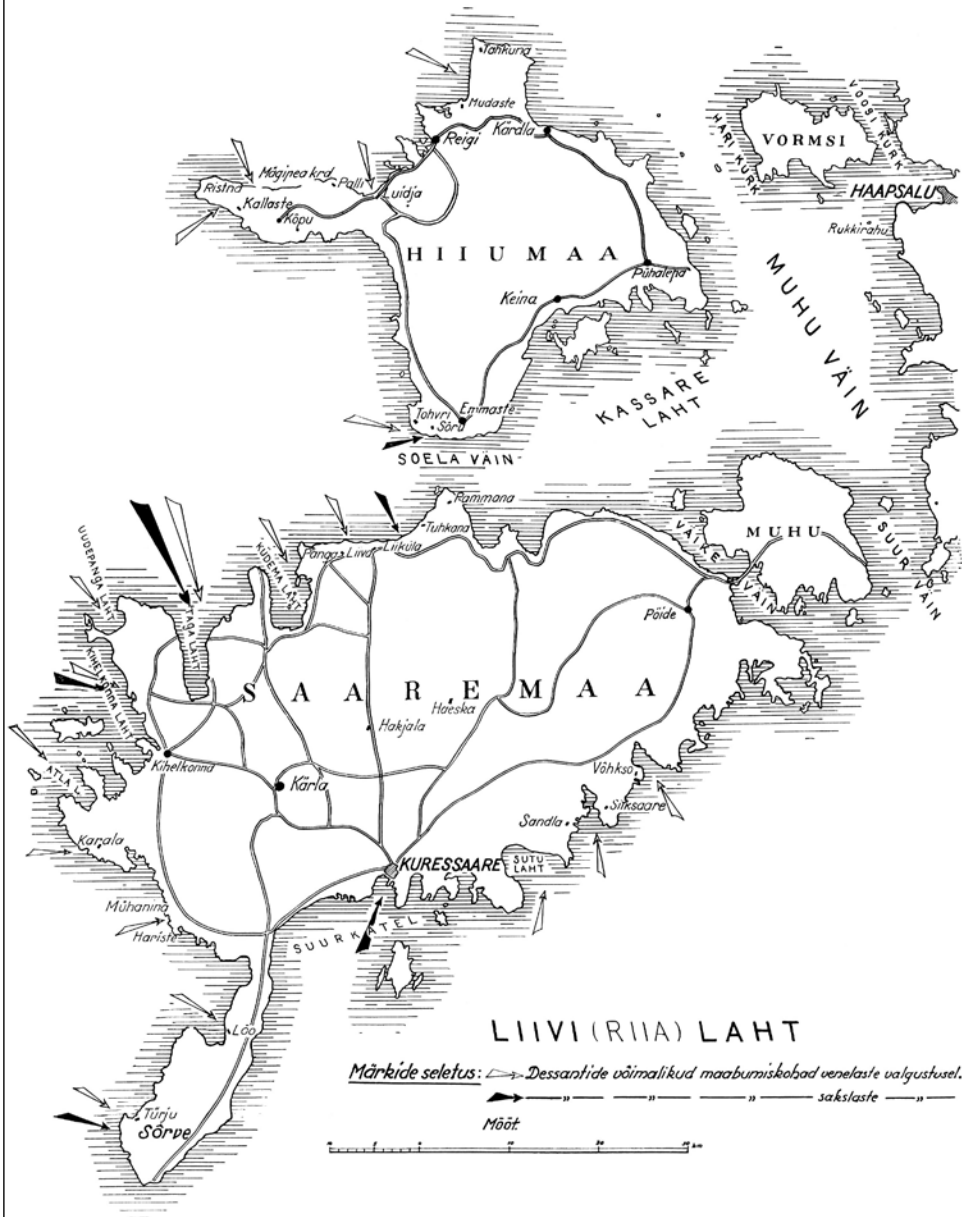
2 Nikolai Ivanov (1851–1919), then Member of the State Council (editor's note).

Saaremaa is a hilly plain, covered with swamps, woods, and sand dunes. Open areas appear mainly in the surroundings of Haeska, Hakjala, Kärla and Kuressaare. Except for the sand dune regions, the surface of Saaremaa consists of a blend of fragments of limestone and gravel. All the roads concentrating on Kuressaare, except the highways, are narrow and become hardly passable during rain periods. The western side of the island appears as a low sand dune coast which descends into the sea, only the area around Karala village is somewhat higher. In the north-western part of the island, the coast of the bays is steep at some places.

Contemplating the possibilities of landing operations on Saaremaa and estimating the danger involved, the Russians believed that the enemy could land in the north-western and western parts of the island, and on the Sõrve peninsula. In the case of the capture of the Sõrve peninsula by Germans, it would be difficult for the Russian Fleet to carry out the scrutiny and the defence of the mine fields in the Irbe Strait, and the control of the Gulf of Riga would become questionable. The entrance of the enemy into the above-mentioned gulf could facilitate landing operations blocking the passage of the Russian Fleet from the Muhu Strait to the Gulf of Riga. If the enemy conquers the coast north of the Sõrve peninsula, it is probable that it is forced to conquer the entire Saaremaa and Muhu Islands to hinder the Russian ships entering the Gulf of Riga through the Suur Strait, and to guarantee free passage for its own ships through the Irbe Strait, or, with an attack towards the south capture the Sõrve peninsula, in order to facilitate the penetration of the Irbe Strait. It was believed that the latter action would require the enemy to put out strong cover in an eastern direction to protect its left flank and the rear against the garrison retreating in this direction and, particularly, against the forces the Russians might bring from the mainland. The Russians considered that both above-mentioned versions could turn out to be long-term operations. On the western and north-western coast of Saaremaa, from the Soela Strait to the southern tip of Sõrve peninsula, the following places were considered by the Russians as probable landing places (Appendix 2).

- the coast between Panga and Liiva villages,
- Küdema Bay,
- Tagalaht Bay,
- Uudepanga Bay,
- Kihelkonna Bay,
- Atla Bay,
- the coast at Karala village,
- the coast between Mühanina and Hariste headlands,

DESSANTIDE VÕIMALIKUD MAABUMISKOHAD
venelaste ja sakslaste valgustusel.



Scheme 2: Possible landing sites. Black arrows show possible German landing areas, while the white ones mark the Russian predictions.

- the coast at Lõu village,
- the coast at Türu village.

After the enemy's invasion of the Gulf of Riga through the Irbe Strait, the following places were considered to be suitable for landing:

- Sutu Bay,
- the coast at Sandla and Siiksaare villages,
- the cove by Võhksa village.

For the warships and transport ships, the Küdema, Tagalaht and Atla bays giving protection against dominating north-western winds were considered favourable places to moor during summertime; the coast by Lõu, Panga and Liiva villages was regarded as less favourable. Discussing the question with the naval officers on how many transports the enemy was able to put into operation at every possible landing place without hindering the operations of the covering battleships, Adjutant General Ivanov concluded that the enemy was able to easily place 4–5 transports in every above-mentioned location, except the coast at Türu village, where it was possible to place not more than 3–4 transports. Every transport can carry approximately one battalion of infantry and the corresponding amount of artillery.

The terrain in Hiiumaa is generally similar to the terrain in Saaremaa. The Russians considered the following districts to be suitable landing places:

- Kõpu peninsula – the more favourable places are on the north coast from Ristna lighthouse to Mägipe border guard post, on the south coast from Ristna lighthouse to Kallaste village, and also the north coast at Polli and Luidja villages;
- Tahkuna peninsula, particularly from the tip of the peninsula to Mudaste village; the coastal waters from Tahkuna village to Kärkla borough are navigable only for smaller craft (destroyers, torpedo-boats, gunboats);
- the south-western part of the island in the area of Tohvri manor and Sõru.

The characterization and assessment of the geographical situation by the Germans generally coincides with the Russians' characterization and assessment. While the Germans did not have the possibilities for reconnaissance and observation, they were still able to create a true picture of the island. This was the result of long and troublesome work but enabled the Germans to choose the directions of attack for a combined operation entirely in accordance with the situation. Particularly, it is worth underlining the correct estimation and the choice of the Tagalaht Bay as the area for the principal attacking line. For the Russians, this area was very important, as the Tagalaht Bay, due to its depth, enables the transports to approach

very close to the shore, and it is protected from the western winds in the autumn; the coast of the bay and the ground of the beach are favourable for landing and, from there, comparatively good roads lead to Kuressaare. The Germans reckoned on Kuressaare as the second most favourable landing place, because technically, the quay in Roomassaare, situated near Kuressaare, was regarded as the best landing place in Saaremaa. However, before landing in the Kuressaare region, the fleet would have to penetrate the Irbe Strait, which would have reduced the element of surprise. Besides the Tagalaht Bay and Kuressaare, the Germans considered the landing possibilities in the Pammana region, in the Kihelkonna Bay, and also on the Sõrve peninsula.

The region around Pammana was considered a favourable landing site, although it was more open to winds than the Tagalaht Bay. From the Pammana area, the roads led to Kuressaare and to the causeway built over the Väike Strait for communication purposes between Saaremaa and Muhu Islands. As regards the characterization of the terrain of Saaremaa, the Germans noted the following circumstances:

- the island lacks natural obstacles and hindrances; only the lakes surrounding Kuressaare from the west and the inland has swamps and marshes have certain military value as obstacles;
- the surface of the island is stony (limestone) which aggravates considerably the execution of fortification works;
- the island is covered mostly with junipers;
- the villages, manors, meadows and pastures are surrounded by one-metre-high stone fences, which may affect favourably or hinder one or another tactical situation.

As it appears from the above, the Russians characterized and appreciated the geographical situation of the islands entirely appropriately, and, on the other hand, the Germans also knew the terrain sufficiently, owing to which they were able to exploit the advantages of the situation and to avoid its pitfalls.

II. The Defence Plan of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and the Forces Detailed for its Defence

For the defence of the West Estonian Archipelago, the Russians formed an extensive defensive organisation which consisted of coastal batteries, land forces, and minefields, and which was named the Muhu Strait Fortified Position (Moonzundskaya ukreplennaya positsiya). The commander of this position was subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet through the Staff of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet. Namely, the Baltic Fleet had two staffs: the Staff of the Land Forces who solved the questions concerning the land forces, and the Naval Staff for solving the naval questions. Besides the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, the naval forces in the Gulf of Riga and all the other forces detailed for the defence of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland were also subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet. The Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet himself was directly subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front.

We are now going to look at the defence organisation of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to answer the question how much the defending forces of the position were able to defend the island at that time. We are going to observe the personnel of the fleet and the air force, their condition and activity only in general lines to get a complete picture of the arrangement for the defence of the islands.

1. The Tasks to the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. The Defending Forces of the Position and the Principal Idea of the Plan of Defence

a) The Tasks of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position

With the general instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet of 25 December 1916 No. 1314 and of 1 July 1917 No. 338/1170, the following tasks were allotted to the Land Forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position:

- to repel the enemy's landing attempts on Saaremaa and Hiiumaa;
- to hold firmly the Sõrve peninsula, which commands the Irbe Strait;
- to defend energetically Saaremaa and Hiiumaa to hold the islands region;
- in the case of the fall of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa, to defend tenaciously Muhu Island and Vormsi Island, and to hinder the enemy's landing on the mainland in the Muhu Strait area. In addition, the forces of the Fortified Position had:
- to block the enemy's vessels' passage to the Muhu Strait through the fairways within the range of the coastal batteries;

- to secure the positions of the coastal batteries situated on the outward shores (against the Baltic Sea), the bases of naval seaplanes, signal stations and other militarily important establishments against the enemy's probable attempts to destroy or vanquish them, whether with small landing parties or in some other way;
- to discover in due time the approach of the enemy's fleet and to employ the necessary means against possible landings.

b) The Defending Forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position

The composition of the garrison of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position on 12 October was as follows:

A. A r m y

1) The 107th Infantry Division:

- the 425th Kargopol Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions and 24 machine guns; the regiment was reinforced with the 1st and 4th mounted machine gun detachment; 2472 men and 32 machine guns in total in the regiment;
- the 426th Povenets Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions and 24 machine guns; the regiment was reinforced with the 1st and 3rd mounted machine gun detachment and one “Colt” machine gun detachment; 2885 men and 42 machine guns in total in the regiment;
- the 427th Pudozh Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions and 26 machine guns; 2435 men and 26 machine guns in total in the regiment;

2) The 118th Infantry Division:

- the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions and 26 machine guns; 2435 men and 26 machine guns in total in the regiment;
- the 470th Dankovsk Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions and 12 machine guns; 2893 men and 12 machine guns in total in the regiment;

The 472nd Mosalsk Regiment was situated on the islands, while the 470th Dankovsk Regiment was on the mainland.

3) 3 companies and 4 machine guns from the Navy Guards Equipage.

B. C a v a l r y

1) The Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion.

In the cavalry battalion, there were 4 squadrons and 2 machine guns, in total 442 men and 2 machine guns. The battalion was situated on the islands.

2) The 4th and 5th squadron of the 2nd Tallinn Border Guard Cavalry Regiment (206 men).

The squadrons were placed on the mainland.

C. Artillery

1) The Field Artillery Brigade of the Coastal Defence Land Front. The brigade consisted of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 6th battery – 24 guns in total.

2) The 107th Light Artillery Battalion.

The 1st, 2nd and 3rd battery belonged to the battalion with a total of 18 guns.

3) From the 2nd Sveaborg Artillery Regiment – the 1st, 2nd and 3rd anti-aircraft battery, 12 guns in total.

4) The Kronstadt close support battery – 6 guns.

5) The 105 mm battery (Japanese guns) of the 4th Artillery Regiment of the Coastal Defence Land Front.

6) The Coastal Defence Artillery.

- The 1st Battalion:

the 30th battery (four 6" Canet cal. 45 guns and two machine guns)

the 31st battery (two 75 mm Müller type anti-aircraft guns)

the 32nd battery (four 6" Canet cal. 45 guns and two machine guns)

the 32-a battery (four 77 mm old-type field guns adapted for anti-aircraft purposes)

the 33rd battery (four 6" Canet guns and 2 machine guns)

the 33-a battery (three 75 mm Müller type anti-aircraft guns)

the 36th battery (five 10" guns cal. 45 and 3 machine guns)

the 36-a battery (four 77 mm for anti-aircraft adapted old type field guns)

- The 2nd Battalion:

the 34th battery (four 120 mm guns cal. 50)

the 38th battery (four 6" guns cal. 50)

the 39th battery (four 12" guns cal. 50)

the 39-a battery (three 57 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 47th battery (four 6" Canet guns cal. 45)

- The 3rd Battalion:

the 45th battery, (four 6" Canet cal. 45 guns and 2 machine guns)

the 46th battery (four 6" Canet cal. 45 guns)

the 48th battery (three 75 mm Müller type anti-aircraft guns)

the 49th battery (three 47 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 50th battery (four 75 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 51st battery (four 75 mm anti-aircraft guns)

- The 4th Battalion:

the 40th battery (four 120 mm cal. 50 guns and 2 machine guns)

the 40-a battery (three 75 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 41st battery (four 130 mm cal. 50 guns)

the 41-a battery (three 75 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 43rd battery (four 12" cal. 50 guns)

the 43-a battery (three 75 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 43-b battery (three 75 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 43-g battery (three 47 mm anti-aircraft guns)

the 43-v battery (three 75 mm anti-aircraft guns).

D. Engineers

1) The 125th Single Pioneer Company.

2) The 3rd Single Pioneer Company.

3) The 2nd Tallinn Fortification Works Company.

4) One platoon of the Kaunas Fortress Telegraph Company.

5) One telegraph section and one cable section of the telegraph company of the 45th Pioneer Battalion.

c) The Principal Idea of the Defence Plan

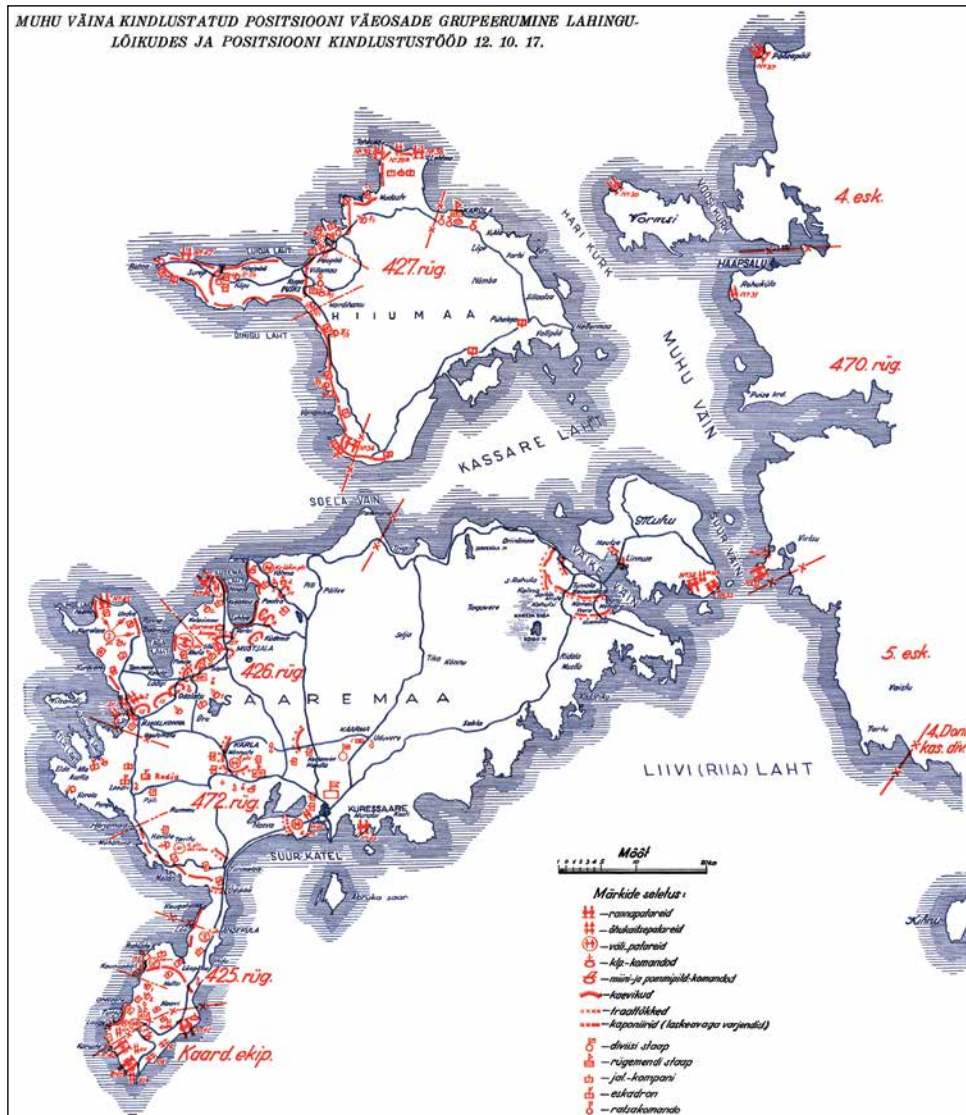
Considering the tasks given to the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, the existing forces and means and the relative importance of different parts in the region of the islands, the Command of the position composed a defence plan the principal idea of which was:

1. The Sõrve peninsula was separated as a special autonomous sector. Preparations for its defence were organised in all domains (i.e., engineers, artillery, equipment, sanitary, etc.) so that the forces, forming the garrison of the peninsula, would be also able to act when they were cut off from Saaremaa by the enemy.

2. The defence of the western and north-western coast of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa was based on the following principles:

- the commanders of the sectors had the task to hinder the hostile landings;
- the basis for the execution of this task was regarded to be careful observation and reconnaissance, and speedy transition to an energetic counterattack with all the forces in the sector that could be concentrated

MUHU VÄINA KINDLUSTATUD POSITSIOONI VÄEOSADE GRUPEERUMINE LAHINGU-
LÕIKUDES JA POSITSIOONI KINDLUSTUSTÖÖD 12. 10. 17.



Scheme 3: A characterization of the defending forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Legend: rannapatareid / Coastal batteries
 õhukaitsepatareid / Anti-aircraft batteries
 väli-patareid / Field Artillery batteries
 klp.-komandod / MG units
 miini- ja pommipild.-komandod / Mortar and mine thrower units
 kaevikud / Trenches
 traattõkked / Barbed wire barriers
 kaponiirid (laskevaga varjendid) / Bunker (caponier)
 diviisi staap / Division staff
 rügemendi staap / Regiment headquarters
 jal.-kompani / Infantry company
 eskadron / Cavalry squadron
 ratsakomando / Cavalry units

in the endangered area; as the starting line of the counterattack, the field fortifications built by troops near the shore were used.

3. If the counterattacks failed and the enemy advanced inland, the plan was to withdraw to a reserve position; the reserve position in Saaremaa was considered, also the Orissaare position on Järveküla lake, Koigi lake, Ridala, Mustla, Kadariku general line, and finally the Orissaare bridge-head position (Scheme 3). In Hiiumaa, the reserve position was intended to be organised on the general line of Kukka, Nõmba and Venküla³. The vigour of the resistance on the above positions was placed into direct dependence on the forces which were able to withdraw to these positions and on the fortifications which could be erected on the reserve positions for the time of withdrawal.

2. The Disposition and the Tasks of the Forces Detailed for Defending the Muhu Strait Fortified Position

In conformity with the tasks of the position, with the elaborate defence plan and the existing forces, the garrison of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was grouped in the morning of 12 October, when the Germans started the landing, as follows: (Scheme 3):

a) The Composition of the Garrison of Saaremaa and their Tasks⁴

The commander of the defence of Saaremaa was appointed to be the commander of the 107th Infantry Division. The troops and units subordinated to him were the following:

- 1) the 425th Kargopol Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions, 32 machine guns, 8 trench mortars, and 2 mine throwers.
- 2) the 426th Povenets Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions, 38 machine guns, 8 trench mortars, and 2 mine throwers.
- 3) the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment – 3 battalions, 24 machine guns, 8 trench mortars, and 2 mine throwers.
- 4) 3 companies and 4 machine guns of the Navy Guards Equipage.
- 5) the 2nd, 3rd and 6th batteries of the Coastal Defence Land Front Field Artillery Brigade; the Kronstadt close support battery; the 105 mm battery and the 107th Light Artillery Battalion – in total 42 light and 4 heavy guns.

3 According to older Estonian maps Võnküla. Nowadays does not exist, was near Luguse and Nasva villages (editor's note).

4 The general instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet of 20 Dec. 1916 No. 1314 and of 1 July 1917 No. 338/1170.

- 6) the 2nd, 3rd and 4th squadrons of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion – in total 3 squadrons, and 2 machine guns.
- 7) the 3rd Single Pioneer Company and 3 platoons from the 125th Single Pioneer Company – in total 1¾ of a company.
- 8) Cable section of the Telegraph Company of the 45th Pioneer Battalion – 1 section.
- 9) the 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Coastal Defence Artillery (batteries 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 40, 40-a, 41, 41-a, 43, 43-a, 43-b, 43-g and 43-v) and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd anti-aircraft batteries of the 2nd Sveaborg Artillery Regiment; in total 20 heavy guns, 44 anti-aircraft guns, 8 machine guns.

In total: 9 battalions, 108 machine guns, 24 trench mortars, 6 mine throwers, 42 light and 4 heavy field guns, 20 heavy coastal guns, 44 anti-aircraft guns, 3 squadrons, 1¾ pioneer companies and 1 cable section.

The task of the Saaremaa garrison was:

- to defend the Western coast of Saaremaa from the Pammanna peninsula up to Mõntu (incl.); if the enemy succeeds in landing, then keep fighting tenaciously inland;
- to defend particularly tenaciously the Sõrve peninsula, keeping in mind that with the holding of the peninsula, the passage through the Irbe Strait is blocked to the enemy; also, in case other sectors of the position should be withdrawn, the Sõrve fortified region had to oppose the enemy as long as possible; in that case, supplying the garrison with everything necessary was to be executed by sea; the defending of the peninsula was to be assisted with naval forces. The batteries of the 3rd Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery under the general command of Lieutenant Commander Nedzvetskiy⁵ had been grouped as follows:
 - a) batteries 34, 45, 46 and the 3rd battery of the Sveaborg Regiment – under the command of Midshipman Dobrovolskiy;
 - b) batteries 50, 51 and the 1st and 2nd batteries of the Sveaborg Regiment were positioned in the Kihelkonna area under the command of Lieutenant Stadnitskiy;
 - c) batteries 48 and 49 – under Ensign Smirnov. In the case of a German landing, the groups, after having executed their special tasks, had to go with all their effective forces under the command of the commander of the corresponding sector.

⁵ Lev Nedzvetskiy (1885–1931). After the war lived in Narva (editor's note).

The batteries of the coastal artillery 4th Battalion and the Navy Guards Equipage under the general command of Navy Captain Knüpf⁶ were given the task to defend the Irbe Strait and the southern part of the Sõrve peninsula (south of the Karuste-Kaavi line). Captain Knüpf⁶ had the task to accomplish the operative special instructions in defending the Irbe Strait and harmonizing his action with the activity of the Russian fleet.

In the case of a German landing on the Sõrve peninsula, Captain Knüpf⁶'s sector had to go under the command of the commander of the neighbouring sector, i.e. to the subordination of the commander of the 425th Kargopol Regiment.

For accomplishing the abovementioned tasks, the garrison of Saaremaa was divided into sectors⁷ (Scheme 3).

Sector 1 (From Pammana peninsula to Rootsiküla)

Forces:

- the 426th Povenets Infantry Regiment;
- the 2nd and 3rd batteries of the 107th Artillery Battalion and the Kronstadt close support battery;
- batteries 45, 46, 50 and 51 of the 3rd Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery;
- the 1st, 2nd and 3rd batteries of the Sveaborg Artillery Regiment;
- a half-company of the 3rd Single Pioneer Company.

In total: 3 battalions of infantry, 42 machine guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers, 18 field guns, 8 heavy coastal guns, and 20 anti-aircraft guns, ½ company of engineers.

Task:

- to watch and to defend the sector from Pammana peninsula to Rootsiküla (southern incl.)
- to hinder the landing of the enemy.

For the accomplishment of the tasks given to Sector 1, the forces of the sector were grouped as follows:⁸

6 Moritz Knüpf⁶ (1882–1954). After the war moved to Great Britain (editor's note).

7 Order No. 263 of 11 October 1917 to the 107th Division.

8 Order No. 127 of 8 September 1917 to the 426th Povenets Infantry Regiment.

The right sector

Forces:

- the 3rd Battalion and the “Company of Death”;
- the mounted machine gun detachment, the 2nd machine gun detachment “Maxim” (12 machine guns) the trench arms detachment (8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers);
- the Kronstadt close support battery;
- the 46th battery of the Coastal Defence Artillery and the 3rd anti-aircraft battery of the Sveaborg Artillery Regiment.

In total: 5 companies of infantry, 16 machine guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers, 4 heavy coastal guns, and 4 anti-aircraft guns.

Task:

- to carry out the observation and to defend the sector from Pammana peninsula to Merise (excl.);
- to hinder the landing of the enemy.

The left sector

Forces:

- the 2nd Battalion and the 1st machine gun detachment “Maxim” (12 machine guns);
- the 2nd and 3rd batteries of the 107th Light Artillery Battalion;
- 45th, 50th and 51st battery of the Coastal Defence Artillery and the 1st and 2nd batteries of the Sveaborg Artillery Regiment.

In total: 4 companies of infantry, 12 machine guns, 12 field guns, 4 coastal guns, and 16 anti-aircraft guns.

Task:

- to carry out the observation and the defence from Merise (incl.) to Rootsiküla (incl.);
- to hinder the landing of the enemy.

The reserve of sector 1.

The 1st Battalion and the machine gun detachment “Colt”.

In total: 4 companies of infantry and 10 machine guns. The reserve was situated in Tammese, Kehila, Läägi, and Kihelkonna area.

Sector 2 (from Rootsiküla to Lõu Bay)

Forces:

- one battalion of the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment and 12 machine guns;

- the 2nd and 4th squadrons of the Kuressaare Cavalry Battalion, and 2 machine guns;
- one platoon of the 6th battery of the Coastal Defence Field Artillery Brigade;

In total: 1 battalion of infantry, 14 machine guns, 2 squadrons of cavalry, and 2 field guns.

- to guard and to defend the coast from Rootsiküla (southern excl.) to Lõu (excl.) and to hinder the landing of the enemy, paying particular attention to the area from Muhanina to Lõu.

The forces allotted to sector 2 were grouped as follows and their tasks were:⁹

The northern sector

Forces:

- One squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion, and 2 machine guns;
- 2 machine guns from the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment.

In total: 1 squadron and 4 machine guns.

Task:

- the 2nd squadron was to be situated with two platoons in Karala village, with one platoon in Atla village and one platoon in Austla village; the squadron, carrying out the observation and defence from Rootsiküla (southern excl.) to Härjamaa village (excl.); had to put out an outpost (at night) by Elda border guard post, an observation post (at day and night) by Karala border guard post and an outpost (at day and night) near Panga farms. The intervals between the observation posts and the area from Panga to Härjamaa had to be guarded with patrols establishing communication with parts of the 472nd Regiment near Härjamaa village.

The southern sector

Forces:

- three companies of the 472nd Mosalsk Regiment, and 6 machine guns;
- 2 guns of the 6th battery of the Coastal Field Artillery brigade.

In total: 3 companies, 6 machine guns, and 2 guns.

Task:

- to carry out observation and defence from Härjamaa village (incl.) to Lõu village excl.);

9 Order for sector 2 of 26 September 1917.

- the machine guns must be given to the companies situated from Mühanina to Hariste, and thence further to Möldre village, owing to the particular importance of the area;
- the artillery has to maintain a position near Taritu village.

The reserve of sector 2.

- one company and 4 machine guns of the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment.
- three platoons of the 4th squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion;
- two sections from the infantry reconnaissance detachment of the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment.

In total: 1 company of infantry, $\frac{3}{4}$ squadrons of cavalry, 4 machine guns, and $\frac{1}{2}$ infantry reconnaissance detachment.

The reserve was situated as follows: the company of the 472nd Regiment in Tiirimetsa village, the 4 machine guns of the 472nd Mosalsk Regiment in Pälli village, $\frac{3}{4}$ squadrons of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the infantry reconnaissance detachment in Leedri village.

Sector 3 (the Sõrve peninsula from the Lõu Bay to Karuste)

Forces:

- the 425th Kargopol Infantry Regiment;
- the 2nd and 3rd batteries of the Coastal Defence Field Artillery Brigade, and the 105 mm battery (Japanese guns);
- three platoons of the 125th Single Pioneer Company, and two platoons of the 3rd Single Pioneer Company.

In total: 3 battalions of infantry, 32 machine guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers, 12 light and 4 heavy guns and $1\frac{1}{4}$ company of engineers.

Task:

- to defend the Sõrve peninsula, to observe and defend the coast from Lõu (incl.) to Karuste (excl.);
- when the enemy begins landing on the peninsula, sector 4 will go under the command of sector 3, whereby with all forces it must be made impossible for the enemy to capture the southern part of the peninsula with batteries situated there and the Mõntu harbour.

For carrying out the above task, the forces of sector 3 were grouped as follows:¹⁰

The northern sector.

- the 1st Battalion of the 425th Regiment;

10 The order to 425th Kargopol Regiment No. 329 of 11 September 1917.

- the 105 mm battery (Japanese guns);
- the 2nd battery of the Coastal Defence Field Artillery Brigade;
- 2 platoons of the 125th Single Pioneer Company;
- 4 platoons from the machine gun detachment and the 1st and 2nd mounted machine gun detachments.

In total: 1 battalion of infantry, 4 heavy and 6 light guns, 16 machine guns, and ½ company of engineers.

Task:

- to carry out observation from Lõu village (incl.) to Kaunispää estate (incl.) and to repel the hostile landing; the 2nd battery has to be situated in the Lõu manor area, to do reconnaissance on all the roads and to choose positions that would enable them to repel the enemy's landing from the coast of the Lõu Bay.

The southern sector.

Forces:

- the 3rd Battalion of the 425th Regiment;
- the 3rd battery of the Coastal Defence Field Artillery Brigade;
- 1 platoon from the 3rd Single Pioneer Company;
- the mounted machine gun detachment;
- the trench arms detachment.

In total: 1 battalion of infantry, 6 guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers; ¼ company of engineers.

Task:

- to carry out observation and to repel the enemy's landing in the area from Kaunispää manor (excl.) up to Karuste village (excl.);
- the battery has to stand at TÜRju village so that it would repel the enemy's landing on the TÜRju Bay coast.

The reserve for sector 3.

The reserve consisted of the 2nd Battalion of the 425th Regiment positioned at Iide village who had to do reconnaissance on the roads leading to the northern and southern sectors, and to carry out, with three companies, the fortification works of the position.

Sector 4 (the south-eastern part of Sörve peninsula)

Forces:

- 3 companies of the Navy Guards Equipage and 4 machine guns;

- batteries 40, 40-a, 41, 41-a, 43, 43-a, 43-b, 43-g of the 4th Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery;

In total: 3 companies of infantry, 12 heavy coastal guns, and 15 anti-aircraft guns; 4 machine guns.

Task:

- in the sector the northern limit of which is Karuste, Taalbri, Kaavi (all the places incl.), to carry out special operational tasks for the defence of the Irbe Strait in accordance with the activity of the naval forces;
- with the beginning of the enemy landing on the Sõrve peninsula, the personnel of sector 4 will go under the command of the commander of sector 3.

In executing the special tasks given to the sector's garrison, the commander of the sector had the right to apply immediately to the commander of the 107th Division and also to the Commanding Officer of the Mine Division of the Fleet and to the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, being also obliged to send copies of the letters dispatched to the commander of the neighbouring sector 3.

The general reserve of the garrison of Saaremaa

Forces:

- 2 battalions of the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment, 12 machine guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers;
- 2 platoons from the 6th battery of the Coastal Field Artillery Brigade;
- the 1st battery of the 107th Light Artillery Battalion;
- the 3rd squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion;
- anti-aircraft batteries 48 and 49.

In total: 2 battalions of infantry, 12 machine guns, 8 trench mortars, 2 mine throwers, 10 light guns, 6 anti-aircraft guns, and 1 squadron of cavalry.

The general reserve was situated as follows:

- 2 companies of the 472nd Mosalsk Regiment in Kuressaare for guard duties;
- 1½ battalion in Meedla area;
- the 6th battery in Nasva village;
- the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion in Mõnnuste;
- the 3rd squadron of the Kuressaare Cavalry Battalion in Kasti;
- the 48th battery in Loodi;
- the 49th battery in Muratsi.

b) The Composition of the Garrison of Hiiumaa and Its Tasks

The Commander of the defence of Hiiumaa was the commander of the 427th Pudozh Regiment, to whom were subordinated:

- the 427th Pudozh Regiment – 3 battalions, 26 machine guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers;
- the 1st battery of the Coastal Defence Field Artillery Brigade;
- the 1st squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion;
- one platoon of the 125th Separate Pioneer Company;
- the cable section from the Telegraph Company of the 45th Pioneer Battalion;
- one platoon from the 2nd Tallinn Fortification Works Company;
- the 2nd battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery.

In total: 3 battalions, 26 machine guns, 6 light guns, 16 heavy guns, 3 anti-aircraft guns, 1 squadron, 1 platoon of engineers; 1 cable section of the telegraph company, 1 platoon of the fortification works company; 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers.

The garrison of the Hiiumaa had the task:

- to defend the northern and western coast of Hiiumaa and the Kõpu peninsula (from Kärkla to Sõru border guard post incl.). If the enemy succeeds in landing, to fight against it tenaciously inland;
- the coastal batteries have to carry out operative special tasks under the general guidance of the commander of the 2nd Battalion of the coastal batteries. In the case of absence of targets on the sea, or after the batteries have accomplished their special tasks, all the batteries of the 2nd Battalion with their whole personnel have to join the personnel of the corresponding sector, and subordinated to the commander of the defence of the island, will execute his orders in defending the island.

The right sector

Forces:

- the 1st Battalion of the 427th Regiment and 4 machine guns, 4 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers;
- the 1st battery of the Coastal Defence Field Artillery Brigade;
- 2 platoons of the 1st squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion;
- one platoon of the 2nd Tallinn Fortification Works Company;
- one section of the 125th Single Pioneer Company;

- batteries 38, 39 and 39 of the 2nd Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery.

In total: 4 companies of infantry, 2 platoons of cavalry, 1 labour platoon, 1 section of engineers, 17 guns, 6 machine guns, 4 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers.

Task:

- to defend the northern coast and part of the western coast of Hiiumaa from Kärda to Jõeranna village (incl.)
- if the enemy succeeds in landing, to fight with it tenaciously inland;
- the coastal batteries have to carry out special tasks under the general guidance of the commander of the Coastal Defence Artillery 2nd Battalion.

The middle sector

Forces:

- the 3rd Battalion of the 427th Regiment, 12 machine guns and 4 trench mortars;
- one platoon from the 1st squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion;
- one section from the 125th Single Pioneer Company;
- the 47th battery of the 2nd Battalion of Coastal Defence Artillery, and 2 machine guns.

In total: 4 companies of infantry, 1 platoon of cavalry, 1 section of engineers, 4 guns, 14 machine guns, and 4 trench mortars.

Task:

- to defend the western coast of Hiiumaa (the Kõpu peninsula from Jõeranna village to Mardihansu village (incl.).

The left sector

Forces:

- three companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 427th Regiment, and 8 machine guns;
- one platoon of the 1st squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion;
- one section of the 125th Single Pioneer Company;
- the cable section of the Telegraph Company of the 45th Pioneer Battalion;
- the 34th battery of the 2nd Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery, and 2 machine guns.

In total: 3 companies of infantry, 1 platoon of cavalry, 2 sections of engineers, 4 guns, and 10 machine guns.

Task:

- to defend the western coast of the island from Mardihansu village to Sõru border guard post (incl.).

The reserve

The 5th company of the 427th Regiment and the armed labour detachment in Kärkla.

c) The Composition of the Garrison of Muhu Island and Its Tasks¹¹

The garrison of Muhu Island was situated on Muhu Island and on the Virtsu peninsula. The commander of the defence of the island was appointed to be the commander of the 1st Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery to whom batteries 32, 32-a, 33; 33-a, 36 and 36-a, with a total of 24 guns and 7 machine guns, were subordinated. The garrison's task was to block the entrance to the Muhu Strait from the south, coordinating its actions with the actions of the Fleet.

d) The Composition of the Garrison of Vormsi Island and Its Tasks¹²

To the commander of the defence of the island was appointed to be the commander of Coastal Battery 30, to whom batteries 30 and 31 of the 1st Battalion of the Coastal Defence Artillery, and half a company of the 427th Infantry Regiment were subordinated. The garrison's task was to block the entrance to the Muhu Strait from the north coordinating its actions with batteries 38 and 39 situated on the Tahkuna peninsula in Hiiumaa.

e) The Tasks of the Russian Forces Acting on the Western Coast of the Estonian Mainland

The commander of the defence of the western coast of the Estonian mainland was the commander of the 470th Dankovsk Infantry Regiment, to whom the 470th Dankovsk Infantry Regiment and the 5th squadron of the 2nd Tallinn Border Guard Cavalry Regiment were subordinated.

Task:

- to defend the coast from Haapsalu to Virtsu, thus establishing communication with the more northerly situated 4th squadron of the Tallinn Border Guard Cavalry Regiment (the squadron belonged to the garrison of the Peter the Great Naval Fortress).

¹¹ The order to the Muhu Strait Fortified Position on 5th September 1917 No. 22.

¹² Ibid.

- from Virtsu southward to Vaiste manor to carry out the defence together with the units of the 5th squadron who have to establish communication with the units of the Don Cossack Division in Vaiste estate.

At the end of September, the Chief of Staff of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet sent a telegram informing that the 4th squadron of the 2nd Tallinn Border Guard Cavalry Regiment would be also placed under the command of the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. This extended the land front under the command of the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position northwards up to Põõsaspea (Spitham).

3. Characterisation of the Defending Forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position

After surveying the disposition and studying the tasks of the forces defending the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, we will now provide a closer overview of these forces. We will present characteristic factors and data by which we can have a general picture about their fighting value and readiness for defence before the German combined operation. First of all, it is worth pointing out that the defending forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had no battle experience before the German combined operation; therefore, they did not have any fighting experience, which is the most important factor in estimating the fighting value of the troops. This does not apply to soldiers only but also to the officers of the regiments of the 107th and 118th Divisions who had no fighting experience either.

The company commanders were mostly ensigns (the first navy rank or peacetime reserve officer's rank in land forces) who had usually completed four-month accelerated wartime courses. The number of senior officers was very limited. The soldiers of both divisions were charged with continuous observation and guard duties and, on the other hand, with fortification works on the position. They were untrained for fighting. The soldiers' basic drill was weak, too. The political events also had a paralyzing effect upon the soldiers and lowered their morale. Bluntly speaking, the poorly drilled and untrained regiments did not match the challenging environment of the swampy and wooded terrain and the long coastline of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. The leading personnel of the coastal batteries were not in any better condition with their training and experience. The batteries were recently erected; due to the lack of technical equipment, the shooting practice had not been carried out, and the complements were not drilled and were lacking experienced officers. So, we can see that also the coastal batteries, which had to fight the enemy's battleships, were actually incapable of the task. As

we have seen earlier, the garrison of Saaremaa was divided into two garrisons: the garrison of the main part of Saaremaa Island and the garrison of the Sõrve peninsula. The first garrison consisted of the fighting troops and of the general reserve who were subordinated to the commander of the 107th Division who was also the Commander of the Defence of Saaremaa. The fighting troops were situated in sectors 1 and 2. As it has been mentioned before, 3 battalions or 2885 men (the 426th Regiment), 42 machine guns, 8 trench mortars and 2 mine throwers, 18 light guns and 20 anti-aircraft guns and 8 heavy coastal defence guns were allotted in sector I. Thus, the manoeuvring force consisted of 2885 men, 42 machine guns, and 12 field guns (the Kronstadt close support battery was without horses) who had to carry out observation and defend the sector from the Pammana peninsula to Rootsiküla (incl. its southern part).

The length of the coast in this region was 90 kilometres, and it was extremely meandering, forming the Küdema, Tagalaht, Kollinge, Kihelkonna and Atla bays. So, we can see that the most endangered area of the Muhu Strait was poorly defended by the coastal artillery from the sea, while the support from the fleet was questionable. Behind the above-mentioned sector in the Meedla area, there were 1½ battalions from the 472nd Regiment and 10 light guns in the Nasva and Mõnnuste area, which formed the general reserve for the Commander of the Defence of Saaremaa. The 426th Regiment had 2 battalions and 28 machine guns as well as all guns, trench mortars and mine throwers on the frontline. One battalion and 10 machine guns were in reserve in the Tammese-Kehila-Läägi-Kihelkonna area. Were these forces sufficient for carrying out the observation and defence from Pammana peninsula to Rootsiküla and for hindering the landing of the enemy?

Even if considering the manoeuvring of the reserve forces and throwing the forces of the neighbouring sector into the region where the enemy had landed, we can say, that the given task was beyond their capacity. In the case of the enemy's landing in the Tagalaht Bay, 8 companies, 34 machine guns and 19 guns could be concentrated only after 4 hours. If considering that the reserve companies would move immediately to the enemy's landing place, it was possible to concentrate no more than 3 companies during the first 2 hours. An interesting table showing the possibilities of manoeuvring the reserve forces has been preserved from 1917 (Appendix 1). It provides the time schedule of concentrating the local and general reserve and half of the forces from the neighbouring sector on a dangerous point if the enemy landed at only one place. This list reveals that the Russian forces were not capable of performing the given task even if considering the general reserve – 6 companies, 10 guns and 1 squadron.

The same also applies to the defending forces of Hiiumaa. The garrison of Hiiumaa consisted of 3 battalions of infantry or 2435 men (the 427th Regiment), 26 machine guns, 6 light guns, 16 coastal guns on fixed mountings, 3 anti-aircraft guns, 1 squadron of cavalry, and 1 platoon of engineers. The manoeuvring force was constituted of 3 battalions (2435 men), 1 squadron, 1 platoon of engineers, 26 machine guns, and 6 light guns which had to defend about 120 kilometres of coast favourable for landing. The above-mentioned garrison could carry out only the observation duties on the western and northern coast of Hiiumaa from Kärkla to the Sõru border guard post but not defend it as prescribed. Briefly, the prescribed task did not match the ability of the garrison of Hiiumaa. The Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and even civilians were aware of this.

Mr. Mankov,¹³ a member of the Russian State Duma, wrote to the Minister of War Mr. Gutchkov on 2 April 1917:

“Dear Sir,

Considering the strategic importance of the position of Hiiumaa in guarding the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, I convoked a meeting of Commanding Officers residing on the island on 23 March at Kärkla to ascertain the island’s resistance ability.

The meeting found that the effective force of the garrison was insufficient and authorised me to apply to you with the following suggestions:

1. to increase the infantry by 1 regiment,
2. to send a machine gun detachment to the island,
3. to place 2 coastal batteries on the island’s south-western coast,
4. to provide 2 additional field batteries,
5. to supply the island’s garrison with barbed wire (there is only 1.7 tons on the island),
6. to send 2–3 searchlights to the island (they are missing on the island),
7. to dispatch a labour detachment,
8. to build a coastal road around the island,
9. to organize a depot for artillery and engineers (additional ammunition will be brought from Haapsalu),
10. to increase the number of floating means for the batteries,
11. to subordinate the aircraft to the commander of the garrison,
12. to increase the number of officers.

13 Ivan Mankov (b. 1882), in March 1917 commissar of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma in Tallinn. Member of the Social Democratic faction (editor’s note).

I beg you to peruse the exigencies mentioned in the report, and if you consider these to be worthy of the authoritative attention of the headquarters, I beg you not to refuse in satisfying these.

Yours faithfully,

I. Mankov.”

In the case of the enemy’s landing, the garrison of Hiiumaa, being only able to perform the observation duties, would have to concentrate somewhere inland at a previously prepared reserve position and defend the strategically important batteries on Tahkuna peninsula to bar the enemy’s advance to gain the time necessary for the transportation of reinforcements from the mainland. The building of such a reserve position was already foreseen, but its position had not been finally fixed. The Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and his staff were aware of the weakness of the defending forces and their inadequacy for the given tasks and, therefore, had undertaken steps to increase the forces. In the deteriorating atmosphere of the Russian revolution, the lack of steps did not give any notable results as the following documents show, which also characterise the internal discipline in the Russian forces of the revolutionary era.

In the first place, we can mention the enclosure to the report of Rear-Admiral Sveshnikov,¹⁴ Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, of 15 December 1916 No 03 submitted to the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet, containing data about the deficiencies of personnel in the regiments of the 1st Brigade of the 107th Infantry Division:

The name of the unit	Officers	Surgeons	Soldiers	
			Fit	Casualties
The 425th Kargopol Infantry Regiment	22	1	597	60
The 426th Povenets Infantry Regiment	19	1	537	30

Note: In addition, there are 1001 recruits in training in the 425th Infantry Regiment, 173 of whom have been evacuated; there are 992 recruits in the 426th Infantry Regiment. The recruits are already counted among the regiment’s privates.

In spring 1917, when the German approach was threatening the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, the following telegram was dispatched from the position’s Staff:

14 Dmitriy Sveshnikov (1864–1936)(editor’s note).

“To the Chief of Staff of the Naval Forces. Urgent.

Copy to Navy Captain Altvater¹⁵ in the Naval Department of Commander-in-Chief’s¹⁶ Headquarters.

As the enemy, in connection with its offensives on the Northern Front beginning with the spring, is also able to undertake vigorous actions against the West Estonian Archipelago, I regard it my duty to report on these indispensable measures without which the successful resistance on the position is unthinkable: 1) to send the 428th Regiment immediately back to Saaremaa; 2) to strengthen the position’s field artillery with one light or mortar battalion together with an artillery park (with artillery and rifle ammunition supply); 3) to supply at once transported and portable equipment and hand grenades which are missing altogether, and to form local ammunition depots which have already been repeatedly asked; 4) to detach from Tallinn one brigade and artillery battalion and to bring them to the Haapsalu district as a general reserve.

31 March, No. 0392.

Rear Admiral Sveshnikov”

At the same time, the Chief of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position also wired to Captain Altvater at the Naval Department of the Commander-in-Chief Headquarters:

“As I do not know the condition of the defence of the coast in the Gulf of Riga in Tõstamaa-Vaiste-Saulepa region, I would like to draw your attention to the abovementioned region where the enemy can fortify itself if it is invading the Gulf of Riga, thus remaining beyond the range of the Pärnu and Virtsu batteries.

No. 0460. Vasilyev”

The High Command reacted immediately to the alarming telegram of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, giving a series of orders for strengthening the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The Commander in Chief of the Baltic Fleet has applied to the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief¹⁷ to immediately send senior officers from the front to his commandment; the situation is serious; all the possible measures have been taken into use everywhere. It is necessary to create firm internal discipline in the troops,

15 Vasiliy Altvater (1883–1919), from October 1917 Rear Admiral. 1918–1919 Commanding Officer of the Navy of Soviet Russia (editor’s note).

16 Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front.

17 Commander-in-Chief of Northern Front.

influencing them through the Council of Delegates to whom the seriousness of the situation must be explained. Demand energetic activity from all the leaders because, more than ever before, their task is to withhold the troops from deteriorating, calling the soldiers to preserve the discipline for their Fatherland's benefit. The despatch of the 428th Regiment is hindered because the regiment is now incapable of fighting and useless for you.

Against the possible operations in spring, the High Command has taken up measures for strengthening the Minelayers' Division, for despatching the reserves, and for supplying the necessary material.

1 April No. 88/418 op.

For the Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces,
Kovanko¹⁸."

"To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

I reveal for your information the telegram from the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief:¹⁹

"Owing to the strong ice cover, the situation in the Baltic is causing grave anxiety in the defence of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, and especially Saaremaa, because with the fall of the Sõrve peninsula the enemy can also capture the Irbe Position when the navigation starts. The intelligence information and the enemy's preparations for offensive activity on the Northern Front allow us to suppose that an expedition to Saaremaa will be undertaken during the period when, owing to the strong ice cover, we cannot send out ships to sea. With the objective of preventing the enemy's operation, and to hold the island in our possession, I have given orders to the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet to concentrate the whole 107th Division and one Brigade of the 118th Division, who are subordinated to the Fleet, upon the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

As the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet has neither the necessary means nor troops at his disposal for forming the reserve, I order:

- 1) to concentrate the Brigade of the 135th Infantry Division which belongs to the Coastal Defence Group in Pärnu and, in the case of necessity, to transport the Brigade from there to Saaremaa;
- 2) until the formation of the 107th Artillery Battalion in Tallinn is completed, to dispatch 3 close support batteries from the Kronstadt Fortress Artillery to Saaremaa under the command of the Commander of the Muhu Strait

18 Most probably Navy Lieutenant Lev Kovanko (1891–1938) (editor's note).

19 Commander-in-Chief of the Armed forces.

Fortified Position. Those batteries will go back into your commandment when the 107th Battalion has arrived in Saaremaa;

- 3) to send 1 light park artillery battalion which you find possible (by all means with the small arms park) from the Northern Front to Saaremaa into the command of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position;
- 4) to send one company of engineers which you find possible into the command of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position; the company will return when the serious situation has passed;
- 5) to dispatch an army engineer with fighting experience into the command of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. During the development of the operations in Saaremaa, it may become necessary to send even more supplements there from the Northern Front. I beg you to apply to Chief of Ordnance and Supplies of the Northern Front for every kind of supplies for the Muhu Strait Fortified Position troops. In the questions about movement arrangement and destination for the troops being dispatched under your command, I beg you to communicate immediately with the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet. I beg you to report about the execution.

3 April 1917, No. 2415.

Alekseyev.²⁰

3 April, No. 450

Prince Cherkasski.²¹”

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The 470th Regiment has been assigned to Haapsalu, the 472nd Regiment to Virtsu. The transfer will start on 4 April and will be finished on 6 April.

No. 194.

For the Chief of the Staff of the Fortress

Captain Rezunov.”

20 Mikhail Alexeyev (1857–1918), Adjutant General, 1915–1917 Chief of Staff of the General Headquarters (Stavka) (editor’s note).

21 Prince Mikhail Cherkasski (1882–1919), Navy Captain, from March 1917 acting Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet (editor’s note).

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

0401. The Commander-in-Chief²² has given the order:

The Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet has to dispatch the 428th Regiment from Helsinki and 2 regiments of the 118th Division from Tallinn immediately to Saaremaa; the Commander of the Northern Front has to concentrate one brigade from the 135th Division in Pärnu for the reserve for the Muhu Strait Fortified Position; to send 3 light field batteries, a light park artillery battalion with the small arms park, a pioneer company, and an army engineer to Saaremaa under your command. The Artillery Main Administration has been given the order to send 8,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, 1,000,000 rounds for machine guns, and 3,000 hand grenades quickly to Haapsalu to your disposal. Commander-in-Chief²³ has ordered to place 8,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, 1,000,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition, 3,000 hand grenades and 12,000 3” rounds to complete the number of grenades and shrapnels from the Sea Fortresses at your disposal. Senior officers will be dispatched for the 427th Regiment. Wire about the arrival of the troops.

No. 4102/B

Rusin.”

“To the Chief of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

I inform you about the arrangements made to strengthen the Muhu Strait Fortified Position: the 428th Regiment will be conveyed to Haapsalu under your command; 2) one brigade of the 135th Division and the Artillery Battalion will be concentrated in Pärnu; 3) the 470th and the 472nd Regiment will be placed under your command for sending to Saaremaa; 4) from the Northern Front, the Kronstadt close support battery, the 121st Artillery Battalion and the Pioneer Company will be sent via Tallinn to your disposal; 5) Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress will give you the required amount of equipment.

3 April No. 478/op.

Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces

Kovanko.”

“To the Chief of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces has ordered to place one battery from the 135th Artillery Battalion under your command. About the arrangement of

22 Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

23 Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front.

dispatching the above-mentioned battery and the Kronstadt close support battery to the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, apply directly to the Staff of the Army.

10 April, No. 4/8. op Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces
Kovanko.”

“To Navy Captain Altvater

The Headquarters of the Northern Front.

The 472nd Regiment of the 118th Division, which came from the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress into Saaremaa, is in extremely bad condition from the viewpoint of internal discipline as well as poor fighting value. There is only one senior officer in the regiment – the acting regiment commander; the battalion and company commanders and the paymaster are, almost without exception, ensigns. There are only 1200 men in the regiment. On the way to the position, robberies were executed, in which even officers have taken part; there has also been negligence in the administrative service, and the elimination of those involved has been started. Earnestly, it is necessary to appoint the regiment commander and also some cadre officers. With the two regiments of the 118th Division, a brigade commander was also despatched to Muhu, but on the way, he turned back to Tallinn under some kind of pretences. It is necessary to despatch the brigade commander here. The appointment of a new commander of the 107th Division in place of General Samgin²⁴ is urgently necessary.

22 April, No. 0597.

Vasilyev.”

An extract from the intercourse by the Hughes apparatus between Colonel Krusenstern,²⁵ Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet, and Colonel Georgievich,²⁶ Chief of Staff of the 107th Division:

24 Pavel Samgin (1854–1919), Lieutenant General, 1915–1917 Commander of the 107th Infantry Division (editor’s note).

25 Otto von Krusenstern (Krusenstiern, 1880–1935), Colonel, 1917 Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet. 1919 served in the Northwestern Army of the General Nikolay Yudenich, was promoted to Major General. After the war lived in Estonia. 1930 moved to Brazil (editor’s note).

26 Mikhail Georgievich (1883–1969), Colonel, acting Chief of the Staff of the 107th Infantry Division. 1917–1918 prisoner-of-war in Germany, then in Russian Civil War in the General Wrangel’s Army, 1919 promoted to Major General. During interwar period lived in Yugoslavia, in the World War II fought in the Russian units of the German Armed Forces. Died in Australia (editor’s note).

"Colonel Krusenstern is speaking. Rodzyanko²⁷ is writing: I consider it my moral duty to tell you about the information that has reached me on the condition of defence of the Muhu Strait Position: the completion of the personnel has not yet ended; in the batteries and infantry regiments, there is a deficiency of more than 50 percent, whereby the deficiency is felt particularly sharply in the artillery teams and in the officers corps. And there is a lack of necessary number of people for fortification works; many batteries are not supplied with the necessary material, the periscope binoculars and rangefinders are missing, owing to which the batteries are not capable for action. I beg you to clarify how much of this information is true.

M. Rodzyanko."

Colonel Georgievich answers:

"The deficiency in personnel is really quite big; the units have been newly formed, and they had to be reinforced in spring already, which could not be carried out owing to the corruption of the reserve forces. Now, 3000 men will be sent in addition. The shortage of workers is a common fact which is caused by present events; the possible measures have been undertaken, but the former number of workers is hardly attainable."

An extract from the telegram of the Chief of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to Captain Altvater of 19 April 1917, No. 0574:

"The regiment as well as battalion commanders of the 427th and the 472nd Regiment are missing."

A telegram from the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to the Chief of the Staff of the Northern Front of 22 April 1917 No. 1519:

"The troops of the Muhu Strait Position need draft companies for completion: for the 425th, 426th and 427th Regiments altogether 6 and for the 472nd Regiment 5 companies. These should be dispatched to Haapsalu. Please inform about the arrangements.

Sveshnikov."

27 Alexander Rodzyanko (1879–1970), Colonel, regiment commander in the Cavalry Officers' School, 1918–1920 served in the Northwestern Army, from July to October 1919 Commander-in-Chief of the Army, 1919 promoted to Lieutenant General. Died in the United States (editor's note).

The inquiry by wire of the Chief of the Staff of Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet on 8 of June 1917, No. 915/op. and the reply of the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position:

"The Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet proposes: 1) to convey the 427th Pudozh Regiment from Hiiumaa to Saaremaa under your orders; 2) the 470th Dankovsk Regiment from Haapsalu to Hiiumaa. Send your opinion about the transfer, the plan of transportation with the existing transport vessels, and the data how much the latter would take part in the accomplishment of the above-mentioned task from Tallinn with a messenger.

Krusenstern."

"To the Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces.

915/op.

Although the transfer mentioned earlier is desirable for the concentration of the 107th Division, it is not executable at the present moment, because the 470th Regiment is not yet raised to its full complement and is therefore entirely unfit for fighting. No. 0956.

Sveshnikov."

Despite all the above-mentioned orders, the Muhu Strait Fortified Position actually got only the 472nd Regiment and one Kronstadt close support battery. The 470th Regiment was useless for action and remained on the mainland. Neither could the 472nd Regiment and the Kronstadt close support battery be considered well-disciplined troops ready for action. Therefore, the strengthening of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was far from perfect and did not correspond with the importance of the position and the prescribed tasks. The Russians were fully aware of the insufficiencies of the force, in as much that the defence instructions were not executable by the existing troops, and all the efforts to strengthen the forces were not giving any results. When the German Fleet's activity became more intense, the question of strengthening the Muhu Strait Fortified Position became more acute. Intelligence about the possible German offensive came quite early in spring already, and, at the beginning of August, alarming new information arrived. It was reported on 4 August that the power projection of the German fleet in the Gulf of Finland was probable, and then, on 5 August, definite information was received that the Germans had concentrated transports with smaller tonnage for carrying out a landing operation.

On 25 September, a warning came about possible German sea operations, whereby even the commencement of the operation was known. On 2 October, a warning was received again from the 12th Army that the operation was going to begin on 3 October. On 4 October, new warnings were received, and, finally, at 14.00 on 10 October the following telegram arrived from the Headquarters of the Naval Forces; the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position communicated its content to every subordinated unit.

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. 1578/op. The information is that tomorrow, on 11 of October, the German Fleet operations in the Baltic Sea will begin.

10 October 1917, at 1400.

Petrov.”

So, intelligence reports and warnings more and more precisely pointing to the beginning of the operation had arrived one after another in the course of two months. As we have seen before, the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position felt the critical condition of the position in spring already, and, to have a general reserve in its immediate command, had ordered to prepare for the transportation of the 470th Regiment from Haapsalu to Saaremaa on 22 August and later also to begin it. The regiment had to concentrate in Kingli-Mustla-Laimjala-Audla area with the objective that, in case of the Russian withdrawal, to cover the retreating and confused troops and to stop the enemy at an agreed reserve position or at the already prepared Orissaare bridgehead position, to gain time for the deployment of reinforcements from the mainland. At the same time, the 470th Regiment, had to begin fortifying the Orissaare reserve position for which the means had been agreed on 9 September 1917. Perhaps, the existence of the 470th Regiment in the aforementioned area would have influenced the course of the operation.

In reply to the order of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position about the transportation of the 470th Regiment, two telegrams arrived on 26 August:

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Copy to the Commander of the Coastal Defences.

13336. Commander of the Land Forces has forbidden the deployment of the 470th Regiment to Saaremaa.

26 August, No. 5293/1912/op.

Krusenstern.”

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

There is no intention to increase henceforward the garrison, therefore the deployment of the 470th Regiment is not desirable.

8 September, No. 5573/2005.

Chief of Staff of Land Forces

Krusenstern.”

So, we can see that formation of the reserve in due time was refused. Already in spring, but particularly earnestly in August, the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position asked for one cavalry regiment for Saaremaa, which was intended to concentrate on the Tumala area. In the case of the enemy’s operation against the north-western coast of Saaremaa, it was intended to direct the cavalry regiment to Liiküla area to cover the right flank of the troops defending the north-western shore. The later events have proved how correctly the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had evaluated the situation, taking care of strengthening the right flank in Liiküla area. The above-mentioned regiment would undoubtedly have played a particularly important role during the operation. The following documents prove the efforts of the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to obtain the cavalry regiment.

Extract from the telegram to Navy Captain Altvater:

“The strengthening of the position with a cavalry regiment is in every way desirable because the strengthening of the Tagalaht Bay and Küdema Bay area is indispensable; it is also necessary to introduce air mail.

19 April 1917, No. 0574.

Vasilyev.”

To Navy Captain Altvater.

“Naval Department in the Headquarters of Commander-in-Chief.²⁸

For defending the 70 kilometres long sector from the Tagalaht Bay to the Küdema Bay is only one regiment, which is not sufficient, of course. Therefore, I beg you to dispatch one cavalry regiment which will enable to strengthen the given sector. No. 0550.

Sveshnikov.”

28 Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front.

“To the Chief of Staff of the Northern Front,
Copy to the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

On the front of the [12th] Army, the question of the defence of the Gulf of Riga is closely related to the defence of Saaremaa and the Muhu Strait Position because, with the capture of those and with blocking the Muhu Strait, the enemy, who will be the full master of the Gulf, will have the freedom of action in the Gulf of Riga. Therefore, while carrying out any kind of landing on the coast of the Gulf of Riga, the first objectives of the enemy will be Saaremaa and the Sõrve peninsula, which bars the passage through the Irbe Strait, and whose keeping in our own hands is essentially important for successful defence of the coast. The report of the Chief of the Staff of the 107th Division, who has gone to the Headquarters of the Army for liaison purposes, reveals that, although from the viewpoint of the number of the troops and artillery, the situation of Saaremaa is considered satisfactory, considering the present mood of the troops, the situation in Saaremaa can be taken as entirely secure only when the garrison will be strengthened with at least one cavalry regiment. The Chief of Staff of the 107th Division asked for this regiment from the 12th Army²⁹, which is closely connected with the Muhu Strait Position. Entirely appreciating the importance of Saaremaa and Muhu Islands in defending the coast of the Gulf of Riga, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, however, does not regard it possible to weaken an already delicate coastal front, the length of which is more than 200 kilometres; in his opinion, it is possible to strengthen the Muhu Strait Fortified Position with the disengaged cavalry units of other armies for whom larger-scale activities cannot be foreseen.

Riga, 24 August No. 3784.
Posokhov.³⁰”

“To the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

By the order of the Chief of the Staff of the Army, I have to inform you that it is not possible to place a cavalry regiment at your disposal at the moment .

Riga, 27 August No. 3864.
Sokovnin.³¹”

29 Colonel Georgevich, Chief of Staff of the 107th Division, was dispatched to the Headquarters of the 12th Army in order to get a cavalry regiment for Saaremaa.

30 Andrei Posokhov (1872–1931), Major General, from April 1917 acting Chief of the Staff of the 12th Army. Died in France (editor’s note).

31 Vsevolod Sokovnin (1870–1922), Major General, 1915–1917 Quartermaster General of the 12th Army, then until the end of 1917 acting Chief of the Staff of the 12th Army (editor’s note).

Neither did the garrison of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position correspond to its task by the number of troops and their composition. The scantiness of the cavalry and the lack of cyclists' units and of heavier armoured vehicles did not afford to carry out active defence. The length of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and the extremely winding coastline favourable for landing necessitated the existence of a mobile reserve for which primarily cyclists' units and, in the main directions, armoured vehicles would have been suitable. The Muhu Strait Fortified Position had two armoured cars reconstructed from ordinary lorries at its disposal; however, their fighting value was small. An officer (Lieut. Lobov) was despatched to Petrograd and Pskov to get new and modern armoured cars, but his trip did not give any results. As we have seen before, the garrison of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position did not also correspond to their task by the training level of the troops. The forces were supposed to be completed during the summer with draft companies. But this staging had not yet been finished because the Command of the Muhu Strait Position had asked repeatedly to dispatch additional 20 draft companies. The question of officers also remained unsettled: senior officers and company commanders with fighting experience had not been obtained. The extent to which the draft companies had been drilled at all during this politically complicated time is self-evident. The training of the troops was considerably influenced by continuous guard duties and the exploitation of men for the fortification works. The report of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to the Commander of the Land Forces gives an impression on the effect of the fortification works upon the soldiers.

"With reference to your telegraphic inquiry of 16 August No. 4919/874, I have to report that, in accordance with the Provisional Government's instruction published in the daily orders of the Commandant of the Peter the Great's Naval Fortress of the 27th of August No. 1746, soldiers appointed to the works are paid on the same basis as salaried workmen, but the normal soldier's pay and the money for food are deducted. The Position Fortification Department should carry out the works with paid workmen, but if they are not available, soldiers should be employed, who will earn enormous sums due to the local prices of the labour force.

As the Position Fortification Department executes only the construction works of coastal batteries and harbours, then all the remaining work in engineering preparation of the position (the entrenchments, etc.) is carried out by soldiers as fighting tasks and, therefore, also without special pay. Due to this, the situation arises when, in one of the neighbouring sectors, soldiers are working with pay,

in the other without pay. This phenomenon increases the soldier's discontent, languor in digging the trenches, and very often entirely ignoring this work. It must be clarified why credit is allowed for the execution of some works but not for others. The abnormality is already reaching so far that every kind work of the soldiers which is directly or indirectly subordinated to the Position Fortification Department is richly paid. This creates discontent and misunderstandings in paying to the soldiers, spoils the normal life of the troops, hinders the preparations for fighting and influences the complement in a demoralizing manner.

The situation can be improved in two ways:

- 1) with the Provisional Government's instruction to exploit soldiers without payment for all the defence work, or
- 2) with keeping soldiers away from the works of the Position Fortification Department.

The first solution, which is not dependent on me, is very desirable, but the second solution would bring, due to the limited number of workers, the omission of important and urgent works. I find that the wartime situation and the necessity to restore the normal life of the troops requires the prohibition of payments to soldiers and sailors working on fortification works. In the near future, it is intended to increase the wages three times, which will also be extended to the soldiers. I regard such an increase inadmissible, and I shall not sanction it; therefore, the work is likely be stopped. I report about that already now, keeping in mind and enclosing the information received from Tallinn from where political agitation is spreading to the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Enclosure:

- 1) The order for evaluation of the work;
- 2) The order of the Commandant of the Peter the Great's Naval Fortress of 9 August No. 1422;
- 3) The Government instructions which should be discussed.

Rear Admiral Sveshnikov."

The above-mentioned report shows that paying of wages influenced the moral of the garrison. But this was also accompanied by other evils which were revealed in frequent thefts and robberies. Particularly, the 472nd Regiment must be mentioned here which the population considered a punishment and caused many annoyances to the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, but especially to the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Soldiers and Workers Executive Committee. The characteristic picture is given in the reports of Captain Terekhov and of Captain Shchelishchev,

who were sent to the 470th Dankovsk Regiment, and of the commander of the 11th company of the 427th Regiment about the internal disorder in the units.

"On 20 June I, arrived from the 31st Alekseyevskiy Infantry Regiment from the Western Front. When I reported to the regiment commander, the latter was surprised about the arrival of us, senior officers (there were 11 officers altogether), saying that the regiment has plenty of officers, there are no vacant companies; therefore, he does not consider it desirable to replace the Ensigns and 2nd Lieutenants. I refused the proposal to take command of the mounted reconnaissance detachment, of the commandant's detachment or of the engineer detachment. Having the rank of Second Captain, I considered it an offence, after having been three years in front line trenches, to be appointed as the commander of some kind of detachment. After inquiring from the division commander what to do with the arrived officers, the regiment commander received the order to appoint us company commanders. I had to accept the 5th company. The commander of the 5th company at this time was Ensign Muratov who almost publicly incited the soldiers against me, regarding himself as a more suitable commander for the reason that he had led the company before the revolution already. Although the regiment commander knew this, no measures were taken against Ensign Muratov.

The regiment commander also took an indifferent attitude in respect of the decision of the 5th company not to accept me as the company commander. All the officers who had arrived from the front and who had to accept the companies were received with the same decision. The question was raised in the regiment's committee. Having examining my service list (which did not belong to the competence of the regiment's committee at all) the regiment's committee decided that the companies had to accept us. Despite this, I once more got the message that I was not wanted as the company commander. Firstly, this is explained by Ensign Muratov's more energetic agitation and, secondly, by the fact that the regiment commander and the regiment's committee did not have any authority among the soldiers. Beginning with the date when I arrived in regiment until the present, I have been appointed nowhere, and, even now, I belong to the regiment as a junior officer (I do not even mention that I have led a battalion lately on the front). All my service in the 470th Dankovsk Regiment has been that I have been appointed to control the sentries in town. The inspection of sentries was fixed by the daily order for 12 o'clock, but actually this was not held; the sentries arrived at different times and everybody separately demanded the password (such was the order on the regiment); therefore, it was impossible for me to check their knowledge of sentries' duties; there were often misunderstandings; the sentries were sometimes relieved

not at 12.00 but at 17.00–18.00. The above-mentioned question was repeatedly raised in the regiment's committee but without any results.

Based on my report, to which I had enclosed two decisions about my rejection, I have waited for a new appointment for about two months in vain. At the end of August, I was appointed commander of the 12th company. When I arrived to take over the command of the company, they declared that they would not accept me; if the 5th company did not accept me, and nothing happened to them after this, why could not they do the same. The regiment commander also disregarded this. I remained at the 3rd Battalion where there were only 11 officers, while the regiment's Staff together with the 1st Battalion had a total of 60 people – from them, 5 officers were under the regiment commander, one of them a relative of the regiment commander. In addition to that, the Staff had 10 officers "for any case", as the regiment commander Colonel Mironov himself indicated. So, there was the senior of the orchestra, the patron of the church, the battle officer at Staff, etc." (Captain Terekhov, dispatched to the 470th Dankovsk Regiment)

"I arrived on 3 June from the Romanian front into the 470th Dankovsk Regiment and, a few days later, was appointed with the regiment's daily order Commander of the 10th Company. Receiving the corresponding order, I went to the location of the 10th Company. I had hardly approached the barracks when I was addressed by insulting calls from the windows. Nonetheless, I entered the barracks and called out the company's committee to whom I announced that I had been appointed the company commander and ordered the company to be lined up the next morning so that I could take over the command of it. From the committee, I got the answer that the company did not accept me because they did not know what kind of man I was, and that the company's soldiers did not understand why I had been sent there as they had their own company's Ensign. I reported on this event to Colonel Mironov, the regiment commander, but the latter accused me of all that had happened because I had not informed the former company commander Ensign Okorokov beforehand about my arrival.

My displeasure was big, but I calmed down a little when I heard that other officers who had arrived from different fronts, like Second Captain Borisov (the 4th Comp.), Captain Krashkov (the 12th Comp.), had met a similar fate. We all received written decisions from the company committees that we were not accepted. This comedy was discussed by the regiment's committee many times, until, on 20 August, the company's delegates approached me personally and asked me to take over the command of the company. About 20 filthy and disgustingly soiled soldiers had assembled to the official acceptance of the company. A part of this

band was sitting on the floor, the other part on the railings of the verandas; some of the men had their caps on, the others did not have belts, and the majority were smoking. I had to accept the company in such form because otherwise the regiment commander threatened to take action against me for not obeying the "battle order".

Later I exhorted the soldiers many times to take part in the drills, but these exhortations had no effect. On the battalion's march, on 6 and 7 September, I brought only 19 soldiers of the company from Haapsalu to Lihula (about 52 kilometres) under my command, while the remaining men arrived either earlier or later. The same also happened to other companies. If something in the regiment resembled some traces of military order, the regiment owed this to the supplements it got from the dissolved Grenadier Guards Regiment from Petrograd." (Captain Shchelishchev, Commander of the 10th Company of the 470th Dankovsk Regiment)

"The soldiers were armed with [Japanese] rifles of Arisaka type whose bolts could not be opened after each discharge without using stones or entrenching tools, and even that was done with difficulties. The situation was also bad with the machine guns. The Kōpu sector to which I belonged was given two machine gun platoons whose deficiency was that the means of transport, the vehicles and harnesses were few, and those were in a very bad condition. The result was that machine gunners did not know how to transport the machine guns. In addition to the rifles with malfunctioning locks and machine guns, which should have been transported manually, the companies were given English Mills-type hand grenades, which nobody besides officers knew how to handle. The bomb-throwers attached to the companies only knew how to throw the dummy ones and were afraid to handle the live grenades. Because of the late distribution of hand grenades, the lack of instructors and the soldiers' present-day attitude towards every kind of training, we had to step out against the enemy with soldiers who had not completely learned the handling of hand grenades." (Commander of the 11th Company of the 427th Pudozh Regiment Korolev)

Summing up, we can see that the defending forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position were already impregnated with the spirit of revolution. The leaders had lost their authority, and agitation and mutual intrigues were rife. The disorder was so big that even the necessary control over the performance of the guards' duties could not be carried out. The exercises were carried out occasionally, whereby the exploitation of soldiers for fortification works revealed a paralyzing effect upon the men's morale. Robberies were happening, which testifies to the complete internal decay of the military forces.

III. The Fortification of the Muhu Strait Position

The bases for the preparation of the fortification works were:

- the tasks of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position;
- the composed plan of defence for the execution of the above tasks;
- the character of the coast of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa depending on its suitability for landing, and
- the number of the effective forces in the garrison of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

1. The Fortification Works of the Coast of Saaremaa

The fortification plan was composed in conformity with the defence plan, according to the relative importance of the island's regions and the accessibility of the coast (Scheme 3).

The North-western and Western coast of Saaremaa was divided into three sectors:

- a) from the Pammana peninsula to Rootsiküla;
- b) from Rootsiküla to the Lõu Bay, and
- c) the Sõrve peninsula from the Lõu Bay to Karuste.

a) The Sector from the Pammana Peninsula to Rootsiküla

Two lines of defence were fixed in the sector from the Pammana peninsula to Rootsiküla: the first line of defence consisted of groups of trenches along the coastline, while the second one consisted of defended localities 3–6 kilometres away from the coast with intervals of 4, 5 and 6 kilometres. The length of the second defence line was about 30 kilometres, and it was situated on the general line of Võhma, Paatsa, Küdema, Mustjala, Pidula, Odalatsi and Kihelkonna.

The first line of defence, which had the direct task to immediately repel the landed troops, consisted of seven groups of fire-trenches.³² These groups were sited near the coastline, which is extremely winding, forming many bights and bays of which the Küdema, Tagalaht, Kihelkonna, and Atla bays must be mentioned as the most favourable for landing.

The ground of this region is almost completely covered with smaller or bigger woods, penetrated by roads in different directions.

³² Groups 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13.

The majority of the roads run along the coast, are 2–3 metres wide and with a foundation of stone and sand, affording the movements of infantry as well as artillery.

The Merise-Selgase line divided both lines of defence into two sectors.

The Right Sector

Reconnaissance revealed that the depth of the sea and the character of the bottom along the eastern coast of the Küdema Bay from the Panga border guard post to Luhtse border guard post and on the western coast of the same bay from Ninase village to Ninase border guard post is entirely favourable for steam boats, rowing boats and sailing boats for approaching the coast, and, therefore, these regions were marked as probable landing places.

In accordance with the reconnaissance report, the fortification of the coast was carried out as follows:

The First Line of Defence

Trenches for 7 machine gun platoons were constructed at Panga border guard post. Southward of Panga border guard post 11 fire-trenches were constructed for infantry platoons (group 1), mostly for firing kneeling and partly for firing standing. The length of the trench group was 3 kilometres; the artificial obstacles were missing. Along the coast of the Küdema Bay, southward of Võhma village, 8 fire-trenches were constructed for infantry platoons (group 3), mostly for firing kneeling and partly for firing standing. The length of the trenches was about 3 kilometres with the intervals up to 300 metres between the trenches; the trenches were in mutual fire support between themselves; the field of fire extended up to the Ranna farms.

On the western coast of the Küdema Bay, from the border guard post to Ninase village, 6 platoon fire-trenches with machine gun emplacements were prepared (group 5) for firing standing; three of these trenches were situated north of Ninase village, and three trenches in the area of Kugalepa village. The construction of the observation posts had been completed. The reserve positions for artillery were chosen in the area north of Mustjala manor. The positions were concealed, and they afforded to fire with flanking fire the approaches from the sea upon the western coast as well as upon the eastern coast of the Küdema Bay. The observation post built on the coast off Vartsi village afforded to watch the whole bay. The wood growing along the coast favoured the approach of the reserves and the concealed manoeuvring within them.

The Second Line of Defence

Resistance barrier 1-a was organized at height 20.0, which is covered with high wood. In the valley in front of the height was situated Võhma village. Through the swamp, situated on the right flank of the resistance barrier, ran a small stream. The resistance barrier, which was more than one kilometre long, consisted of 14 platoon fire trenches for firing kneeling; in front of the trenches, there was a field of fire up to 700 metres. Resistance barrier 1-a was of special importance because it was situated on the position's flank and blocked the way to Pilli and Põltse villages. Resistance barrier 1-b was formed at height of 20.1; the height, with sandy surface, was covered with sparse wood, at some places with undergrowth. The resistance barrier with the general length of more than one kilometre consisted of 12 platoon fire-trenches for firing kneeling. The trenches were in one line; in front of the trenches, there was a field of fire up to 250 metres. Resistance barrier 1 was located in young wood on a height about 2 kilometres west Paatsa village and was almost in line with resistance barrier 1-b. The resistance barrier, which was 1.5 kilometres long, consisted of 16 platoon fire-trenches sited doglegs wise and was for firing kneeling; the field of fire in front of it situated extended to 300 metres. Resistance barriers 1 and 1-b completed each other and had to strengthen the opposition power of the above sector as they secured its right flank and rear.

Resistance barrier 3 near Küdema manor was formed on the probable line of attack if the enemy who had landed in the Küdema Bay, and the locality had to block the Küdema-Kuressaare road. The resistance barrier consisted of 8 platoon fire-trenches which were sited dog-legs wise to the left on the height's opposite slope, while in front of it was the field of fire up to 700 metres. Resistance barrier 5-a was situated in the vicinity of Mustjala church and consisted of 5 half-company fire-trenches partly for firing kneeling, partly for firing standing. In front of the trenches, there were wire obstacles and the field of fire up to 700 metres. In case of the enemy's landing in the Küdema Bay, the above-mentioned barrier was of great importance, as it was situated on the enemy's probable line of attack. Resistance barrier 5 was situated near Silla village on a height inside a young wood and consisted of 16 platoon fire-trenches for cross-firing to the front, within the field of fire up to 250 metres. Resistance barrier 7 was situated near Selgase village and consisted of 12 platoon fire-trenches for firing kneeling, which were situated in the middle of a wood; in front of the trenches, there was the field of fire up to 300 metres. The above-mentioned resistance barrier was of importance only if the enemy landed in the Tagalaht Bay and advanced in the directions of Abula and Pidula. For supporting resistance barriers 3, 5 and 7, the artillery position was

chosen about 2 kilometres east of Mustjala onto a forest clearing. For supporting the resistance barrier, a concealed artillery position was provided near Mustjala in the Silla village area.

The Left Sector

The coast between the Merise border guard post and the Abula border guard post favoured the hostile landing because up to 15 metres deep the bay allowed even the bigger ships to approach the coast.

The First Line of Defence

The advanced line of defence was formed by the group of trenches between Kalasimmu and Abula (group 7) which consisted of 6 half-company fire-trenches for firing standing; in front of one trench, there was a wire entanglement. The length of the group was 1 kilometre. Between Merise and Kalasimmu, there was no need for fire-trenches, because about 50 metres inland from the coast began the wood, and great numbers of big stones on the coast offered good protection to rifle posts; the construction of the trenches in that region would have demanded plenty of time and resources due to the stony surface. Along the coast from Abula border guard post to Tagamõisa, the bay was shallow and stony; therefore, the landing in that region was not probable and no fortification works were done there.

The area from Tagamõisa to Undva Peninsula was favourable for landing, although the bottom was stony. In this area, group 15 was organized, which consisted of 15 platoon fire-trenches for firing standing and 16 machine gun emplacements; the trenches were in mutual fire support between themselves, and in front of them, there was a good field of fire. The intervals between separate trenches were 0.5–1 kilometre. Many trenches were provided with shelters and roofs for protecting against splinters.

In the area from Undva border guard post to Kurelase, 2-kilometre-long group 11 was constructed, which consisted of 21 platoon fire-trenches for firing standing and of 20 machine gun emplacements. The task of this group of trenches was to make landing in Kollinge Bay more difficult, although, owing to its shallowness and stony bottom, this bay was not favourable for landing of troops.

On the coast southward of the Kollinge Bay to Kurevere village, the sea is very shallow and stony; the coast is a flat height covered with lonely small woods and bushes.

The southern part of the Kihelkonna Bay was favourable for landing because the bay is sheltered from the winds and sufficiently deep, its wide extent affording

anchorage for transports; different smaller ships and boats could approach the coast. For the defence of this part of the bay, group of trenches 13 was organized, which consisted of 3 platoon fire-trenches near Kurevere village. But this group of trenches was weak and could not reveal substantial opposition against the enemy's landing parties.

Group 13 was supported by the Kihelkonna anti-aircraft batteries which were adapted for firing at land targets. On the Undva peninsula, positions for artillery were prepared near Rannaküla, Undva and Neeme villages; each position was meant for 4 guns and fitted with dugouts for gun teams.

The Second Line of Defence

Resistance barrier 9 was situated near Pidula manor and consisted of 10 platoon fire-trenches allowing cross-firing to cover the whole field with a 500 metre range; the wire entanglement was under construction. This resistance barrier had the importance of flanking both sectors. Resistance barrier 11 was constructed near Odalatsi village with the aim to cover the direction of the Odalatsi-Uru road. The barrier consisted of 9 platoon fire-trenches for firing kneeling. The left flank of the resistance barrier bordered on a stream which was passable in summer. Resistance barrier 13, situated on a height on the isthmus of the Undva peninsula, had to bar the advance of the enemy, who had landed on the peninsula, towards inland. Cutting through the above-mentioned isthmus, the resistance barrier together with the Kihelkonna resistance barrier (15) was of very great importance. The resistance barrier consisted of 25 platoon fire-trenches for firing kneeling and was sited dog-leg wise to the right and left. Resistance barrier 15 was situated in the Kihelkonna area. With its left flank, the resistance barrier rested upon the sea and with its right flank was in connection with defended locality 13, covering the roads leading towards Kuresaare and Tiirimetsa. The resistance barrier consisted of 20 platoon fire-trenches for firing kneeling; the wire entanglement was under construction. The artillery position was provided in the region the resistance barrier 13 upon the isthmus of Undva peninsula.

b) The Sector from Rootsiküla to Lõu Bay³³

The coastline from Rootsiküla to the Lõu Bay is extremely winding, forming the Kuusnõmme Bay and the Atla Bay, of which the Atla Bay is navigable for shallow draught ships. Further southward, the coastline straightens, forming only the Lõu

³³ The reconnaissance report of Lieutenant Colonel Bradke, Acting Commander of the 426th Regiment.

Bay on the Sõrve peninsula. The section from Rootsiküla to Atla Bay was considered entirely unsuitable for landing, as the sea is shallow and stony. The entrance to the Kuusnõmme Bay is closed by Vilsandi Island. The Atla Bay is favourable enough for shallow draught transports, but it is narrow and rich in shoals; therefore, it is impossible to anchor more than 3–4 transports simultaneously there; it was assumed that the Atla Bay is suitable for only secondary (demonstrative) landing.

The coastline from Elda farm to Härjamaa farm is not sheltered from winds and does not provide stopping places for ships there; therefore, it is unsuitable for a landing operation. Larger transports are able to approach only up to 2 miles, owing to the shoals.

The sea from Härjamaa to Möldri is shallow and with a stony bottom; the approach to the coast is difficult for the ships; therefore, a landing there was considered hardly possible. Big transports are able to approach only up to 2 miles from the coast. The Härjamaa-Rummu line divides the above-mentioned sector into two parts: the right (northern) side where only observation was carried out, and the left (southern) side where, despite its shortcomings, the enemy's landing was still assumed possible with the objective to isolate the Sõrve peninsula. The southern part was being fortified by forming a group of trenches (group 51) which was to consist of 85 trenches (only 51 platoon and section fire trenches for firing kneeling were ready). On the left flank, this group was already united with the completed position in near Üdipää³⁴ village.

The Üdipää position, cutting through the Sõrve peninsula in its narrowest part and having the front towards the south, was meant to stop the enemy, which had landed in the Lõu Bay, advancing in the Kuressaare direction. The position was provided for 2 companies and 4 guns and consisted of 5 half-company fire-trenches together with communication trenches and of 15 shelters, each for 12 people; in front of the trenches, about 30 metres away, there were 7 fence wire entanglements, which could be defended from the trenches with rifle and machine gun flanking fire.

Behind the Üdipää position, there was the Tehumardi position, the second-line position in relation to the Üdipää position. The task of the Tehumardi position was to block the roads leading to Kuressaare. This position was meant for 2 companies and 4 guns, consisting of 5 trenches in the front line and 4 trenches in the support line, communication trenches, and 16 shelters, each for 12 people; in front of the trenches, 35 metres away, there were the 7 fence wire entanglements. To block for the enemy who had landed in the Tagalaht, Kollinge or Atla bays, the ways to Kuressaare as a junction of roads, positions were constructed in Kärkla, Kellamäe and Nasva regions. All the work on these three positions was completed.

³⁴ Nowadays Üüdibe (editor's note).

The position at Kärla was built for 2 battalions and 8 guns and consisted of two parts: the 1st sector from Kärla church to Sõmera village and the 2nd sector from Sõmera village to the swamp of Mõnnuste.

The task of the first sector was to detain the enemy from moving from the Tagalaht Bay towards Kuressaare; the sector's position consisted of half-company fire-trenches, 12 of which were in the front line and 2 in the support line, communication trenches, and 20 shelters.

The task of the second sector was to bar the enemy attacking from the direction of Kuressaare in order to afford the withdrawal to Orissaare via Uduvere, Tika and Tagavere. The position consisted of 10 half-company fire-trenches, communication trenches, and 14 shelters. Both sectors of the Kärla position had a 7-fence wire entanglement in front of the trenches. The position at Kellamäe was a second-line position in relation to the above-mentioned position and was constructed for 2 companies and 4 guns. It had the task to block in the advance of the enemy landed in the Tagalaht Bay towards Kuressaare. The position consisted of half-company fire-trenches, 5 of which were in the front line and 3 in the support line, communication trenches, and 12 shelters, each for 12 people. In front of the trenches, there was a 7-fence wire entanglement. The position at Nasva village was constructed for 2 companies and 4 guns and was the third-line position in relation to the Üdipää and Tehumardi positions, having the same task. The position consisted of 6 shelters with loopholes (caponieres) on the right bank of the river; around each caponiere, there was a 5-fence wire entanglement.

c) The Sõrve Peninsula from the Lõu Bay to Karuste³⁵

The Sõrve peninsula, which, due to its importance in commanding the Irbe Strait, had been separated as an independent sector, was decided to fortify particularly quickly. Two transverse positions with fronts towards the north were formed on the peninsula :

- 1) on the Indu,³⁶ Rahuste and
- 2) on the Kaunispe, Lõopõllu, Koltsi general lines.

35 The report of the Chief of Staff of the 107th Battalion of 18 March No. 54; the report of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet of 20 July No. 1362; the instruction of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to the Commander of the Defence of Saaremaa No. 1327; the report of the Chief of the Operative Section of 3 October, No. 02463 and the report of Lieut.-Col. Andromov, Acting Commander of the 425th Regiment about the reconnaissance.

36 Nowadays Sõrve-Hindu (editor's note).

The task of the above-mentioned two transverse positions was to prevent the enemy who had landed in the Lõu Bay or had already conquered Saaremaa from capturing the Sõrve peninsula. Therefore, the position of the Sõrve peninsula was not allowed to be dependent on the course of the enemy landing operations on the western or north-western coast of Saaremaa. Of those two transverse positions, the fortification of the Rahuste-Indu line had not been started, but the Kaunispe manor – Lõopõllu – Koltsi position was in state of fortification, as 12 platoon fire-trenches for firing standing were already completed. The Western coast of the Sõrve peninsula was decided to be fortified in places favourable for the enemy's landing, namely:

- 1) the Kaugatoma-Rahuste line and
- 2) the Ohessaare-Türju-Loode general line.

The transverse positions and positions on the coast formed group 17.

On the coast from Kaugatoma to Karuste, there are two bays – the Lõu Bay and the Türju Bay. It was considered that the Lõu Bay may be entered by ships which have a draught down to 12 feet, but the big transports cannot come nearer to the coast than 3 miles. Owing to the shoals and the stony bottom, the approach of larger launches and boats was extremely difficult from Lõu manor to Rahuste border guard post. At places, the landing parties would have to walk nearly 1 mile in water (for example, near the Rahuste border guard post). From the viewpoint of landing, the area from Kaugatoma to Lõu was considered to be favourable as boats were able to approach the coast; therefore, the coast in that area was being fortified. Here, 15 of the proposed 22 trenches were constructed. Near Rahuste village, 8 trenches were foreseen, of which 6 were completed.

The sector from Kaunispe to the tip of the peninsula did not provide good anchorage for ships as bays were lacking, but other conditions made landing favourable; the transports could approach the coast up to a distance of one mile, while rowing and sailing boats (for conveying the landing parties) could approach nearer to the coast. The most suitable bay for landing was Türju, in the vicinity of which a position was constructed on the line of Ohessaare and Loode villages. Altogether, 38 trenches had been planned of which only 15 platoon fire-trenches were completed for firing standing; in front of the trenches, there were wire entanglements at some places.

2. The Reserve Position of Saaremaa and the Orissaare Fortified Bridgehead Position³⁷

a) The Reserve Positions Inland Saaremaa

According to the defence plan of Saaremaa, the enemy's attack had to be stopped at the reserve positions if the landing of the enemy's troops on the coast could not be prevented. For such defence, the Triigi-Selja-Kõnnu-Saikla general line was provisionally fixed. But reconnaissance revealed that fortification of the above-mentioned line required too much work, and its defending required big forces which were missing, and there was no hope to get additional forces in the future. For the above-mentioned reasons, it was decided to organize the reserve position on the Järveküla lake – Koigi lake – Ridala – Mustla – Kadariku general line. It was believed that with flooding the swamps existing in that region, the length of the defence line would noticeably shorten, and this would also decrease the amount of fortification works and the number of the forces required for the defence. Actually, the fortification works of this position were not started.

b) The Orissaare Fortified Bridgehead Position

The last reserve position in Saaremaa was meant to be the Orissaare fortified bridgehead position, which had the task to protect the evacuation forces defeated in Saaremaa over the causeway to Muhu Island. The position consisted of northern and southern sectors and was meant for 3 battalions and 8 guns. The Kareda morass, which separated the sectors of the position, was considered impassable in every season. Each sector consisted of a resistance position and of a reserve position, as appears from the following.

The Northern Sector.

The resistance position was situated on the general line of Orinõmme, Rahula, Kalma and Saikla villages. The position was organized as follows:

Near Orinõmme village, 3 trenches with 9 machine gun emplacements and with 13 dugouts were prepared.

Near Rahula village, there were 6 trenches, each one for an average 130 riflemen with machine gun emplacements and with 15 dugouts.

Near Kalma and Saikla villages, there were 4 trenches, each for an average 130 riflemen, together with machine gun emplacements and 17 dugouts.

In front of the whole sector, except at Saikla village, there was a 7-fence wire entanglement.

³⁷ The general instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet No. 338/1170 of 1 July 1917; the reconnaissance report of Captain Sabir; telegram No. 01328.

The reserve position was situated in Varemete area and consisted of two trenches for 70 and 130 riflemen, together with machine gun emplacements, and with 8 dugouts. In front of the whole front, there was a 3-4-fence double-wire entanglement. Behind the left flank of the reserve position, about 300 metres away, there was a support point for a nearly company-strong reserve.

The Southern Sector

The resistance position was situated on the general line of Kahutsi-Veere-Uuemõisa-Kärneri villages. On the Kahutsi village - Pöide manor (Oti manor excl.) line the planned fortification works had not been done.

The fortification works near Oti manor had started. The trenches were halfway completed, and the pickets for wire obstacles had been hammered in the ground.

Near Veere village, there were 4 trenches, each for approximately 100 riflemen. The trenches had machine gun emplacements. Altogether, this area had 6 dugouts.

Near Uuemõisa, there were 3 trenches, of which 2 were for approximately 100 and one for 24 riflemen. In every trench, there were machine gun emplacements, and a total of 8 dugouts.

Near Kärneri village, there were 3 trenches, of which 2 trenches were for approximately 50, and one for 250 riflemen. In the trenches, there were machine gun emplacements, and a total of 11 dugouts. In a small wood behind the trenches, positions were prepared for 4 guns. In front of the whole sector of trenches, there was a double wire entanglement, each row of 3-5 fences.

The reserve position was situated on the general line of Suur-Rahula village, Tumala manor and Ariste village.

Near Suur-Rahula village, there were two trenches, each for approximately 60 riflemen together with machine gun emplacements, and a total of 5 dugouts.

Between Suur-Rahula village and Tumala manor, there were 2 trenches for approximately 60 riflemen, together with machine gun emplacements, and 4 dugouts.

Near Tumala manor, there were 2 trenches, each one for 80 riflemen together with machine gun emplacements and 2 dugouts.

Near Ariste village, there were 4 trenches, each for approximately 100 riflemen; in each trench, there were machine gun emplacements and a total of 14 dugouts.

In the wood near Tumala manor, there was a position for 4 guns and, behind the battery position in the same wood, a shelter for an about a company-strong reserve.

In the wood between Tumala manor and Salli (Reinumõisa),³⁸ there were 2 trenches, each for approximately 75 riflemen, together with machine gun emplacements and 5 dugouts.

Near Salli (Reinumõisa), there were 2 trenches, one for approximately 130 and the other for average 270 riflemen. In the trenches, there were machine gun emplacements and a total of 10 dugouts, most of which were not finished.

In the wood behind the estate, there was a position for 4 guns. Behind this position, about one kilometre away in the wood, there was a shelter for a reserve about a company strong.

Near Metsara, there were 2 trenches, one for 200, the other for 70 riflemen, together with machine gun emplacements and a total of 14 dugouts.

Near Nenu, there were 4 trenches, each for approximately 70 riflemen together with machine gun emplacements and with a total of 11 dugouts.

Before the front from Suur-Rahula village to Metsara village, there was a 7-fence wire entanglement; in the other parts of the sector, the wire entanglement had 3–4 fences.

The general reserve position was organized in the Maasi manor area; the position consisted of 6 trenches, each for approximately 60–130 riflemen together with machine gun emplacements, and with a total of 12 dugouts. The wire entanglement in front of the position was partly double with 3–4 fences and partly single with 6 fences. The Orissaare fortified bridgehead position belonged to the Muhu Island fortified position, which was situated on the general line of Nautse and Linnuse villages and was organized as follows:

Near Nautse village, there were 6 trenches, for approximately 20–100 riflemen together with machine gun emplacements and with a total of 15 dugouts;

Near Linnuse village, there were 3 trenches, for approximately 80–150 riflemen together with machine gun emplacements, and with a total of 7 dugouts.

In front of the whole position, there was double wire entanglement with 3–4 fences, which in places was connected into a single one.

General characterization of the Orissaare fortified position fortification works.

- 1) Almost all the trenches were in full profile, i.e., with a step for firing while standing.
- 2) The depth of the communication trenches was on average 2 metres.
- 3) All the shelters were of the same type and meant only against light gun shells.
- 4) Almost every trench line was protected by a single or double wire entanglement.

38 Nowadays near Reina (editor's note).

3. The Fortification Works of Hiiumaa³⁹

In Hiiumaa, shelters with loopholes (caponieres) and a system of platoon or half-company fire-trenches were intended to be constructed along the northern and western coast at places which were favourable for landing of troops. According to natural conditions, the whole above-mentioned coast was divided into three parts:

- from Lehtma to Paope village;
- from Paope to Mardihansu and
- from Mardihansu to Emmaste.

The sector from Lehtma to Paope village was in his turn divided into two parts:

- from Lehtma harbour to Mudaste and
- from Mudaste to Paope village.

The coast from Lehtma harbour to Mudaste village is sandy and only some tens of fathoms wide; immediately behind the coastline are sand dunes covered with conifer woods. It was decided to construct only a series of observation posts and smaller trenches for outposts and for machine guns on the coastline in that part of the sector, whereas the position of defence was being formed behind the coastline on the sand dunes which offered sufficient protection against both rifle and artillery fire.

Narrow crevices like trenches were decided to be dug on top of the sand dunes; at places where the sand dunes' inside slope was steep, this was restricted to digging down one side of the sand dune and reinforcing it. The intention was to construct 4 trenches in first stage and 5 in second stage into this part of the sector. In the part of the sector from Mudaste village to Paope village, two peninsulas are extending into the sea – the Kotseri⁴⁰ and the Kõrgessaare; the coast is sandy there and strewn with granite; the sea is shallow and rich in shoals. For the ships with a small draught, a favourable place for approach is the area around Paope village. As the groundwater in this region is near, it was possible to construct the trenches only upon the surface. The parapets of the trenches were built of stones and covered with sand; the internal slopes were partly reinforced with stones, partly with wood. A machine gun emplacement for two machine guns was built into each trench.

³⁹ Draft for the island's defence plan submitted by Colonel Veselago; his weekly reports beginning on 1 July to the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and to the Staff of the Land Forces; the report of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position of 3 August No. 01691 to the Staff of the Land Forces about the completed state of fortification works up to 1 August.

⁴⁰ Nowadays Kootsaare nina (editor's note).

In total, it was planned to construct 6 trenches in the first stage and 11 in second stage in this part of the sector.

The Sector from Paope to Mardihansu (the Kõpu peninsula).

The whole coast is narrow and sandy, behind it starts the thick wood which covers the entire peninsula; in the wood were only a few roads, hardly passable even for infantry. On the whole peninsula, works were carried out for clearing the routes of the roads leading from the major road of the peninsula (Paope, Kõpu, Ristna lighthouse) to its coast. The stony surface of the peninsula made the construction of trenches more difficult; therefore, all the trenches on the coast were built upon the surface. In the middle part of the peninsula, there is situated a ridge extending from the east to the west; at two places it widens, forming groups of higher hills. The first group of hills is situated at Kõpu, Surepi,⁴¹ and Mägipe, and the second group on the isthmus near Kopa and Puski villages.

In the area of the first group of hills, a position was marked, which cut through the roads leading from the western part of the peninsula towards the east. In the area of the second group of hills, the reserve position of the peninsula was foreseen, which had to cut through the isthmus from the Luidja Bay to the Õngu Bay. On the highest points of the above-mentioned groups of hills observation posts were organized (in Kõpu lighthouse, on Hannusemägi hill and at the Orthodox Church⁴² about 3 kilometres north of Mardihansu village).

On the peninsula, trenches were planned:

- along the coast – 16 fire-trenches, 5 of which were constructed in the second stage;
- on the southern part, 11 fire-trenches which were meant for one battalion; the trenches were situated in the area of the roads and footpaths leading from the coast to Kõpu lighthouse;
- on the isthmus in the area of Villamaa, Kopa and Puski villages, 10 trenches which had to block the advance of the enemy from the peninsula inland; a part of the trenches were situated on the top of the sand hills; part of the trench weapons were also decided to place on the same position.

The Sector on the Western coast from Mardihansu village to Emmaste.

The coast is strewn with granites. Half a kilometre away, a swampy wood begins. Here and there, the wood withdraws more than half a kilometre from the

41 Nowadays Suurepsi (editor's note).

42 Puski Orthodox Church (editor's note).

coast, forming some larger areas on the shore like at Õngu, Haldi and Vanamõisa. Due to the low depth of groundwater, all the trenches were on the surface here. Machine gun emplacements were planned for every trench. A total of in 23 fire-trenches were planned for the above sector, 9 of which were being constructed in the second stage. The wire obstacles were under construction.

The Reserve Positions of Hiiumaa⁴³

For stronger and more durable opposition in Hiiumaa, a reserve position was foreseen on the Kukka-Nõmba-Venküla general line, which was meant to be a bridgehead. The reconnaissance of the above line revealed that it would be advisable to organize the reserve positions with a bridgehead on two lines:

- Kärkla, Lõpe, Partsi, Kuri; in the second stage Kukka, Padala, and
- Sillaotsa, Pühalepa, Valipe lines.

The above two bridgeheads had to form two separate sectors.

It was considered undesirable to fortify the Kukka-Nõmba-Venküla line because, apart from the large fortification works on the position, suspicion arose whether the troops were able to defend it strongly. It was necessary to consider the impulse of the withdrawing forces to concentrate upon the roads; therefore, it would have been difficult to direct them to the caponieres situated in the wood; in addition, fighting in the wood is manageable only with well-disciplined troops with high morale. It was considered probable that, in the case of breaking through the position, the whole defence system would collapse, which would place the position's garrison in a critical situation, as they would be threatened by the danger of being cut off from Pühalepa. It was also considered that defending of the wood with the system of caponieres requires many troops (not less than a regiment), whereby the effectiveness would not still be guaranteed. Also, it was supposed that, to create a defended locality in the Nõmba area, instead defending the wood with the system of caponieres, was not appropriate, because the above locality can easily be cut off from the neighbouring parts; in consequence, its garrison would have been forced either to surrender or to leave the position without delay. This would have put the flanks of the neighbours in a difficult situation, which could easily cause the abandonment of the whole position.

By 12 October the location of the Hiiumaa fortified reserve position was not finally fixed.

43 The general instruction of the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet of 1 July 1917 No. 338/1170; reconnaissance report No. 02203 of 16 September and the report of the Commander of the Defence of 1 September 1917 No. 95.

4. The Coastal Batteries⁴⁴

From the viewpoint of engineering, the coastal batteries were prepared as follows (Scheme 4).

a) Sõrve batteries 40, 41 and 43.

All the batteries were supplied with means for fire control and with rangefinders. The guns stood openly, the magazines and shelters were protected only against smaller aircraft bombs. The works were in progress to surround battery 43 with a concrete parapet.

b) Saaremaa north-western batteries 45 and 46.

The installation of the guns had not been completed yet, but the guns could fire already. The parapet of battery 46 was not yet finished. The fire control means were placed on temporary wooden stands; the rangefinders were missing.

c) Hiiumaa batteries 34, 38, 39 and 47 were all on temporary wooden mountings. Although battery 39 was supplied with a rangefinder, this did not correspond to the range of the battery. All the guns were standing openly. The shelters were meant against smaller aircraft bombs and splinters.

d) The batteries on Vormsi island were in the same condition as those in Hiiumaa.

e) Muhu and Virtsu batteries 32, 33 and 36 were all on wooden mountings, except battery 32 where 2 guns were on concrete mountings. The batteries were supplied with fire control means and rangefinders; the magazines and shelters were proof only against small aircraft bombs and splinters.

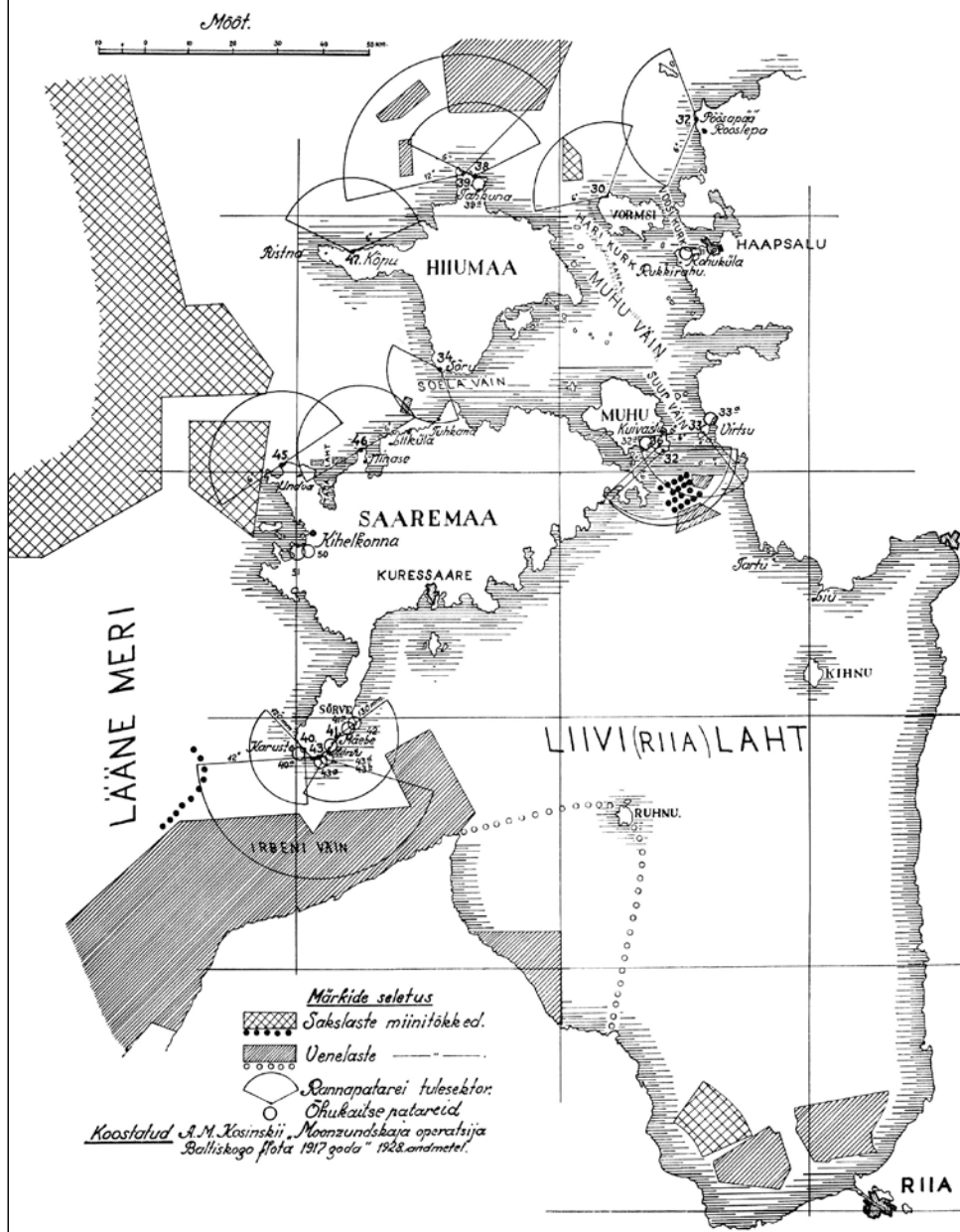
The Muhu and Virtsu batteries were the only ones which had carried out a shortened practical firing exercise.

5. The General Course of the Fortification Works and their Characterization

The fortification work of the Muhu Strait Position was started in early autumn 1916. In the first stage, the fortifications were erected in Saaremaa, namely at Panga, Ninase and Undva. So, the Single Naval Brigade began the fortification works on the north-western coast of Saaremaa already in September 1916. These works were later continued by the 426th Regiment. The Fortification Department of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position gave the following overview of the works to the Staff of Muhu Strait Fortified Position on 28 April 1917 in explanatory letter 9, which was enclosed with report 7.

⁴⁴ A short report of the Commander of the Coastal Artillery; telegram No. 0659 of 3 May 1917 to the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet.

MIINITÖKKED JA VENELASTE RANNAPATAREID
Läänemere saarte püirkonnas



Scheme 4: Mine barriers and the positions of coastal batteries.

Legend: Sakslaste miinitõkked / German minefields

Venelaste miinitõkked / Russian Minefields

Rannapatarei tulesektor / Range of coastal batteries

Õhukaitse patareid / Anti-aircraft batteries

“On the position at Panga, Ninase and Undva, the fire-trenches of the second line, the roofs of the trenches and the shelters are missing. All the trenches are camouflaged. The slopes of the trenches are reinforced with laths and faggots. The general length of the trenches is about 7 kilometres.”

The Staff of the Land Forces made the following written inquiry on 29 August 1917, No. 5397-1946/op. based on the monthly reports of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position about the progress of the engineering works, which were dispatched on the first day of every month:

“To the Chief of the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

1) The short description of the position shows that the fire-trenches in groups of trenches 1, 3 and 13 and in defended localities 13, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 15 have been constructed for firing kneeling. Please inform whether there is an intention to complete these trenches also for firing standing or the existing profile is caused by the surface and underground water. In the latter case, the commander of the land forces considers necessary to complete the trenches up to full profile with the help of earth or bags for firing standing.

2) The Commander of the Land Forces has indicated that wire obstacles in front of the trenches are insufficient and ordered to report whether that is due to the lack of barbed wire, whether it has been demanded, and to which stage of work the erection of the obstacles has been designated.

For the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Bogolyubov.

The Chief of the Section,

Captain (G. S.)⁴⁵ Afanasyev.

A reply on this inquiry followed on 9 September 1917, No. 01992:

“To the Chief of the Staff of the Land Forces under the command of Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet.

I have the honour to report that completion of the greater part of the fire-trenches in profile for firing kneeling in the sector I was caused by the hard surface and also by the circumstance that the construction work on a large scale, on a broad front, with limited time and hands required, first of all, the construction of smaller erections so that later begin the erection of obstacles, which is now in progress everywhere.

The stoppage of the erection of the obstacles was caused by the lack of labour, and also by the late arrival of the wire. The position's Building Department is excusing itself with the disorderly receipt of relay horses.

45 Captain of General Staff, henceforward abbreviated G. S.

When the erection of the wire obstacles has advanced, the completion of the trenches to full profile will be started at once.

Second Captain Sabir

For the Chief of the Operative Section,

Lieut. Dubrovin (R. N.)”

This reply did not solve the question to full extent because, besides the extensive works and the lack of workers, the progress of the work was affected by political events and particularly by the aforementioned paid work in the Position’s Fortification Department, which is certified with the following documents:

(Extract from the reply of Colonel Georgievich in verbal communication with Colonel Krusenstiern, Chief of Staff of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet):

“The lack of workmen is a common circumstance caused by the present events; all possible measures have been taken, but the previous level number of workmen will hardly be reached.”

“To Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

16 May 1917, No. 118.

I have the honour to report that, from my personal observations and from the reports of the contractors, it must be concluded that the fortification of the positions, being done by the troops (the 425th and 426th Regiment) cannot be finished even after a month. The troops are working languidly, firstly because they are engaged with guard duty of the coast, and secondly due to the reasons created by the events witnessed in this critical moment of Russia. The fortifications in the region of the 425th and 426th Regiments, which are not particularly strong, are still most necessary to repel and to detain the enemy in the case of its probable landing in Saaremaa.

Such is the objective of the above fortifications. So that the position could possibly provide at least some opposition to the enemy, the only possibility for its speedy fortification is to hand this work over to the Position’s Fortification Department, who could complete in due time with the salaried workmen and with the help of companies who are free from guard duties.

Chief of the fortification works of the 425th and 426th Regiment region,
Captain Orlovski.”

The second part of Captain Orlovski’s report did not correspond to the actual situation because the mentioned handing over of the works to the Position’s Fortification Department would not have improved the situation owing to the

lack of salaried workers; the latter circumstance was the main impeding factor at all fortification works of the Muhu Strait Position. So, a year passed, but the north-western fortifications of Saaremaa still did not meet their tasks, as is evident from the above: the fire-trenches were mostly for firing kneeling, and there were extremely few wire obstacles.

The Sõrve peninsula was also in the same condition if not in worse, which is certified with the following documents.

The communication of the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position of 15 August 1917, No. 01674, to the Executive Committee of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Soldiers and Workers Delegates' Council:

"According to the information of the Staff, the progress of the engineering works on the Sõrve peninsula is extremely small. I beg the Committee on the order of the Commander of the Position to help to increase the productiveness of these works, which are very important from the combat point of view.

Colonel of G. S. Vasilyev.

Chief of the Operative Section Captain of G. S. Reek ⁴⁶."

The communication of the 425th Kargopolsk Regimental Committee of 18 September, No. 1157, to the Executive Committee of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Soldiers and Workers Delegates' Council:

"The Regiment's Committee sends herewith the budget of fortification works for the Sõrve peninsula verbally required by Mr. Shelukhin and Mr. Anson, members of the Executive Committee Defence Section of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

President of the Regiment's Committee NCO⁴⁷ Kostin.

Secretary Ensign Suloyev."

"The Commission of the 425th Kargopolsk Regiment's Committee, with the participation of engineer officers 2nd Lieutenant Markov and Ensign Chigirinski, investigated the situation of the fortification works of the Sõrve peninsula and found that, in the Vintri-Kaunispe sector, only a third of the works provided in the

⁴⁶ Captain of General Staff Nikolai Reek was appointed as Chief of the Operative Section of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position on 28 June 1917, and on 23 August of the same year he was appointed as Chief of Staff instead of the previous Chief of Staff, Colonel of G. S. Vasilyev.

⁴⁷ Non-commissioned officer.

plan had been carried out because of the lack of labour, the lack of transport means for conveying the materials and the shortness of the working day.

The situation is even worse in the Ohessaare-Türju sector where lack of available material and the stony surface must be added to the above-mentioned factors impeding the work.

In these conditions, it can hardly be assumed that the completion of the works will happen before the arrival of the cold period. The completion of the works in November is possible only if not less than 800 people and 40–50 means of transport are working every day, if the working day lasts 6–8 hours as foreseen in the engineers' calculation, and if the Position's Fortification Department arranges the transport of the requisite materials in due time.

The regiment can give every day for the works an average of only 300–350 people.

Lieutenant-Colonel Krylov.

Members of the Commission:

A. Nikolayev and K. Panov."

Regarding the reserve position, the situation in Saaremaa was a little better than in Hiiumaa. The Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position wired on 31 March:

"To the Chief of Staff of the Naval Forces.

Copy to Navy Captain Altvater in the Naval Department of the Commander-in-Chief Headquarters.

For detaining the enemy in case of landing in Saaremaa, I consider necessary to start the organization of a fortified position in the island's eastern part already now, for instance, on the Poka, Tika, and Kõiguste general line. For executing this, it is urgently necessary to despatch one experienced military field works engineer, or at least one experienced pioneer officer under my command, because the Position's Fortification Department is not capable of carrying out the above-mentioned works without those persons. The above-mentioned position is required for protecting the Muhu Strait region, and also when the enemy has broken through the first line of defence.

31 March, No. 0391.

Rear-Admiral Sveshnikov."

The above telegram received the following reply:

“To the Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The Commander-in-Chief⁴⁸ regards Poka, Tika Kõiguste position's fortification not only useless but even harmful, as its defending requires large forces which are unavailable.

No. 4117/B.

Rusin.”

But the question of reserve positions caused much anxiety to the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and the position's Chief of Staff wired to the Chief of Staff of Land Forces on 29 July:

“Please inform me whether an order will be given to prepare the reserve position in Saaremaa on the Triigi-Saikla general line. I myself consider necessary the immediate fortification of the roads of the southern part of the front, which belong to the above position.

29 July, No. 01133.

Vasilyev. “

The new arrangements for the reserve positions followed only on 31 July when the following was mentioned in general instructions No. 338/1170/op. to the Chief of the Naval Forces :

“The Special Situation in Relation to Saaremaa.

Owing to tactical deliberations and geographical conditions, I consider it appropriate to fix the main line of defence upon the Triigi-Selja-Kõnnu-Ariste-Saikla general line where to carry out reconnaissance, to compose the project for fortification works and the plan of defence. As the fortification of the above-mentioned line is impossible owing to the lack of labour, its only significance is to coordinate the withdrawal. In case the troops do not succeed in opposing on the above line, the Orissaare position must be defended until evacuation from the island, later to repel the landed hostile troops from Muhu Island and to defend it intrepidly.”

48 Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front.

Reconnaissance at the beginning of July ascertained that it was not suitable to organize the reserve position on the Triigi – Selja – Kõnnu – Ariste – Saikla line but rather on the Järveküla – Tagavere – Koigi lake – Ridala – Saare⁴⁹ line. Owing to the lakes and swamps, less labour was necessary for the fortification of this position, and its defence required less troops, which was the most essential point. This line was called the Orissaare position, which was separate from the Orissaare bridgehead position that was mentioned before. The question of fortification of the Orissaare position was finally determined as early as on 27 July (letter 399/1473/op.), but the start of the works was hindered by lack of credit which was given only on 9 September. So, we can see that, since the beginning of the operation, it was only intended to fortify the position which, according to the main defence plan, was to become the main obstacle for the enemy who had invaded Saaremaa and tried to conquer it. By the beginning of the operation, the positions north of Üdipää village, near Tehumardi and Nasva villages, near Kellamäe manor, near Kärkla and the Orissaare bridgehead positions were completed. These positions have already been described above, and they were all completed by 13 July 1916. As explained above, those positions were only of secondary importance.

So, it is to be inferred from the above that the fortification of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was not finished yet and corresponded only to a small extent to the necessary tasks.

The situation of engineering preparation of the coastal artillery was considerably better. The batteries were easily capable of engaging in action. The batteries with weakest preparation were 45 and 46, which is ascertained by the following documents:

“To the Chief of the Staff of the Naval Forces.

In reply to your No. 432/op. It is intended to instal two guns on Ninase peninsula by 28 April and to put the whole battery in order by 13 May.

On Undva peninsula, excavations are being dug for shelters; the construction of gun mountings has not been started because it is not clear which kind of guns will be received.

27 April, No. 0624.

Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, Colonel Vasilyev.”

49 Nowadays Saareküla (editor's note).

“To the Chief of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

During firing practice in battery 46, parts of the parapet’s cover are falling upon the crew; it is necessary to cover the parapet with concrete, for which I beg you to give an urgent order to the Position’s Fortification Department. Besides this, telephone communication and the roads are in extremely bad condition; for putting these in order, I beg your exceptional instructions.

26 July 1917, No. 756.

Lieut. Commander Nedzvetski.”

The parapet of the 46th battery was left unfinished, and, by the beginning of the operation, neither battery had been camouflaged. Battery 46 needed a rangefinder. The following plan of defence of the Gulf of Riga by the artillery was enclosed with the report of 15 January, No. 03, submitted to the Chief of the Naval Forces by the Chief of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position:

“... If the above-mentioned tasks meant to be completed by the Muhu Strait Fortified Position can be considered right, it is urgently necessary to increase the position’s artillery defence.

The 12” battery of the Sõrve peninsula is partly performing the defence of the Irbe Strait, but is unable to do anything if the enemy’s fleet enters the Gulf of Riga.

On its course up to the Muhu Strait, the enemy’s fleet will not find nearly any opposition, considering that our fleet will withdraw to the second line, i.e. to the Muhu-Virtsu line.

At the same time, by placing big-calibre long-range batteries on Abruksa and Ruhnu islands, on the Laiduse headland, and on the Taritu peninsula, it would be possible to oppose the advance of the enemy’s fleet on its 80-mile-long course and to impede his partition for forcing the Muhu Strait.

Such disposition of batteries would increase the importance of the position of Saaremaa and would guarantee on every occasion our command in the Gulf of Riga.

It would be a serious menace to the enemy’s fleet if it should shift insufficient forces forward for covering its left flank or should invade, disregarding our fleet, the rear of the region of Riga with the objective to help the army in capturing Riga.

In such a case, the opponent’s rear and the communication line would be under the attack of our fleet, which will be encouraged by the forward-shifted batteries in the forts of the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress.

It is self-evident that fitting out of the above-mentioned batteries with anti-aircraft guns, searchlights, and with the largest possible amount of munitions (depending on the calibre) should be carried out to full extent."

The question of strengthening the artillery defence was solved by 19 September but not completely when Commander Tyrtoov wired:

"To the Chief of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

I have been instructed to construct batteries to Abruka, Sandla and Kübassaare. I beg you to make arrangements that the Position's Fortification Department would already now begin estimation of the construction works so that, on my arrival, we could decide together and submit a plan to the Chief of the Naval Forces for approval.

No. 49.

Chief of the coastal batteries works of the Muhu Strait Position."

Besides the above-mentioned plan, it was decided to place a battery of four 130-millimetre guns on the Liu headland to block the entrance to the Pärnu Bay. Reconnaissance was carried out for the construction of the battery, and the work was started.

In his personal report to the Chief of the Naval Forces, the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position made a suggestion in January to fix two 12" batteries for strengthening the defence of the north-western coast – one on the south-western coast of Hiiumaa and another in the region of the Undva Peninsula. Those batteries were to be placed so that their firing sectors would intersect; together with batteries 45 and 46, they would successfully defend the entrance to the Tagalaht and Küdema Bays. This scheme was not executed. Moreover, attention was turned to the necessity to place a battery upon the coast of the Lõu Bay, which was also decided positively in September. At the end of September four 120-millimetre guns arrived; reconnaissance for their mounting was carried out and was finished by 10 October, after which the work started. But by the beginning of the operation their mounting had not been completed. Generally, it must be mentioned that, from the viewpoint of artillery defence, the High Command undervalued the significance of the north-western coast where, in fact, only eight 6" coastal guns were placed.

Summing up, we can see that great efforts were made for fortification works on the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, but despite these efforts, owing to the lack of labour and the unsuitable surface, they did not make good progress. Some use could be expected from the constructed fortifications only if the Russian forces contained orderly fighting units. But the disorder and decay of morale among the

Russians, made the fortifications worthless. Fortifications do not defend themselves; they must be defended by troops. If the forces capable of fighting are missing, the fortifications are worthless, and the whole energy, all the efforts which have been spent to construct the fortifications are pointless.

IV. The Communications and Transportation Services of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position

1. Communications

The condition of communications at the Muhu Strait Fortified Position in spring 1917 is characterized in telegram of the Chief of Staff of the Land Forces:

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. The organization of the communications of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position is entirely dissatisfactory. The defence of Saaremaa is only possible when the organization of the island’s telephone and telegraph net is started without delay. It has been ascertained that the Muhu Strait Fortified Position has very few means for communications. It is necessary to detach a single telegraph company for Saaremaa and to give it under the command of Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet because one platoon from Kaunas fortress, being on the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, cannot manage with all the work. May 27th, No. 2350/800/op.

Krusenstiern.”

Development of the communications net began already in spring 1917 based on the defence plan of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and general instruction by the Chief of Staff of the Baltic Fleet of 4 June 1917 No. 218/858/op.

Due to the lack of the necessary equipment and technical specialists, the work was progressing very slowly. In the middle of July, the line section and the cable section of the 45th pioneer battalion arrived, but, because of their training, they were not capable of building and repairing the permanent lines (all the communication lines of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position were permanent).

By 12 October, the following lines were not yet completed: Triigi-Taaliku, Võhma and Kuressaare-Meedla-Orissaare. For all the three lines, only the poles had been placed in position.

As mentioned before, all the communication lines of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position were single-conduit and permanent lines; the lines with double conduit were not built because of the shortage of wire; owing to the large size of the islands, the lines were particularly long. Therefore, communications did not work properly during action because repairing of long lines required too much time, increased by the lack of technical specialists. To eliminate this shortcoming, the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position asked the Chief of Staff of the Land Forces

at the end of June with telegram 01215 for field wireless telegraph stations and a crew for an already existing station. It was intended to place the stations on Sõrve peninsula, to Kärkla, to the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and to Haapsalu. The wireless telegraph stations were meant to complete and simplify the communication between the mainland and the islands, between the Staff and subordinated troops, especially between the Staff and the garrison of Sõrve peninsula. But the question remained unsolved. Perfection of communications with mounted, bicycle or motorcycle orderlies was not practicable because of absence of corresponding troops and the insufficient size of the mounted troops.

Communication between the mainland and the islands was not of sufficient quality either. This question was raised in spring already, but during the summer it had not been possible to solve it completely. For strengthening the communications, it was intended to build a double-wire line between the islands and the mainland: Rohuküla – Puise border guard post – Lõetsa border guard post on Muhu Island, but the Rohuküla-Puise line was put under the direct command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position only in the event of two occasions:

- when the enemy attacks Saaremaa and
- if the enemy has captured Virtsu on the mainland with an advance from the south.

At other times, the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had to use the above line on a similar basis as other users. Actually, at the beginning of the operation, the Rohuküla – Puise border guard post – Lõetsa border guard post line had been not completed owing to lack of material; the necessary material arrived only at the beginning of the operation. There not much hope to communicate with Hiiumaa over the Soela Strait, because it was clear that, in the case of collapse of the Russian troops on the north-western coast of Saaremaa, they had to withdraw to the Orissaare bridgehead position, where using that line would be impossible. It was considered necessary to establish a connection between Heltermaa and Haapsalu to guarantee circular intercommunication with the forces operating in Hiiumaa, but owing to the lack of cable, the Heltermaa-Haapsalu underwater cable was not completed.

As the existing communication line between Hiiumaa and Vormsi Island was under the control of the Navy, it was impossible to use it for directing the troops.

The imperfection of intercommunication between the mainland and the islands was especially noticeable during the operation when the existing intercommunication, particularly the submarine cable, was strongly overloaded.

2. The Transport Service and Means of Transport for Relocation of Supplies

The length of the coastline of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position favourable for landing required the existence of transportation means for relocation of supplies. For this, either lorries or horse transport could be used.

a) Lorries⁵⁰

Regarding lorries, the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was in a critical condition; there were very few lorries, and a lot of transportation necessary; therefore the lorries were very often overloaded. It is natural that in this situation the lorries were often breaking down, and, therefore, the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had normally up to 3 and very rarely up to 8 properly working lorries at its disposal. There were days when not a single lorry was available. The Position's Fortification Department was in no better condition. Therefore, lorries could not be taken into consideration as means for relocation of supplies.

b) Horse Transports

At the beginning of the operation, the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had three horse transport units – 141, 496 and 499 – under his command; the latter was on the mainland. Units 496 and 499 had arrived at the end of August in extremely bad condition, especially bad was transport unit 499 where 48 horses, i.e., 93 percent were in a feeble condition. Owing to the large area and long communication roads of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position district, it was necessary to disperse the sections of the transport, as otherwise the execution of transportation was not manageable. Consequently, the sections of transport could not be used for quick relocation of supplies. Only one possibility remained – to use the horses requisitioned from the inhabitants, but their gathering always required a lot of time. Summing up the situation of the communications and transport services of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, we may say they barely covered the indispensable needs. Very long communication lines, which were difficult to repair quickly, and the overloaded submarine cables, made the intercommunication of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position very complicated. The personnel and equipment necessary for the upgrading and renewal of the communications net was missing. The horse transports and lorries satisfied only the minimum requirements, their exploitation for the relocation of supplies did not come under consideration at all.

⁵⁰ The report of Commander of the Motor Detachment of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position of 5 November 1917 No. 924 about the reasons of the bad condition of the existing lorries.

V. Situation of the Navy and the Air Force in the Gulf of Riga on 12 October 1917

Having familiarized ourselves in detail with the condition of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position by 12 October 1917, we will also review the condition of the Navy and the Air Force taking part in the defence of the West Estonian Archipelago in the Gulf of Riga.

1. The Navy

The navy had 121 vessels of different types. The biggest ships were the obsolete battleships *Slava* and *Grazhdanin*. The small number and obsolete type of battleships was caused by the fact that only they could pass through the dredged channel in the Muhu Strait owing to their small draught. The navy also had three British submarines (Appendix 2)

The primary task of the navy was to maintain control of the Gulf of Riga. The great importance of the Irbe Strait in performing the above task was estimated correctly. Therefore, minefields in the Irbe Strait were laid out at the beginning of the Great War already, and supplementation and renewal of mine barrages was continued throughout the war (App. No. 6). In consequence, the Irbe Strait was an area largely blocked with mines. It was a field of mine barrages divided into two parts, and between them there was an area for manoeuvring the Russian fleet. Defence of the mine barrages was the responsibility of the Sörve 12" coastal battery. The patrol of minefields during night and in the fog was the fleet's task. The base for the patrol vessels was planned to be at Mõntu harbour on the Sörve peninsula.

The second task of the fleet was to defend the Muhu Strait. Here, principal attention was paid to the defence of the Suur Strait, in front of which mine barrages were laid. The defending of the minefields was carried out by 10" and 6" coastal batteries situated on Muhu Island; their fire was supplemented by a 6" battery in Virtsu. The need for defending the Suur Strait was increased by the circumstance that the main base of the Russian fleet was situated there (at Kuivastu). This base was well protected against attack from the sea and guaranteed the safety of the ships against submarine attacks. The area for manoeuvring the fleet in the Strait was quite limited, but the exit of the fleet into the Gulf of Riga was protected with coastal batteries.

The fleet's task was also to protect Saaremaa and Hiiumaa from the sea. As the fleet was not capable of engaging in battle with a strong hostile fleet, it could only

assist in defending Saaremaa and Hiiumaa on the Baltic Sea. With the objective of assisting, the Soela Strait was also dredged, and torpedo boats could carry out attacks through the Soela Strait from the Muhu Strait directly to the west into the Baltic Sea. The attacks of torpedo boats would have been supported by the fire from the coastal batteries. First, a 120-millimetre coastal battery was erected near Sõru in Hiiumaa for the defence of the Soela Strait and to support torpedo boats attacks. Later the Russians had the intention to erect two 12" coastal batteries, one of which was to be placed on the Kõpu headland, and another on the Undva peninsula. But the construction of these batteries was not finished. If these batteries had been completed, it may be supposed that either the Germans would not have risked to undertake a landing operation altogether, or would have chosen the landing places somewhere else, but not in the Tagalaht Bay or near Liiküla and Tahkuna.

As for the technical condition of the ships, it may be said that disorder had revealed its paralyzing influence here also. The refit of the ships had been too superficial, and the crew did not lay the necessary stress on maintenance. On some occasions, the ships' machines and boilers did not work properly; guns could not open fire owing to their bad condition; the searchlights did not light, the torpedoes did not explode, etc. Very often it happened that the ships were sent back to the harbour due to defects that had previously been repaired at sea by their crews. The base for repairs of the fleet was provided in Rohuküla harbour where the necessary workshops, stores and breakwaters were constructed, and fairways were dredged.

The morale of the fleet's complement was very low. Discipline was entirely missing, and the crews did not trust the officers. In consequence, the men very often fell into panic. So, for instance, they still carried lifebelts on the ships on calm and still days; outside Kuivastu harbour, there were very few who risked sleeping on the ships, at night. The most important task from the viewpoint of the crew of *Slava* was the measuring of the depth of the Muhu Strait channel which was their only route of escape. The executive committees of the ships interfered even in the operative questions and required that the opening or writing of operative telegrams was attended by members of the committee. The disorder was also caused by the crews' engagement in politics. The daily meetings of delegates with political negotiations by semaphore and signal lamps and the constant meetings were taking away crew from executing their immediate tasks, creating a tense and nervous atmosphere. The officers' corps was entirely incapable of establishing and maintaining discipline; the officers had completely lost their energy; many officers had to leave the ships for political reasons, many had given up even the attempts to maintain the discipline.

Irresponsibility dominated in the crew, as they knew that they could do anything they wished with their leaders. Mostly young and inexperienced midshipmen had remained on the ships; they had finished abridged courses in the Navy schools and midshipman classes. An expressive picture of the disposition of the crew is revealed in the protest of the sailors of the battleship *Slava*.

"The whole complement of the battleship *Slava* considers the appointment of our mighty ship to the Gulf of Riga unjust. As *Slava* and her crew have defended the Gulf of Riga for 16 months, which is known not only to the Baltic Fleet but also by the whole of free Russia, the crew finds it to be just that one of the battleships either *Respublika* or *Andrei Pervozvannyi* would come to fulfil their sacred obligation towards free Russia in the Gulf of Riga because they are also capable to pass the Muhu Strait channel."⁵¹

2. The Air Force

The air force was subordinated to the naval command. In the Muhu Strait Fortified Position's area, there were two aircraft bases, one of them situated in Kihelkonna, the other in Haapsalu. The Kuressaare seaplane harbour (1 flight, 6 planes), the Sõrve seaplane station (2 flights, 12 planes) the Kihelkonna seaplane station (2 flights, 12 planes), and the Virtsu seaplane station (1 flight, 6 planes) were subordinated to Kihelkonna base. Large-scale hangars, workshops, stores, dwelling houses, and other necessary buildings had been built in Kihelkonna. The base had its own independent waterworks and electric lighting. The base was defended by anti-aircraft guns placed so that they could also fire out to sea. However, the base was situated outside the positions of the land forces of Saaremaa, and it was not actually defended in the case of an enemy landing. The posterior events have certified this, and the base with its workshops and large supplies of petrol had to be abandoned in the beginning of the operation already.

The seaplane stations in Hiiumaa at Tahkuna and Kõrgesaare were subordinated to Haapsalu.

Regarding the condition and technical capacities of the Russian planes, these were also weak. Very often, the planes were out of order, and repairs took a lot of time. The personnel included many very good pilots who could not show their capabilities due to the unreliable machines and the air supremacy of Germans.

51 A. М. Косинский. "Моонзундская операция Балтийского флота 1917 года". Ленинград, 1928, с. 116.

VI. Summary of the Arrangements for the Defence of the West Estonian Archipelago in the Great War

Summing up we, can say that the defence arrangement of the West Estonian Archipelago was based on a definite plan of defence, and the troops were given fixed tasks. However, as we have examined, the number of troops and their actual strength was too small to defend the allotted areas. Also, the mobile reserve at the disposal of the islands' higher command, which would have afforded a rapid response according to the changing situation, was missing. The repeated suggestions of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to dispatch one cavalry regiment to Saaremaa did not get yield any results. Great efforts were made to fortify the position, but, due to the lack of labour and the means, it the plan of defence could not be carried out.

Great efforts were made regarding the coastal batteries, but technical deficiencies reduced their fighting power and value. Yet, the weakness of Russians was not in the above-mentioned defects. The primary cause was the low morale of the complement and disorder in the troops. In spite of numerical inferiority, technical deficiencies and lack of fighting experience, the Russians could have been able to mount a capable opposition, but the ill-disciplined rabble no longer represented an effective fighting force. Lack of any discipline on the one hand and lack of fighting spirit on the other hand destroyed the morale of the Russian Army, making it inferior. This moral inferiority was festering in the Russian army before the German's attack and rapidly deepened during the combined operation. The Russians did not have the foundations upon which they could build the fighting spirit and which would consolidate discipline among the fighters.

The general disgust for war in the population and in the armed forces had destroyed the fighting spirit. The fighters had neither conscientiousness nor patriotism which would have suppressed their selfish instinct for life preservation.

The leaders were powerless to improve the situation because they did not have authority in the eyes of the soldiers, and they were pushed aside. Belief in leadership had vanished, belief in one's own ability as well as the vigorous feeling to eliminate any threatening danger had disappeared. The Russians had almost completely transformed into a force incapable of fighting. The fighting spirit was extinct in the army, and instinctive life preservation impulse dominated in the complement, and this made the Russian forces into a mass without a leader during the German attack.

B. Preparation for the German Combined Operation and Their Activity until the Landing

I. The Forces Detailed for the Combined Operation

For the combined operation in Saaremaa, the Germans formed a special Army and Navy complement which were supplemented with aircraft.

The Army component consisted of landing corps which had been organized by the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps.

The complement of the corps included the 42nd Infantry Division, which consisted of the 65th Infantry Brigade (the 17th, 131st and 138th Infantry Regiments), the 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1 squadron of cavalry, and the engineer, mortar, communications, cyclist and sanitary units.

Besides the 42nd infantry Division, the following units were subordinated to the Corps Commander:

- the Headquarters of the 77th Reserve Division until the embarkation of Landing Corps in Liepāja was finished;
- the 365th Infantry Regiment was brought over to the island already after the operation was finished;
- the 255th Infantry Regiment;
- the 2nd Cyclist Brigade (the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th and 6th Cyclist Battalions);
- the 77th and 203rd Cyclist Company;
- the 10th Assault Company (Sturmkompanie);
- the 18th Assault Company;
- the 2nd machine gun troop, who was brought over after the operation was finished;
- five heavy batteries;
- the 16th aircraft flight;
- eight seaplanes;
- the engineer, mortar, communications and other units.

The total complement of the corps was 5 infantry regiments (four regiments landed on the first day), 33 cyclist companies, 2 assault companies, one field artillery regiment, 5 heavy batteries, 1 flight, 8 seaplanes, engineer, communications, mortar units, medical service, etc. The specificity of the actual strength of the force was the

abundance of light units in the form of cyclists. The speed of cyclists enabled them to move quickly on the roads after the withdrawing Russians, or to be a mobile reserve. The numerical size of the infantry was sufficient to undertake a large-scale operation.

Altogether, 24,600 officers and soldiers, 8,500 horses, 2,500 carts, 40 guns, 220 machine guns, and 80 mortars were involved in the operation. Moreover, the supplies and food were taken along for 30 days; the food only weighed 2300 tons.

The special concentration of naval forces formed for the combined operation included:

- the flagship - battlecruiser *Moltke*;
- the Third Battle Squadron (battleships *König*, *Bayern*, *Großer Kurfürst*, *Kronprinz*, and *Markgraf*);
- the Fourth Battle Squadron (battleships *Friedrich der Große*, *König Albert*, *Kaiserin*, *Prinzregent Luitpold* and *Kaiser*);
- the Second Reconnaissance Group (cruisers *Königsberg*, *Karlsruhe*, *Nürnberg*, *Frankfurt* and *Danzig*);
- the Sixth Reconnaissance Group (cruisers *Kolberg*, *Augsburg* and *Straßburg*);
- the cruiser *Emden* and the 2nd, 6th, 8th and 10th Torpedo-boats Flotillas and the 7th Half-Flotilla (56 torpedo boats in total);
- the Kurland Submarine flotilla (UC 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 and 78);
- the minelayer *Nautilus*;
- the minesweepers (34 ships and 65 motorboats);
- the anti-submarine flotilla (21 ships and 59 motorboats);
- the anti-submarine net layer ships (3 ships);
- the transport (19 vessels);
- the supply ships (21 vessels).⁵²

The naval force consisted of 181 different ships and 124 motorboats. Under the command of the navy, there were also 94 planes and some airships.

Analysing the naval forces, we see the big quantity of battleships. Because of their heavy calibre guns, the battleships are the most powerful ships to fight the coastal batteries. Those German battleships were all modern.

The numerous air force enabled continuous air reconnaissance.

The transport fleet had ships of 1,750–11,500 in gross tonnage. The transports had been thoroughly overhauled, and particularly prepared for embarking and disembarking the troops and for accommodating them.

⁵² General der Infanterie a. D. Tschischwitz, "Armee und Marine bei der Eroberung der Baltischen Inseln in Oktober 17", pp. 182–184.

The command and control of these various forces was given to the High Command of the German 9th Army who gave the general instructions and regulations for the preparation and execution of the operation. The commander of the 23rd Reserve Corps and the commander appointed for the combined operation were subordinated to the Army Commander-in-Chief. So, the co-ordination of the activities of land and naval forces belonged to the commander of the army. The preparation of the combined operation was carried out in close cooperation between the land and naval forces. As a result of this cooperation, certain common understandings and perceptions were reached.

The guidance of the combined operation on the sea during the crossing belonged to the leaders of the Navy. The Commander of the Army was only the administrative and economic chief to his subordinates. The naval officers were taking command of the transports because the mercantile marine officers did not sufficiently know the operative requirements during the crossing and also during the landing. From the landing moment onwards, the land forces were completely subordinated to the army commanders again.

II. The Plan of the Combined Operation

The basis for the execution the operation was the operation plan. The operation plan primarily fixed the landing places. From the technical viewpoint, Roomassaare quay was considered the most favourable landing place, but then the element of surprise would have been lost. To penetrate the Irbe Strait, the ships would first have to silence the Sõrve coastal batteries. Therefore, the landing in Roomassaare was abandoned. Among the northern and western coast bays, Tagalaht Bay came first under consideration, as it enabled the transports to approach very near to the coast and to arrange fire support by the fleet. In autumn, the bay is sheltered from the dominating westerly winds. The coast of the bay and the geographical conditions on the shore are favourable for landing. Good roads lead to Kuressaare from there.

The Tagalaht Bay is 160 miles (300 kilometres) away from Liepāja; Kuressaare, however, is 32 miles (60 kilometres) and the southern end of Saaremaa 64 miles (120 kilometres) nearer. Therefore, the long crossing to the Tagalaht Bay required precautions on open sea.

At the entrance to the Tagalaht Bay, there were situated two Russian coastal batteries, which had to be silenced before landing. Despite these, it was decided to choose the main landing place in the Tagalaht Bay. For another landing place, the vicinity of Pammana was considered. This place was also quite favourable for landing, but it is more open to the winds than the Tagalaht Bay. From there, roads are leading towards Kuressaare and the causeway. The next landing places which came under the consideration were Kihelkonna, situated very near to the Russian aircraft base, and the Sõrve peninsula, the capture of which would have freed the Irbe Strait from Russian gunfire. From the above mentioned considerations, the following plan of operation was formed:

- the principal attack – in Tagalaht Bay in the direction of Kuressaare;
- the secondary attack – Pammana in the direction of Orissaare;
- the demonstrations near Kihelkonna and on the Western coast of the Sõrve peninsula.

The task of the naval forces was:

- to transport the land forces to the Tagalaht Bay and to the Pammana area;
- to defend the flanks of the army against the enemy's naval forces;
- to assist the army in conquering the island, especially Kuressaare;

- to assist the army in crossing over to Muhu Island, considering that the causeway is demolished;
- to block the Muhu Strait for the enemy's naval forces.

The task of the army was:

- to advance with the bulk of the forces from the Tagalaht Bay in direction of roads to Kuressaare and Orissaare, to capture Kuressaare and to occupy the Sõrve peninsula with small forces;
- to advance with light forces from the Pammana area in the direction of Orissaare in order to cut off the Russian retreat to Muhu Island;
- to cross over to Muhu Island.

The objective of the first day was to organize a beach-head position on the general line of Kihelkonna, Järumetsa and Ohtja lake, and the Küdema Bay (10 kilometres off the Tagalaht Bay), to enable the landing of greater landing forces to be carried out without any interference. For the success of the operation, surprise was required as well as speed and decisiveness on landing, and very close co-operation between the army and the navy and their mutual support.

III. German Activity until the Landing

Preparations for the combined operation were started with the operative order No. 3258/17 op. of the Commander of the 8th Army on 24 September 1917. The order was as follows:

“1. With the objective to command the Gulf of Riga and to secure the flank of the Eastern Front, Saaremaa and Muhu Islands will be conquered with the combined attack of the land and naval forces, and the Suur Strait will be blocked for the enemy's ships.

2. For this will be detailed:

a) from the 8th Army – a Landing Corps under the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps; during assembling, the Command has to be situated on the flagship of the Commander of the Naval Forces;

b) from the Naval Forces, a support fleet and a transportation fleet.

3. The crossing and its protection at sea will be carried out by Commander of the Naval Forces. The embarked land forces will be under his command from the moment of embarking until landing. In case the landing is successful, the Commander has to execute the regulations of the High Command of the 8th Army and also the orders of the Commander of the Landing Corps with all forces at his disposal.

4. Saaremaa and Muhu Islands will belong to the area of operations of the 8th Army. The operations on the islands will be directed by the Commander of the Landing Corps who will later also be responsible for the defence of the islands.

5. The supplying and embarking harbour for the Landing Corps will be Liepāja. All the details for preparation and embarking will be elaborated by the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps together with the Commander of the Naval Forces. All the differences of opinion will be settled by the High Command of the 8th Army.

6. The arrangements for embarking and about from Liepāja will follow.

7. The landing will be carried out in the Tagalaht Bay.

8. The command and control and defence of transports and of the landing against enemy's surface ships and submarines will be in the competence of the Commander of the Naval Forces, also neutralizing by fire of the coastal batteries defending the entrance of the Tagalaht Bay. The directing of the fleet's supporting artillery fire for the landing force will be carried out in close communication with the Commander of the 23rd Reserve Corps.

9. In order to distract the enemy elsewhere than the landing, an attack will be carried out with small naval forces against the coastal batteries on the Sõrve peninsula.

10. Until sufficient forces are ready for advance, the 23rd Reserve Corps has to organize the protection of the landing. Coastal batteries situated on the Ninase and Undva peninsulas are to be captured quickly. An attack must be launched in the direction of Kihelkonna and the seaplane base situated on Papissaare captured.

11. The operation's next objective is the capture of Kuressaare in order to organize a support base for the fleet there, and the capturing of fortifications situated on the Sõrve peninsula with an attack from the north.

For this, the advance must be started as soon as possible after landing.

In order to cut Kuressaare off from the forces situated eastward of it and to create more favourable chances for the attack, the advance must be carried out in the direction of roads leading from Kuressaare to the north-east. It is desirable that the attack of land forces against Kuressaare would be supported by the Naval Forces being freed from the defence of the transport fleet. For this, it is requested that the Naval Forces already conquer the entrance to the Gulf of Riga. Therefore, the crossing cannot be started before the finish of sweeping the entrance of the Gulf of Riga can be predicted, which is the preliminary condition for supporting the advance of the Landing Corps by the navy.

12. The land forces directed to the Sõrve peninsula (probably the cyclist units) have to destroy all the possible positions and batteries at Tiirimetsa, have to capture the fortified isthmus of the peninsula and thence to continue the advance in a southerly direction, with the objective to clean the peninsula and to capture the batteries situated in the south. These batteries, able to fire 360° and also able to fire to the isthmus of the peninsula, have to be engaged with the fire of the fleet when the army is advancing upon the peninsula.

13. After capturing Kuressaare, the relocation of transports and equipment to the town is probable.

14. The operation's second urgent objective is to capture the Orissaare bridgehead position in the eastern part of the island, cutting through the causeway leading to Muhu Island and conquering of the whole island.

15. The protection arrangement of the right flank of the forces advancing from Kuressaare to Orissaare direction and threatened by the enemy's fleet is the task of the Naval Forces.

16. The passage over the Väike Strait has to be taken under the protecting fire of the fleet.

At the same time, shipping must be stopped in the Suur Strait.

17. The transportation of the Landing Corps to Muhu Island will also be carried out by the means of transport given to the fleet and by neutralizing the batteries situated on Muhu Island.

18. The corresponding arrangements for transferring the orders and information by wireless between the High Command of the Army⁵³ and the Naval Forces, between the High Command of the Army and the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps and between the Naval Forces and the 23rd Reserve Corps has to be fixed with a special order by the Navy in agreement with the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps. The High Command of the Army must be informed in good time of the measures employed.

19. The liaison officer of the High Command of the Army at the Command of the Naval Forces will be Major von Rauch and at the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps Captain von Wallenberg.

20. All the orders and arrangements of the Command of the 23rd Reserve Corps or of the Commander of the Naval Forces which have fundamental importance have to be sent to the High Command of the Army in three copies."⁵⁴

1. The Assembly and Preparation of the Forces

The assembly and preparation of the landing forces were carried out in Liepāja and lasted from 21 September to 8 October, i.e., for 18 days. The assembly was executed without any hindrances and proceeded according to the plan. The assembly of the forces also marked the beginning of preparation for the landing operation. The preparation was very thorough. Particularly extensive were the technical preparations for accommodating the people, horses, artillery, carts and different kind of equipment on the ships. Great attention was also paid to the rapid embarkation and disembarkation, and to the landing on the open coast. For this, intensive embarkation and disembarkation exercises were arranged, and, finally, was the aim was reached that embarkation could be carried out in two days.

For the landing of horses and carts, special pontoon-like floating means were prepared with double bottom and bulwarks. The bulwarks could be lowered and would form small landing bridges.

During the preparation period many orders were given, and arrangements made, which went into significant detail. For supplying the ships with coal, 6

53 I.e. High Command of the 8th Army (AOK 8) (editor's note).

54 General der Infanterie a. D. von Tschischwitz. *Armee und Marine bei der Eroberung der Baltischen Inseln im Oktober 1917*. Berlin, 1931, pp. 24–27.

colliers were in readiness in Liepāja, while two ships would be taken along for the crossing. The battleships and the cruisers always had to be ready to supply the torpedo boats. For communication between the army and the navy, respective codes and recognition marks (pennants, lanterns, rockets, searchlights, sirens etc.) were composed. The preparations were lasting as long as more thorough they turned. The result was that each leader knew his task exactly.

Simultaneously with the preparations in Liepāja, intensive reconnaissance and the sweeping of minefields was carried out. The seaplanes and submarines carried out perpetual reconnaissance whereby all precautions were taken that the enemy would not realise the actual intentions. The sweeping of the mine barrages was carried out mainly in the Irbe Strait. During the sweeping, it appeared that the mine fields were much more extensive than it was assumed before. Darkness was used to conceal the sweeping, and the sweeping areas were continuously altered.

2. The Embarkation

Intensive preparation lasted until 9 October when the embarkation of the forces was started. For embarkation, the transport ships were divided into groups, 4-5 in each. Every group embarked different arms (infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, etc.). This was necessary so that if the landing places were changed, it would be possible to land different arms in new places. The beginning of the embarkation depended on two circumstances:

- the weather and
- the mine sweeping.

As the weather affects the crossing by sea and also the landing, the Germans were waiting for an improvement, because strong winds were blowing during the preparation. Depending on the sweeping, the fleet could not start the crossing before the courses to the Tagalaht Bay and the entrance to the Irbe Strait were cleaned of mines. The sweeping was hindered by the weather. This delay caused by the weather and sweeping conditions was considered even useful, because more time remained for preparation works and for training the personnel more thoroughly.

At the same time, the long preparation period misled the Russians in awaiting the combined operation, as based on the existing information, the Russians were anticipating the landing in the middle of September. The longer the waiting period was drawn out, the more the Russians lost the belief of in the possibility of a landing. The weather improved on 8 October, and the meteorological stations were forecasting favourable weather conditions for a longer period. The sweeping made

huge progress. Therefore, the Command of the combined operation decided to start the embarkation of the forces for which the order was given on 8 October at 20:00. On the evening of 10 October, the transport fleet was ready to go. At daybreak on 11 October, the fleet was assembled and was arranged in cruising order.

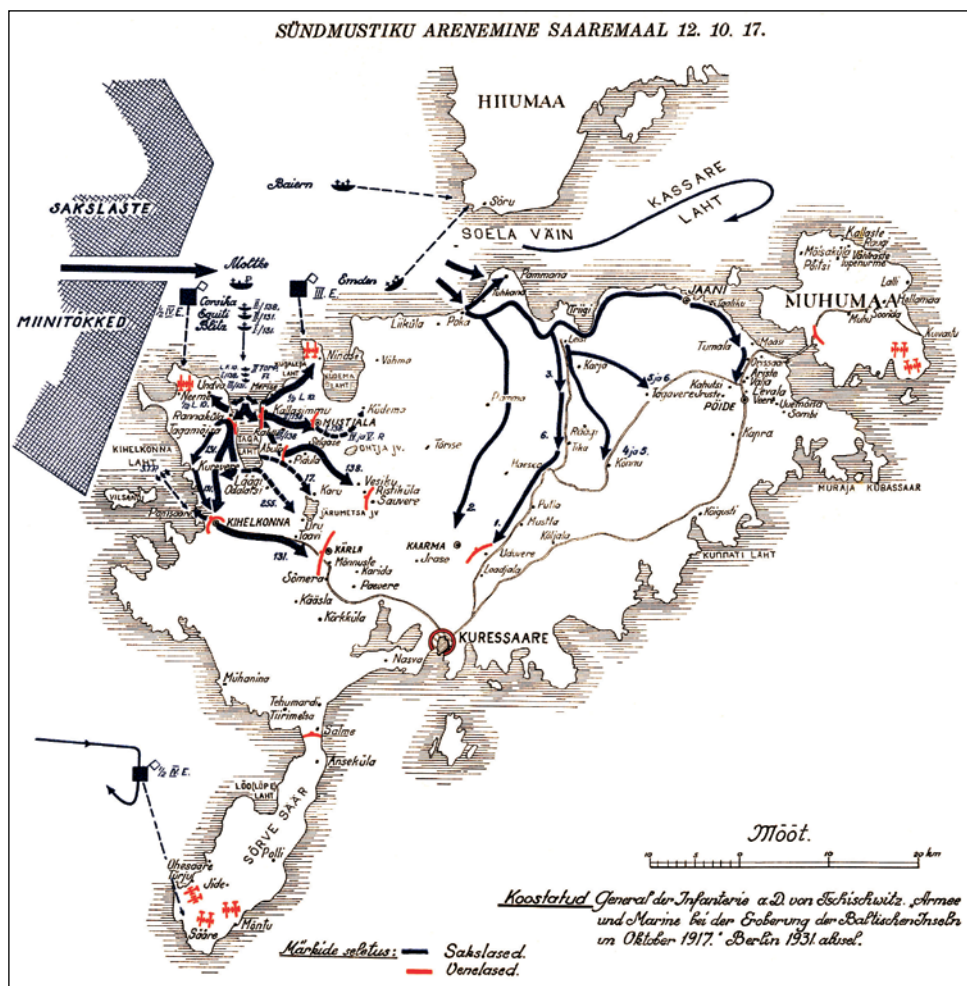
3. The Crossing

The movement was started from Liepāja with the consideration that the fleet should arrive 7 miles Northward off the Tagalaht Bay 4 hours before sunrise (i.e., about 2 a.m.) on 12 October. The last stage of the crossing had to be done among Germans' own minefields. To find their way in darkness and to fix the position, two submarines had been sent forward to fix two positions where two light vessels were sent before the arrival of the fleet groups, and which were marking the way through the mine barrages. This was particularly necessary for merchant ships that had limited navigating means.

The fleet cruised in a single-line ahead formation, forming one long column of ships. The sides of the column were protected by torpedo boats cruising with zigzag courses because submarine attacks were feared. The planes and one airship guaranteed the safety of the column from the air. The submarines had been sent to the Gulf of Riga, in front of the southern and northern entrances to the Muhu Strait and to the south-western region off Hiiumaa.

Early in the morning, it was raining, but soon the weather cleared. The sea was quiet. The enemy was not in sight. Until the evening, no obstruction had occurred during the cruise. In the evening, it began to rain again. The complete darkness caused difficulties in orientation. The light vessels sent forward were of great help. At midnight a small obstruction happened, namely the minesweepers sent forward earlier got in the way of the fleet. The Commander of the Fleet had to choose whether to be late for the Tagalaht Bay or to give up the sweeping of the course, which was connected with many dangers. The Commander chose the latter way. This reflects the right judgement and firmness of the German leaders in executing the plan of operation.

At night at 2 a.m. the fleet arrived at the foreseen point and anchored to make the last preparations.



Scheme 5: Events in Saaremaa on 12 October 1917. Blue represents German forces while red shows Russian.

4. The Preparations for Landing

During the stoppage off the Tagalaht Bay, the fleet was grouped as provided in the operation plan, and advanced echelons of the covering troops were formed which consisted of⁵⁵:

- the 131st Infantry Regiment
- the 138th Infantry Regiment (without the 3rd Battalion)
- the 10th Assault Company).

It was still dark when the fleet went to the foreseen positions to support the landing with fire as follows (Scheme 5).

⁵⁵ Altogether 3600 men without machine gun companies, horses and carts.

1) Three ships of the 4th Battle Squadron took a position north of the Undva peninsula and the 3rd Battle Squadron (without battleship *Bayern*) north of the Ninase peninsula with the objectives to neutralize the coastal batteries which had been placed for the defence of the Tagalaht Bay; these ships were supporting the main landing in the Tagalaht Bay.

2) Battleship *Bayern* and cruiser *Emden* took the position west of the Soela Strait with the task to neutralize the coastal batteries on the Pammana headland and in the Sõru area on Hiiumaa; under the support of these ships, the secondary landing had to be carried out near Pammana.

3) Three torpedo boats had to arrive near Kihelkonna and commence shelling Kihelkonna to draw the enemy's attention.

4) Two ships of the 4th Battle Squadron took the position west of the Sõrve peninsula to shell the Sõrve batteries and coastal fortifications.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ General der Infanterie a. D. Tschischwitz. "Armee und Marine bei der Eroberung der Baltischen Inseln im Oktober 1917", pages 44 & 45.



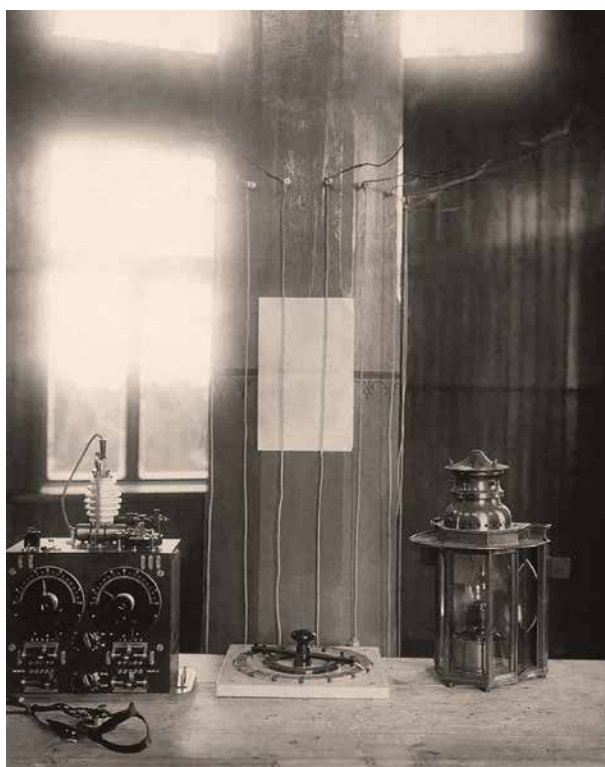
Vice Admiral Erhard Schmidt (centre) aboard SMS Moltke while in command of the German Naval Squadron during the invasion of the Island of Saaremaa.



German troops embarking on a ship for the Island of Saaremaa. Liepaja, September 1917.



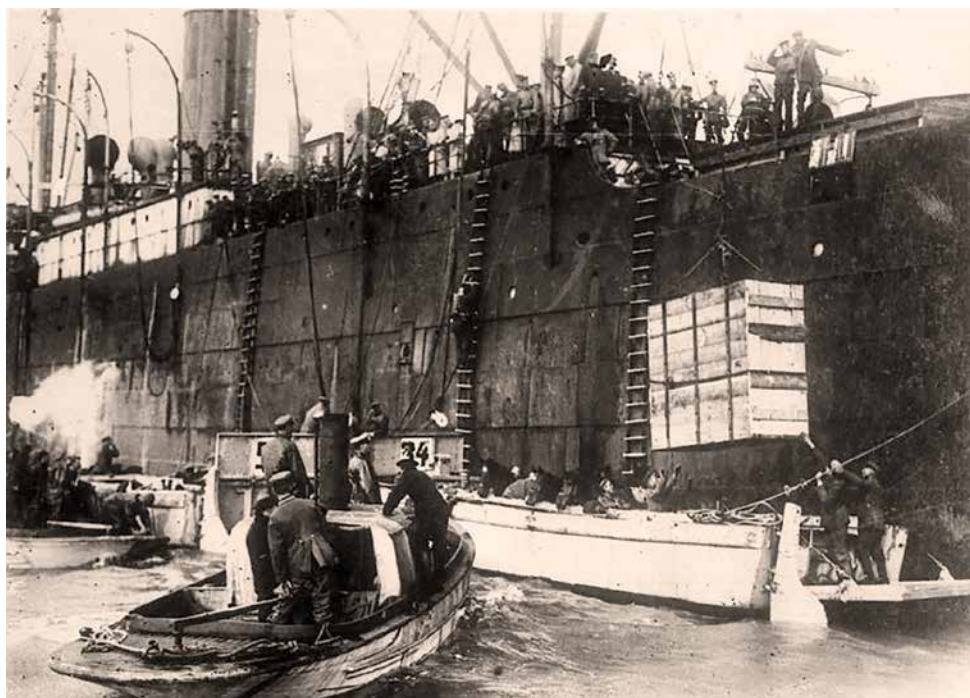
Papissaare (Kihelkonna) seaplane station in 1914. There were hangars, workshops, stores, houses, and other necessary buildings. The base had its independent waterworks and electric lighting.



Interior of Papissaare radio surveillance station.



The Germans getting acquainted with the landing plan in Tagalaht Bay.



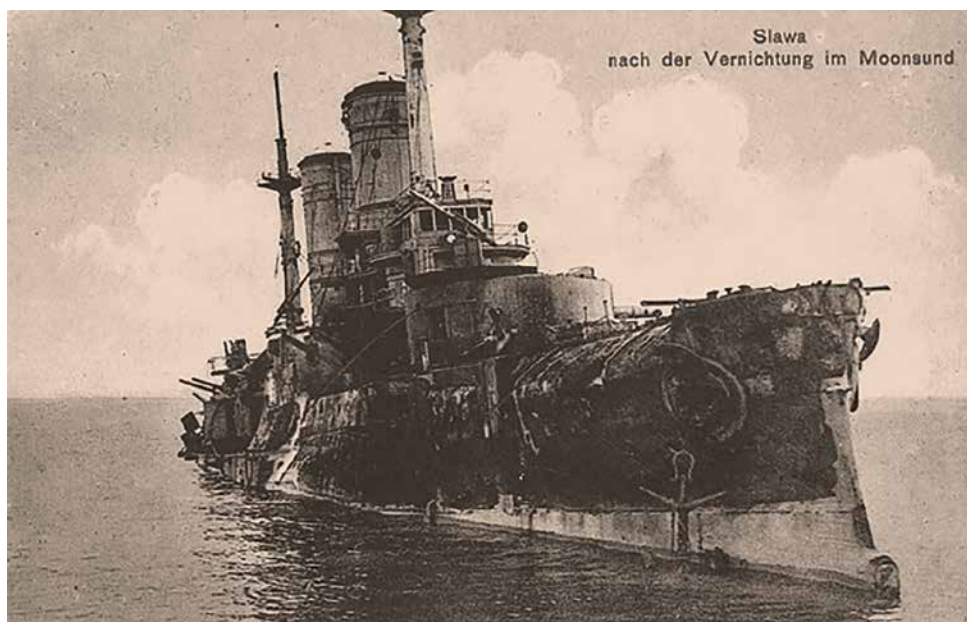
German troops disembarking supplies from a ship near Tagalaht Bay.



The Germans are landing in Tagalaht Bay. The boats are connected to each other and were hauled by a motorboat.



Disembarkation beach in Tagalaht Bay. A Friedrichshafen FF33 floatplane is seen on the beach.



Russian battleship Slava (Glory). Slava was badly damaged by the German dreadnought SMS König. The shallow channel made it impossible to escape, and she was scuttled in the Suur Strait between the island of Muhu and the mainland.



SMS Friedrich der Grosse was till 1917 German fleet flagship and took part of Operation Albion.



Transportation of German soldiers to the landing area on the ship Batavia.



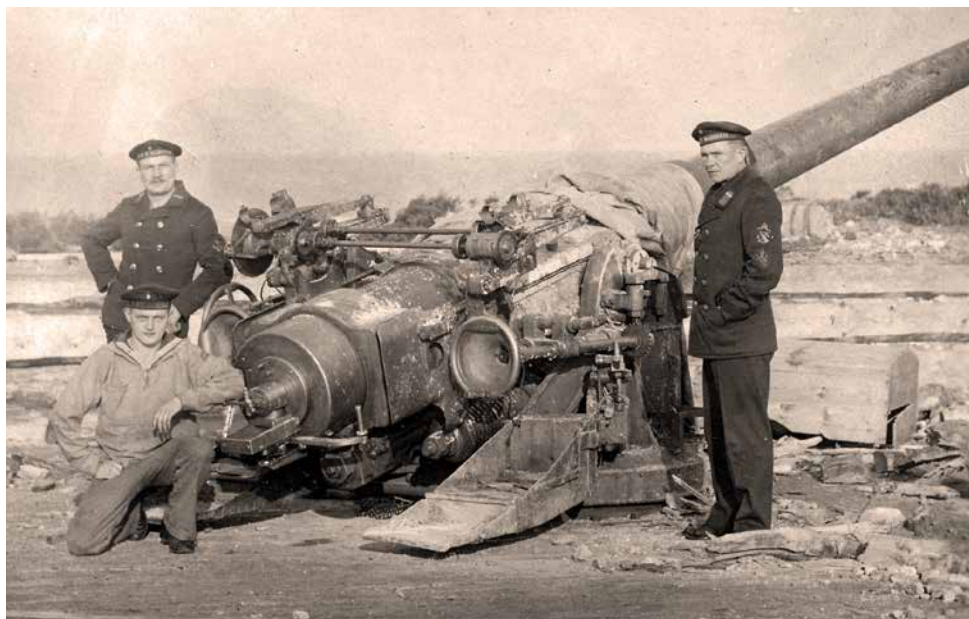
Autumn weather conditions affected mobility. In addition, road conditions in Saaremaa were limited.



German soldiers socializing with local villagers.



Aerial photo of the port of Kuressaare, where the seaplane base was located. The area of Kuressaare Castle is also clearly distinguished in the photo.



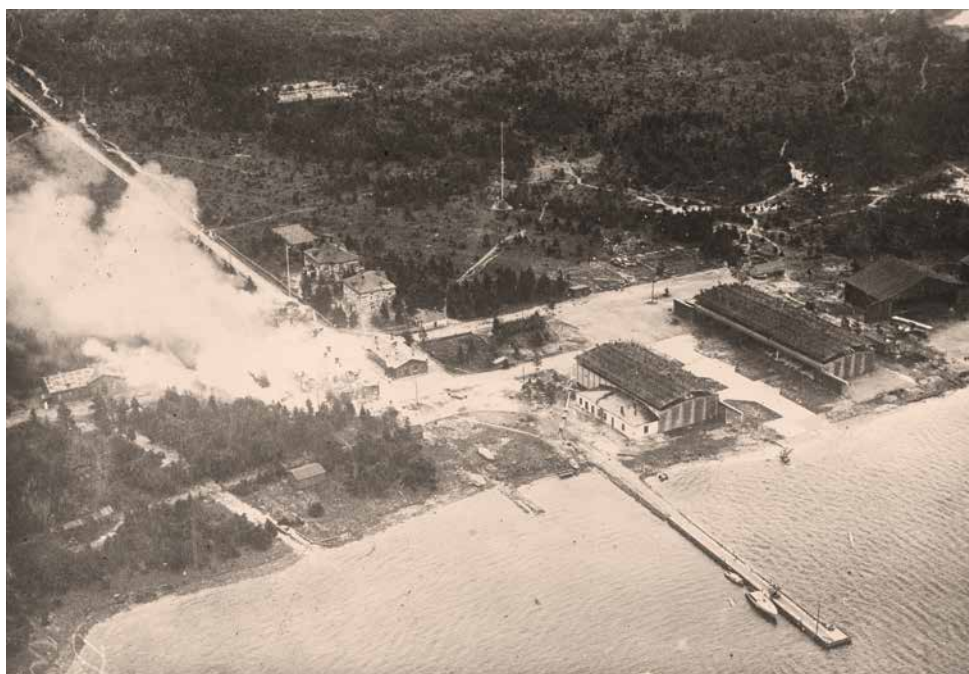
German soldiers posing at Ninase battery positions.



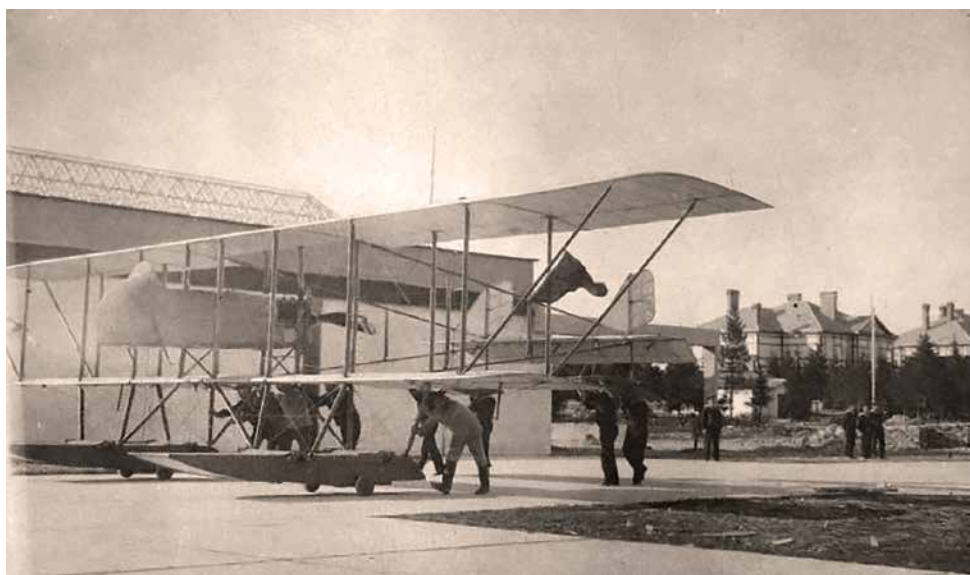
Russian trenches on the coast of Saaremaa. The rocky coast is common to Saaremaa, and it also made it difficult to build trenches.



Aerial photo of Sörve peninsula. The photo shows a lighthouse built in 1770, destroyed in the battles of 1944 in the Second World War.



Aerial view of Papissaare seaplane station after German air attack.



Papissaare (Kihelkonna) seaplane station.

C. The Capture of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and of the Islands

I. German Landing on Saaremaa and their Advance on 12 October. The Russian Counteraction

1. German Landing on Saaremaa on 12 October

On 12 October, there was dense fog on the sea. A weak southerly wind was blowing.

There was complete silence on the coast of Saaremaa until 06:00 when two mine explosions were heard from the northerly direction off the Tagalaht Bay. This was followed by gunfire from the sea. Namely, the German battleships *Bayern* and *Grosser Kurfürst* had struck the mines; supposing that they were torpedoed, they opened fire. In the opinion of the Commander of the Naval Forces, the right moment had arrived, and he gave the general order to open fire upon the coast of Saaremaa.

After a few minutes, the first salvo roared from the ships of the 4th Battle Squadron in the direction of the 45th coastal battery situated on the Undva headland. This coastal battery saw 4 warships, and 2 transports 25° in the north-easterly direction. At the same time, 20 minesweepers and 6 torpedo boats were heading towards the Tagalaht Bay. The minesweepers were followed by many rowing boats. Falling under the ships' fire, the battery opened fire against battle cruiser *Moltke*. After three salvos, the target was already in short bracket and, with the fourth salvo, would have started barrage upon the ship. But the battery's internal communication ceased to work; the crew ran away, and the battery was silent.

The 46th coastal battery situated on the Ninase peninsula saw 4 battleships escorted by about 30 smaller ships in the northern direction. This was the German 3rd Battle Squadron who opened violent fire against the battery. Shelling was carried out with armour piercing shells and shrapnel. The first salvo hit the second gun's magazine, which was blown up, while the second salvo destroyed the observation post. The German fire was so violent that the first salvos silenced the battery, and the crew left the battery.

At about 08:45, the German torpedo boats were approaching Vilsandi from the northwest direction and opened fire on the seaplane harbour situated on Papissaare. At the same time, some low-flying German planes appeared above the seaplane harbour. The communication with Vilsandi ceased. The anti-aircraft

batteries on Papissaare opened fire against the torpedo boats who were already anchoring. At about the same time, the German ships also appeared off the western coast of the Sõrve peninsula and opened fire. Despite the Germans' air supremacy, some Russian planes succeeded in taking off to attack the German ships from the air. But the German air forces forced the Russian planes to land before they could drop their bombs.

Nevertheless, the aircraft succeeded in ascertaining that:

- in the Tagalaht Bay, there are 9 German torpedo boats and up to 40 smaller manoeuvring ships;
- about 6–7 miles away from the bay in the northern direction, there are 3 battleships;
- eastward of the battleships, there are 10–12 ships in line formation.

At 08:30, the Russians noticed German ships which were making preparations for the disembarkation of troops in the Pammana area.

Based on the received information, the Command of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position formed the following picture about the Germans' activity during the moment of landing: the German main attack is directed through the Tagalaht Bay, the secondary attack from the Liiküla and Tuhkana area against the Russian flank and into the rear, while, at the same time, a landing is demonstrated near Kihelkonna and on the Sõrve peninsula. Therewith, the German idea of manoeuvring was deciphered completely in its whole extent.

How was the German landing carried out (Scheme 5).

The German 131st Regiment landed on the western shore of the Tagalaht Bay, namely at Rannaküla. The 3rd Battalion landed first and seized a covering position. The 1st and 2nd Battalion were landing next. The regiment's objective was to advance in the Kihelkonna direction, to capture Kihelkonna and the seaplane harbour on Papisaar, and to continue the advance in the general direction of Kuressaare. The German 138th Regiment landed on the eastern shore of the Tagalaht Bay. The first to land at Kalasimmu was the 1st Battalion. The battalion's objective was to advance in the:

- Kalasimmu-Mustjala and
- Kalasimmu-Pidula-Vesiku direction.

The 2nd Battalion landed later and was directed towards Mustjala, while the 3rd Battalion advanced in the Vesiku direction.

The 10th Assault Company, divided in two parts, had landed at the entrance to the Tagalaht Bay as follows:

- half of the company on the western coast of the Tagalaht Bay by the Undva village with the task to attack the 45th coastal battery at Undva from behind and to capture the battery;
- half of the company on the eastern coast of the Tagalaht Bay near Merise with the task to attack 46th coastal battery at Ninase from behind and to capture it.

The German 1st and 2nd Cyclist Battalion, the 18th Assault Company, the fleet's landing parties and naval artillery sailors (altogether 1900 men) had landed in the Pammana area abreast Liiküla and Tuhkana.

2. The Russian Counter Activity on the Coast during the German Landing

For repelling the landed troops before the arrival of reserves, the Russian troops in sector 1 could exploit the 5th, 3rd, 6th Company and the "Company of Death", the 2nd machine gun detachment and the 2nd and 3rd batteries of the 107th Artillery Battalion. The batteries were in the following positions:

- the 2nd battery was in position being divided into platoons
- the 1st platoon was in the region of 45th coastal battery near Neeme village with the task of anti-aircraft defence;
- the 2nd platoon was in a concealed position in Undva village with the task of defending the western coast of the Tagalaht Bay;
- the 3rd platoon was situated near Rannaküla with the objective to keep under fire the eastern coast of the Tagalaht Bay northward and southward of Kalasimmu.

The 3rd battery was placed in a concealed position, in open country near Kalasimmu village, 1-5 kilometres from the coast, where two platoons (the 2nd and 3rd) were with the front towards Rannaküla with the allotted task to keep under fire the opposite coast of the bay in Rannaküla area, and a 90° sector on the coast of its own side. The task of the 1st platoon was to keep the coastline up to Merise village and the Lõuka Bay under fire. Sixty metres away from the battery, there was an observation tower, while advanced observation point 1 was in Kalasimmu and point 2 near Merise village. During the battle, a part of the 2nd machine gun detachment was moved into Merise village.

When the German ships appeared in the Tagalaht Bay, the 3rd battery opened fire upon torpedo boats and gun-boats sighted through the fog, which had approached very close to the coast. At the same time, two German torpedo boats

opened fire against the 3rd platoon of the 2nd battery. At 08:00, the torpedo boats were nearing Kalasimmu village but were forced to leave because of the battery's fire. Beginning from 09:00, a German seaplane fired at the observation tower of the 3rd battery with a machine gun during half an hour, coming down to the height of the tower. After 09:00, when the fog diminished, the 3rd Battery opened rapid fire upon the ships, thus obstructing their landing. From the observation post it was seen that some ships, lighters and boats were hit, and they were forced to withdraw. At the same time, two torpedo boats which opened fire were approaching the coast off Kalasimmu again, evidently with the objective to disclose the position of the 3rd battery. The battery returned fire and the ships retired outside the battery's range. At about 09:30, the whole coast from Kalasimmu to Merise was enclosed by German ships, of which many were lighters. The 1st platoon of the 3rd battery opened rapid fire on these vessels. According to the explanations of machine gunners who were situated at Merise village, the landed Germans withdrew in great tumult behind the steep descent because of the platoon's gunfire, losing an number of men killed and wounded. At 10:00, the 3rd battery ran out of ammunition, but then limbers with reserve ammunition arrived. Under German fire, a lot of battery horses and a few soldiers were wounded, mainly the drivers. The 1st platoon continued firing; at the same time, the battery shelled the vessels that were concentrated off Rannaküla again. The vessels were dispersing without lowering any boats. At about the same time, the general approach of German vessels towards the interior of the bay, probably to escape the battery's fire, was noticed.

Until 10:30, telephone connection between the 3rd battery and the Headquarters of the 426th Regiment was intact.

The Staff of the regiment did not know much about the situation and required an explanation from the battery. According to the report of the battery commander, the forces of the 426th Regiment had not taken up their positions on the coast by 10 a.m. Therefore, during the German landing, the Russian infantry was entirely inactive. Beginning from 10 a.m. the commander of the 3rd battery was concerned about his right flank, and therefore sent a reconnaissance party to Merise village to get information about the enemy. The reconnaissance returned after half an hour, having not seen Germans. But, at about 11:00, the German infantry already assaulted the 2nd and 3rd platoons of the battery from the rear with "hurrah" exclamations from the distance of about 100 metres. Simultaneously with the attack with fixed bayonets, the Germans threw hand-grenades killing almost all the battery's horses of the limbers, as they were situated between the position and the attacking Germans. Being under the fire from the Germans, the gunners got the

order from the battery commander to damage the guns after which the men who were alive tried to escape into the woods.

The officers stayed in the observation tower until the very last moment and escaped into the woods about 200 metres away from the battery, where the retreated soldiers were assembled and attempts were made to save the ammunition limbers. At the same time, the Germans managed to seize one platoon of the battery. The German violent artillery fire was concentrated upon Rahtla village. The men, escaping from the 3rd battery, went to Mustjala where there were two companies of the 426th Regiment who had not yet taken up their position. The Commander of the 426th Regiment's sector was unaware of what was happening in the Tagalaht Bay. According to the report of the commander of the 3rd battery, the battery was placed in a very difficult situation, as the companies situated in the Abula and Mustjala area did not take their positions in due time. The units of a machine gun detachment situated near Merise region left their position at about 10:00 under German pressure without informing the battery.

So, we can see that during the German landing on the eastern coast of the Tagalaht Bay, only the 3rd battery provided opposition in the Merise and Abula area over the course of 3½ hours, while the units of the 426th Regiment were absolutely passive. The disorientation of the commander of the sector is absolutely incomprehensible.

On the western coast of Taga Bay at Rannaküla, there was a platoon of the 2nd battery who fell under the fire of the German torpedo boats at about 07:30. The covering units of the 3rd platoon of the battery – the 1st machine gun detachment and half of the 5th company – left their positions in panic in the Tagamõisa direction, after which the gun crews also left taking the breechblocks with them. So, the platoon did not fire a single shell. The battery's 2nd platoon, which was situated near Undva village, shelled the landing Germans at Merise for half an hour. The platoon ceased firing after the platoon commander 2nd Lieutenant Golvezev was killed in an observation post.

At 12:00, the units of the 426th Regiment were already situated in resistance barrier, i.e., on the Võhma-Küdemä-Mustjala-Selgase-Odalatsi general line.

In the Tagalaht Bay, opposition was shown by only 8 light guns altogether, while the infantry remained entirely passive. This made it possible for the Germans to carry out the most difficult phase of the combined operation – landing – with few losses. By capturing the Ninase and Undva peninsulas, the Germans had obtained favourable ground for further activities.

Simultaneously with the landing in the Tagalaht Bay, troops were also landed near Liiküla and Tuhkana. Already before the beginning of the operation, observation posts and patrols of the 3rd squadron of the Kuressaare Border Guard Battalion had been put up on the coast near Liiküla. The landing in the Liiküla and Tuhkana area started at 08:30. The Russian patrols of the 3rd squadron did not provide any opposition to the Germans and withdrew in panic.

From the landed German 2nd Cyclist Battalion and the 18th Assault Company, the so-called Winterfeldt Detachment was formed with the task to move quickly in the general direction of Orissaare, to capture the Orissaare bridgehead position and to close the causeway. To advance more quickly, a part of the 18th Assault Company was placed on carts taken from the islanders.

The task of the German 1st Cyclist Battalion, who had landed in the same area, was to cut the retreat of the Russians from Kuressaare to Muhu Island. For execution of the above task, the battalion started to advance by two roads in the direction of Kaarma. The fleet's landing parties with naval artillery sailors had to capture the Russian coastal battery situated on the Pammana headland and use it to neutralize the Russian battery situated on the southern coast of Hiiumaa, and support the invasion of the Kassari Bay by naval forces through the Soela Strait. But the Germans did not find the Russian battery, because there had not actually been any battery at all.

3. The German Advance and the Beginning of the Russian Withdrawal

a) The German Activity

Having become acquainted with the landing of the Germans and with the counter-activity of the Russians, let us examine the German activity after landing.

According to the German information, the 131st Infantry Regiment started to move after landing on the western coast of the Tagalaht Bay as follows:

- the 1st Battalion moved along the coast to the end of the bay and turned from there towards Läägi-Kihelkonna;
- the 2nd Battalion moved via Kehila in the direction of Kihelkonna, while one company was sent via Kurevere to cover the flank.

At 10:45 the regiment arrived at Läägi. At the same time, a reconnaissance aircraft informed that Kihelkonna was free of Russians. While approaching Kihelkonna, the regiment fell under artillery fire, which did not do any harm. On the way to Kihelkonna, the regiment had many small skirmishes with Russians who had occupied several points. The Russians, however, did not reveal any stronger opposition but were retreating in disorder or surrendered.

At 14:00, the Germans arrived at Kihelkonna and at 15:20 at and the Russian seaplane base on Papissaare.

The cleaning of the surroundings of Kihelkonna from Russians lasted until 17:00 when the regiment continued movement in the direction of Mõnnuste. Two kilometres northward of Mõnnuste, the regiment's advance force halted, and the regiment commander decided to remain overnight near Taavi. It was already dark when the regiment stayed on both sides of the road for the night's rest. The 138th Infantry Regiment had run into smaller Russian units. Stronger resistance by Russians was encountered only in the Mustjala area, and Mustjala was captured at 17:00. The 4th and 5th Cyclist Battalions advanced from Mustjala and arrived at Küdema by the evening.

The units of the regiment were situated in the evening as follows: the 1st and 3rd Battalions in the wood of Vesiku in bivouacs, the 2nd Battalion near Mustjala and one company on the Mustjala-Sauvere road on the Vesiku-Ohtja lake line. The rapid advance of the advance forces made it possible to also land the remaining forces without any hindrance. Before noon had landed:

- the 255th Infantry Regiment,
- the 17th Infantry Regiment,
- the 6th Cyclist Battalion,
- three batteries, of which only one was able to arrange itself to advance on the same day.

The landed infantry and cyclist units quickly started moving towards the interior of Saaremaa, not waiting for machine gun companies and for mounts, and arrived at the evening without hindrances: the 255th Infantry Regiment to Üru and the 17th Infantry Regiment to Karu, i.e., in line with the advanced forces.

So, by the evening of the first day, four infantry regiments, three cyclist battalions, and one battery had landed in the Tagalaht Bay. These forces had reached the line of Taavi – Järumetsa lake – Ohtja lake – Küdema, which is situated 10–12 kilometres away from the landing place. With that, a favourable beachhead position for further landing of the forces and a base for the continuation of the advance on the following day had been formed.

In the area of Liiküla, the landed Germans' activity progressed as follows:

Winterfeldt Detachment, who was moving in Orissaare direction, had advanced rapidly. After some smaller skirmishes with Russian mounted units, the troop occupied the ground in front of the causeway and consolidated. The German small reconnaissance units even advanced up the causeway. Two Russian armoured cars, which were the first defenders of the causeway, had withdrawn to

Muhu Island. One platoon of the 3rd squadron of the Kuressaare Cavalry Battalion and a part of soldiers from the Orissaare fortified bridgehead position's personnel had been captured by the Germans. The activity of Winterfeldt Detachment had a great influence. The capture of the causeway and the disorganizing of the rear put the Russian demoralized parts of the 107th Division into very difficult situation. With capturing of the Orissaare bridgehead and with the actions on the causeway, the Germans guaranteed their further activity in conquering Muhu Island.

The German 1st Cyclist Battalion reached the Uduvere-Kõnnu line by the evening.

b) The Russian Counter Activity.

Having made acquaintance with the general course of the German activity from the landing until the evening of 12 October, we will now examine the Russian counteraction.

As mentioned before, at noon a part of the companies of the 426th Regiment were situated on the line of resistance barriers as follows:

- the 10th company – in resistance barrier 1-a,
- the 9th company – in resistance barrier 5,
- the 6th company with machine guns – in resistance barrier 7,
- the 4th company with machine guns – in resistance barrier 9,
- the 1st company with machine guns – in resistance barrier 13.

Information about the other companies of the 426th Regiment and about the 2nd and 3rd light battery of the 107th Division was missing in the Staff of the 107th Division at noon. Neither the Staff of the 107th Division nor the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had received any information about how fighting was progressing on the line of resistance barriers during the operation. At 12:00 o'clock, the commander of the 107th Division sent Major General Kolbe¹ to elucidate the situation. He made sure that the units of the 426th Regiment had already left the line of resistance barriers and were withdrawing inland in great disorder.

Accurate information is lacking on how the commander of the 107th Division had exploited the general reserve, i.e. 1½ battalions of the 472th Regiment. Based on fragmented documents and belated reports, it is evident that the commander of the 472nd Regiment was very badly informed about the situation, or more correctly, not at all. The conduct of the battle was imperfect. The main cause of this is that, due to the lack of cavalry, communication was possible only by telephone;

1 Vladimir Kolbe (born 1862), 1916–1917 Commander of a brigade of the 107th Infantry Division (editor's note).

owing to the depth and width of the front, the long telephone lines proved to be insufficient. Telephone connection ceased after the first shots, and the forces and the means for repairing it were missing. The second reason which made directing the battle very difficult was the very rapid progress of the fighting activity, which is explained by the weak resistance by the 426th Regiment's companies. As the commander of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Division affirms, two companies of the 426th Regiment appeared at Paevere as early as at 16:00, having run away from their positions at the Tagalaht Bay. They affected the general reserve, so that the last two reserve companies of the 472nd Regiment did not agree to take the fortified position at Kärä; the commander of the 472nd Regiment had to persuade the companies on the necessity of taking the position.

As mentioned, during the withdrawal of the troops the battle acquired a chaotic nature. The retreating forces were gathering in two groups at the beginning: one in Sauvere and the other in the Kärä area.

At about 10:00, several companies of the general reserve were given tasks, but no information is available about the tasks they were given. The remaining companies received the order to be ready to start at 15:00. The general reserve of the commander of the 107th Division was situated near Kärä.

At about 16:00, the commander of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion, receiving alarming news about the situation from the forces withdrawn from the coast, retreated on his own initiative to Paevere where he made a proposal to the commander of the general reserve (the commander of the 472th Regiment) to send the remaining companies in position in the Kärä area under his command. The battery commander explained this as follows:

"I have reported to the commander of the 472nd Regiment Colonel Arekhov² all the received information about the situation and my opinion is to take up the position in the Kärä area until receiving subsequent instructions. As is evident, the situation was not clear at all to the regiment commander; after my report, connection with the Staff of the division was successfully established after many efforts. They also confirmed my information. After that, I placed the battery on the position at the edge of Paevere village. Only two companies, the trench weapons and machine guns were under the order of the regiment commander. These companies did not take up the position at Kärä but went to Sömera village with two companies of the 426th Regiment who had retreated from the coast of the Tagalaht Bay and were together with parts of the 472nd Regiment.

2 Karapet Arekhov (born 1864), Colonel, 1916–1917 Commander of the 427th Mosalsk Infantry Regiment (editor's note).

Only after the regiment commander had personally exhorted them and demanded their return, did they come back to the position...”

The 12th company of the 426th Regiment and the mounted machine gun detachment were sent from Võhma to meet the enemy’s Liiküla group, but apparently they did not arrive at the allotted place.

To check the advance of the German cyclists, parts of the Liiküla group, to Levala-Kuresaare road, the 11th company of the 472nd Regiment, who was free of guard duties, was sent, by the order of the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, from Kuressaare in the direction of Uduvere-Haeska; at the same time, the 12th company of the 472nd Regiment was also released from guard duties and was sent at about 16:00 with relay horses to follow the 11th company.

The above information testifies to the great confusion and disorder in the Russian troops.

Official reports about the fighting were missing. Yet, despite incomplete information, the Chief of Staff of Fortified Position had an absolutely clear picture about the situation by about 16:00, which was proved by the communication on Hughes apparatus at about 17:00 on 12 October between the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Captain Reek and the Chief of the Operative Section of the Staff of Land Forces Lieut. Colonel Afanasyev.

“The situation is as follows: the action started at about 07:00. The coastal batteries were soon made silent. The enemy approached the coast under the cover of fog and started to land at Sõru in Hiiumaa, at Liiküla in Saaremaa and on the eastern and western coasts of the Tagalaht Bay. The units of the 426th Regiment engaged the enemy. The local reserves were concentrated at Liiküla because the enemy threatened from there the rear of the 426th Regiment. The enemy’s landing was supported by the gunfire of many torpedo boats and of a squadron consisting of 10–12 battleships, which forced our troops to withdraw from the coast. The fighting went over the line of resistance barriers, the general reserve – two battalions of the 472nd Regiment, together with the machine gun detachment – was sent there for reinforcing. All that remained has been sent against the enemy’s Liiküla group, i.e., the last two companies and two squadrons who cannot arrive earlier than tomorrow morning owing to the long distance. At present information has arrived that the units of the 426th and the 472nd Regiment and their batteries have been forced by the enemy to leave the line of resistance barriers, i.e., our last position on the coast, and are retreating inland.

The enemy's cyclist units of the Liiküla group arrived at Levala cutting us off; so, our only way for withdrawal is through Kuivastu. The commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position considers the situation critical. The garrison of the Sõrve peninsula has been ordered to hold on. Parts of the 426th and 472nd Regiment have to go to the Orissaare position by breaking through the enemy. It is possible that our connection will soon cease. There is no connection with Hiiumaa, and it is unknown what is happening there. The Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position will probably go over to Haapsalu at night. At present, the results about the ways for withdrawal are expected. The swiftness of the enemy's activities is explainable with the landing of its big forces simultaneously at different places and with widespread distribution of our forces. We have done all we could to liquidate the bulk of the enemy's forces who were concentrating in the Tagalaht Bay area, but we did not reach there in due time. The biggest danger threatens the flank of our troops and their rear from the Liiküla region, because the enemy's Liiküla group has repelled our weak units and has taken up our retreating way; all has been done to repel the enemy's motorcyclists, but no success has been achieved. Such is the situation. I am afraid the connection will soon cease entirely.

Captain Reek."

"Please communicate which forces the enemy has, what is known of batteries 45, 46 and 34, and which light batteries have been lost. Have you any information about the casualties?

Lieutenant Colonel Afanasyev."

"The battle is progressing too quickly and too seriously; the enemy is undoubtedly in domination over us. Coastal batteries 45 and 46 were destroyed at the beginning of the battle with the first salvoes; of the light batteries, the 2nd and 3rd battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion, one Sveaborg battery and one Kronstadt battery without horses have been lost. Judging by the reports, the casualties are heavy. I repeat once more that the battle is developing at lightning speed and with superior enemy forces.

Captain Reek."

As Captain (G. S.) Reek was called away from the apparatus, Second Captain Sabir continued the negotiations.

"Just now I spoke with Captain Reek who was called to the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. Please inform which direction for movement

has been given to the general reserve, and why the commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position has the intention to go to Haapsalu but not to stay at Kuivastu. Thirdly, keep the connection working throughout the withdrawal and inform us on every possible occasion about the course of events and also about when the Staff of the Muhu Strait Position will move to a new place.

Lieutenant Colonel Afanasyev."

"The general reserve – two battalions – have been used as follows: one battalion has been sent and placed under the command of the commander of the 426th Regiment for reinforcing the forces withdrawing from the Tagalaht Bay. At present, probably these forces have been forced to withdraw from the line of resistance barriers because Pidula has been already captured by the Germans.

Second Captain Sabir.

(Communicated on behalf of Captain Reek)."

At 18:00, Commander of the 107th Division arrived in the headquarters of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and gave Commander of the Position a clear overview of the events. After joint deliberation, in which Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, Chief of the Staff of the Position, Commander of the 107th Division, Chief of Staff of the Division, Commander of the Brigade of the 107th Division and the members of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position's Soldiers Committee were taking part, the following resolution was adopted:

"As the defeated troops are not capable of keeping the intermediate positions, Commander of the 107th Division as the commander of defence of Saaremaa had to break through with the remaining forces to the Orissaare position and has to occupy this. The garrison of the Sõrve peninsula has to continue fighting tenaciously. Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position must not go to Haapsalu, and has to take all measures for the swift despatch of the promised reinforcements."

It was considered that Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position himself was capable to correctly lead the reinforcements necessary to save the 107th Division because he is well informed of the situation; according to the above, it was decided that the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had to go to Haapsalu immediately."

, Chief of Staff of Muhu Strait Fortified Position informed of the above decision concisely with the following telegrams:

“To the Chief of Staff of Land Forces,
To Admiral Bakhirev,³ To Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet,
To the Chief of Staff of the 12th Army,
To the Chief of Staff of the 13th Corps and
To the Chief of Staff of the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress.

After battle on the line of resistance barriers, parts of the 426th and 472nd Regiment are withdrawing inland due to enemy’s pressure and threat by the Liiküla group. To secure the right flank, all the reserves under my command – three companies and two squadrons – have been dispatched.

I have the intention to withdraw with the left flank and to halt on the Kärla-Nasva line. During withdrawal from the line of resistance barriers, some batteries have been lost. Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position considers the situation critical because it is not possible to provide strong opposition on the Kärla-Nasva line, while all the reserves have been utilized.

12 October, No. 02452.

Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position
Reek.”

“To Chief of Staff of the Land Forces, to Admiral Bakhirev, to Chief of Staff of the 12th Army, to Chief of Staff of the 13th Corps, and to Chief of Staff of the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress.

Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position together with Commander of the 107th Division has taken the following decisions: the battalion of the 472nd Mosalsk Regiment defending the Mühanina-Lõu sector has to concentrate in Kuressaare in order to protect the withdrawing forces. At the same time, some companies will be despatched on the road to Soela for strengthening the two squadrons and three companies sent there before to secure the right flank in Liiküla region. The division has been given the task of breaking through to Orissaare and taking up the Orissaare position.

12 October, No. 02453.

Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position
Reek.”

The description of the operation shows how accurate the decision of Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was. The decision of the Position’s

3 Mikhail Bakhirev (1868–1920), Vice Admiral, 1917 Commander of the Naval Forces in the Gulf of Riga (editor’s note).

Commander to go to Haapsalu and to dispatch from there the reinforcements as quickly as possible was correct. But the 107th Division did not get any supplement, neither on 12 or 13 October, as it appears from Order 1 by Commander of the Land Forces:

“ ... for definitely occupying the Orissaare position and for cleaning the eastern part of Saaremaa of the enemy, the Naval Assault Battalion,⁴ the 470th Dankovsk Regiment and the 2nd Tallinn Border Guard Squadron will arrive in Saaremaa as of 14 October. The 471st Kozelsk Regiment will be taken to Haapsalu...”

The same Order 1, marking that “any time lost is a crime”, ordered to start the decisive activity on 15 October, i.e., when there was no units of the 107th Division anymore.

Order 1 was given before Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position had arrived in Haapsalu, and therefore he was ignorant of it, and it shows that Commander of Land Forces, taking with Order 1 the direction of the operation directly into his own hands, was absolutely correctly informed of the events in Saaremaa on 12 October. For accomplishing the decision accepted by the general deliberation, Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position went on the gunboat *Khrabryi* to Haapsalu at 01:00 on 13 October. The Staff together with its Chief, Captain Reek, remained in Roomassaare harbour at Kuressaare, from where communication with the Staff of the 107th Division continued. After the departure of the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, the Chief of Staff received the following order from the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet: at about 02:30.

“To the Commander of Muhu Strait Position. You have to remain on Muhu Island together with the Staff and keep steady connection with the troops situated in Saaremaa.

At 23:30, 12 October, No. 1615.

Razvozov.⁵”

The Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position also received the same telegram and replied to the Commander-in-Chief as follows:

4 The naval “Battalion of Death” under the command of Commander Shishko.

5 Alexander Razvozov (1879–1920), Rear Admiral, Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet from July to December 1917 (editor’s note).

“To the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet.

On Muhu Island, I cannot make a single arrangement because contact is missing with Haapsalu, with the rear and with Hiiumaa. I have no reserve forces on the island; the existing forces are commanded by the Commander of the 107th Division to whom I can direct the reinforcements more successfully from Haapsalu. I beg for your permission to go to Haapsalu. I shall wait for arrangements on the transport ship *Libava*, which has direct connection. No. 406.

Rear-Admiral Sveshnikov.”

The Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position together with the Chief of Staff remained in Roomassaare harbour near Kuressaare keeping connection with the Chief of Staff of the 107th Division until 10:00 on 13 October. At about the same time, the retreating troops damaged the intercommunication exchanges whereby any kind of connection ceased. As with the interception of communication, the Staff was isolated from the troops and, owing to the enemy's approach, the demolition of stores and fortifications started in town, the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position gave the order to transfer the staff to Kuivastu to the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, as was demanded by the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet in the aforementioned telegram 1615.

Owing to the stormy weather and to the two days' detainment of transport ship *Elba* at Kuivastu, the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position arrived from Kuivastu in Haapsalu as late as on 16 October. The transport *Elba* was detained at Kuivastu by Admiral Bakhirev because of an obscure condition. To quicken the conveyance of the ship to its destination, the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position wired:

“To Admiral Bakhirev, Copy to the Commander of the Land Forces.

I have dispatched the transport *Elba* with property, the Staff's personnel, the persons and institutions belonging to evacuation, and with other loads from Kuressaare to Haapsalu. The arbitrarily left soldiers whom I have ordered to be detained at Haapsalu, to enlist and to organize for dispatching to Kuivastu have also embarked.

After the arrival of the transport at Kuivastu, my arrangement was affirmed by a telephone message from my Chief of Staff to the flag officer asking to dispatch the transport to Haapsalu at daybreak. Nonetheless, my instructions were not executed, and the transport was detained at Kuivastu for a day and a night and

has not been dispatched yet. I beg for your arrangement to abolish such double authority which only brings harm and to dispatch the transport to her destination.

14 October, No. 02602.

Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position
Sveshnikov.”

As soon as the information about the German landing in Saaremaa reached the High Command, all measures were taken to strengthen the defending forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position and to liquidate the combined operation.

During 12 October, many instructions were given for that as can be seen from the following.

At 09:30 the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet wired:

“Tallinn, to the Commander of the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress, Copy to the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, Kuressaare.

The Battalion of Death will be dispatched via Haapsalu to Saaremaa as quickly as possible. The Commanding Officer of destroyer *Gavriil*, Commander Shishko,⁶ has to take command of the battalion, while Lieut.-Commander Gusakovski has to take temporarily over the command of the *Gavriil*. Arrangements about transportation will be made.

No. 1579/op.
Razvozov.”

The Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position ordered to dispatch the Naval Battalion of Death to Taaliku harbour and to direct it to Liiküla with the task of paralyzing the advance of the German troops moving in the direction to Orissaare. The arrival of the above battalion in due time would have had great importance because the battalion would create a cork which would close the causeway for enemy, while later, the occupation of the Orissaare bridgehead position would have allowed the remnants of the 107th Division, who had arrived at Põide on 14 October, to withdraw to Muhu Island. At 14:10 on 12 October, a new telegram arrived from the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet:

6 Pavel Shishko (1881–1967), 1916–1917 Commander of the destroyer *Gavriil*, 1917 Commander of Tallinn Naval Battalion of Death. 1917–1918 German prisoner of war. During Russian Civil War fought as the commander of a tank battalion in the Northwestern Army. From 1921 lived in USA (editor’s note).

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, Kuressaare.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front has approved the proposal and sends one brigade from the 45th Division, the Estonian Regiment, and one artillery battalion via Haapsalu for strengthening the Muhu Strait Fortified Position; the sending of the second brigade from the 45th Division may also prove possible. In addition to the above troops, I shall despatch the 173rd Regiment and the Battalion of Death at once. I order to liquidate the landed forces in Saaremaa and Hiiumaa with all the necessary means; not to leave the islands but to defend them tenaciously until the arrival of reinforcements after which to undertake decisive active operations. The allotted forces, if considering their further strengthening, are sufficient; I demand to preserve the calm and to use all the means for eradicating the panic.

At 14:00, 12 October 1917, No. 1610/op.
Razvozov.”

At 15:00 on 12 October, the Chief of Staff of Land Forces wired:

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet will send, together with the Battalion of Death, the 173rd Kremenets Regiment⁷ from Tallinn to Haapsalu to your disposal. Please wire how you intend to exploit these troops and communicate the estimation of existing floating means for transporting of these troops.

At 15:10, 12 October 1917, No. 4/op.
Krusenstern.”

This telegram was followed by the reply:

“To the Chief of Staff of the Land Forces. 4/op.

All the floating means are concentrated in Haapsalu; the Battalion of Death and the 173rd Regiment are to go directly to Taaliku harbour for taking up the Orissaare position in order to cover the withdrawing troops.

Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position
Reek.”

At night on 13 October, the following telegram arrived:

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

⁷ 173rd Infantry Regiment had the name Kamenets(-Podolskiy); name Kremenets belonged to the 311th Infantry Regiment. Most probably author is keeping in mind the 173rd Kamenets Regiment that was a part of the 44th Infantry Division (editor's note).

I have received information that, due to the passiveness of the forces concentrated on Saaremaa, the enemy's landed troops have repelled our forces and conquered the island. I suggest that you order the commander of the 107th division to concentrate as many forces as possible immediately in the landing place and undertake a decisive attack. Before the attack, the Committees and the leaders have to explain to the soldiers what destructive results may be the result of weakness and invoke decisive action against the enemy. I also beg you to demand from the naval leaders under your command a decisive opposition against the enemy's fighting and transport vessels.

12 October, No. 03649.

Cheremisov.^{8''}

But as it is already clear from the above, all these instructions proved to be too late. Regarding leading the forces in Saaremaa, the Russians did everything that was possible in the situation. So, at about 23:00, the Commander of the 472nd Regiment received the following order from the Commander of the 107th Division.⁹

Order
to the 107th Infantry Division
at 22:30, 12 October 1917
Map 1 verst in 1 inch.
No. 18.

The enemy has landed in the Tagalaht Bay and near Liiküla. Its advanced guards are near Leisi and on the general line of Mustjala, Selgase, Pidula, Kihelkonna.

I order:

1) Colonel Gvait¹⁰ with the advance protection troops of the 1st sector forces to hold up the enemy, not breaking the contact. At noon on 13 October, to assemble the main forces on the Karja, Haeska, and Uduvere general line. Particular attention must be paid to the security of the right flank.

8 Vladimir Cheremisov (1871–1937), Infantry General, from September to November 1917 Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front. After the war in Denmark, died in France (editor's note).

9 This order was given by the Commander of the 107th Division after the meeting in the headquarters of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position described on page . . .

10 Nikolai Gvaita (1865–1926), Colonel. 1915–1917 Commander of the 426th Povenets Infantry Regiment. Died in Germany (editor's note).

2) Colonel Prokopovich¹¹ has to concentrate three companies from the 472nd Regiment, and four squadrons from the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion, to Uduvere. To move along the Soela road in the north-easterly direction, and to clean the above road from the enemy's smaller units if they are discovered.

3) Colonel Arekhov has to hold the enemy on the Kihelkonna-Kuressaare road with three companies from the 472nd Regiment and one battery from the 107th Artillery Battalion.

4) Colonel Yakhimovich¹² has to detach three companies of the 472nd Regiment from the troops of the 2nd sector and to direct them to Kuressaare; with the remaining forces, to break the enemy's advance upon the front from the Kihelkonna road to Tehumardi village. To keep the continuous communication with Colonel Arekhov and the 3rd sector.

5) The 3rd and 4th sectors under the general command of Colonel Bordzyakovski have to hold on to the Sõrve peninsula by all means.

6) Three companies of the 472nd Regiment separated from the 2nd sector and the 6th battery situated in Nasva village have to assemble to Kuressaare on the morning of 13 October under the general conduct of Captain Fedotov, and move from there to take up on time the Orissaare bridgehead position.

7) The 1st Artillery Park has to assemble in the Levala area.

8) The Divisional Field Hospital has to assemble at the Pöide border guard post.

c) The Development of the Events on the Sea and in the Air

Having made acquaintance with the activities on land, we will also briefly observe the developments on the sea and in the air during 12 October. The German naval forces had the task to penetrate the Soela Strait into the Kassari Bay to support the land forces in capturing the causeway and defending it, and, if necessary, to assist the land forces in crossing to Muhu Island. Only smaller vessels like destroyers and torpedo boats were able to pass through the Soela Strait, but even they had difficulties. At 09:00, the Germans decided to send smaller forces into the Kassari Bay before the Russian ships would arrive there. For this, one torpedo boat and three minesweepers were dispatched into the Kassari Bay. At 09:30, two Russian destroyers appeared from Muhu Strait and forced the German ships to

11 Georgiy Prokopovich (died 1966), Lieutenant Colonel, 1917 Commander of the 3rd Battalion of the 472nd Mosalsk Infantry Regiment. Died in Paraguay (editor's note).

12 Walerian Jachimowicz (born 1880), Colonel, 1916–1917 Commander of the Arensburg (Kuressaare) Border Guard Cavalry Battalion (editor's note).

withdraw. So the fighting for the Kassari Bay began, which lasted many days. The situation of the Russians was facilitated by the circumstance that they could withdraw into the Muhu Strait where the bulk of their fleet was situated and to get fire support from them. The Germans had only two bigger ships to support the smaller ships acting in the Kassari Bay.

Before noon, the Germans sent a small detachment of sailors from the ships to Hiiumaa. They destroyed the Russian coastal battery 34 at Sõru. So, the threat to German naval forces from Hiiumaa was completely removed. At 14:00, the Germans sent two detachments of smaller ships into Kassari Bay again. Under smoke cover, they forced the Russian destroyers to retreat. Later they fell under the fire of the Russian cruiser *Admiral Makarov* and were forced to withdraw. The connection with the cyclists was not established.

At 16:00, the Germans undertook a new attack in the Kassari Bay and made the Russian destroyers withdraw from the bay, but later they had to retreat also. So, the first day of naval operations finished. At night the Germans blocked the Soela Strait.

On the next day, the Germans decided to undertake a bigger operation in Kassari Bay. The German aircraft carried out intensive reconnaissance throughout the whole day. Many times, they flew over Kuivastu, and once they also bombed a destroyer. The activity of the Russian air force was episodic. Only a few aircraft took to the air, and they could not stay up for long, as the German fighters forced them to land.

4. Conclusion

Summing up, we can see that the Germans obtained the following results during 12 October:

- the landing was executed without greater hindrances;
- the movement towards inland was progressing quickly; therefore, not only the advanced troops but also the infantry units of the main force arrived on favourable bridgehead for continuation of the advance;
- the withdrawal route of the Russians from Kuressaare to Muhu Island was cut;
- the causeway was captured and its defence organized;
- energetic operations with smaller ships into the Kassari Bay were undertaken.

These results can only be explained by the moral inferiority of the Russian troops, which caused the panicked withdrawal in the general direction of Muhu

Island and also the surrender without resistance. The absence of opposition is also certified by the fact that the German casualties in personnel were negligible. Among the German ships, only one transport and two battleships were damaged by mines, and yet, they still carried out their tasks until the end.

The Russians decided to strengthen their forces in order to undertake a counterattack with the objective of throwing the Germans back into the sea. The Commander of the Fortified Position went personally to Haapsalu to get new forces, while the Position's Staff, with Chief of Staff Captain Reek at its head, remained at Kuressaare, keeping contact with the troops until the last possible moment. At the same time, we can see from the first day activity that the German landing was not at all an exploit but only succeeded thanks to the disorder deepened by the revolutionary fervour in the Russian troops. Also, we cannot imagine an offensive of 28 kilometres in depth as has been mentioned in German sources. There could not be battles but only small encounters between the retreating demoralized Russian detachments and the superior German forces.

II. The Continuation of the German Attack and the Disorderly Withdrawal of Russians on 13 October

1. The Development of Events Inland Saaremaa

As mentioned before, at 22:30 on 12 October, the Commander of the 107th Infantry Division gave the order (No. 18) which was the basis for the actions for the forces situated in Saaremaa on 13 October. This order was the command to hold on contact with the Germans who had landed in the Tagalaht Bay, to bar the German attack on the line of Karja-Haeska-Uduvere-Kihelkonna-Kuressaare road and Tehumardi, and then to withdraw to the Orissaare bridgehead position, while the Sõrve peninsula had to be kept by all means. Estimating the existing situation, we can see that the idea of the order of the Commander of the 107th Division was entirely appropriate in the whirl of the developing events. It was not possible to give the task to counterattack to the demoralized forces, as the mass of morally inferior fighters would be unable to execute such a task. In the given order, the demands were the maximum that could be asked from the troops if objectively estimating their moral level and fighting value.

What were the Germans' intentions on 13 October?

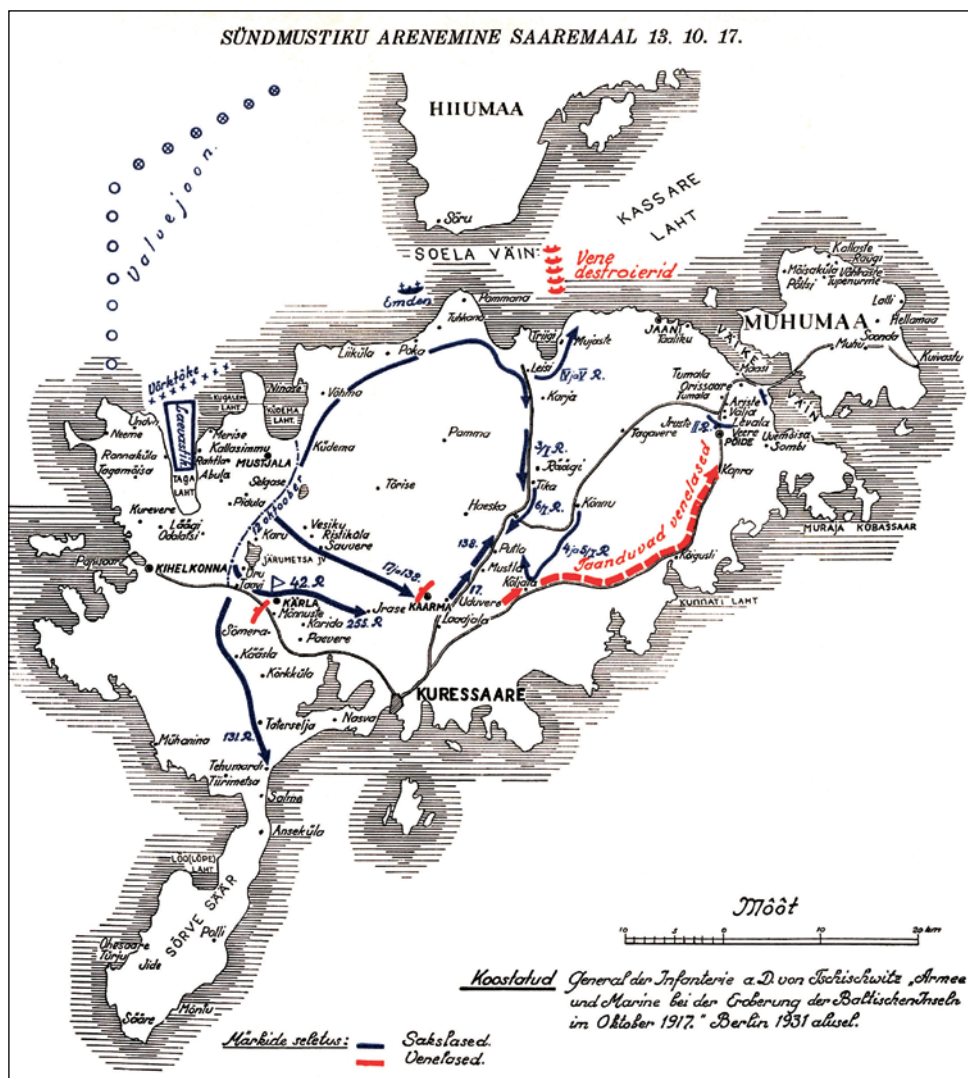
The idea of German actions was to energetically resume the attack on 13 October with the general objective to cut through the roads between Kuressaare and Muhu Island with the bulk of forces, to hold the causeway, and to resume the attack with the objective of capturing the Sõrve peninsula (Scheme 6). For realisation of the idea, the 255th Regiment was directed to Kärla and Irase; the 17th and 138th Regiments to Sauvere, Uduvere, Mustla, and Putla, and the 131st Regiment towards the Sõrve peninsula; while the 4th and 5th Cyclist Battalions were directed along the northern coast of Saaremaa towards Orissaare. The 1st Cyclist Battalion had to resume carrying out its previous task, cutting off the route between Kuressaare and Muhu Island. How did the events develop towards obtaining the objectives?

From the Russian standpoint, one of the most important tasks was to cover the direction of Kihelkonna-Kuressaare. For executing this task, the commander of the 472nd Regiment decided to stand on the defensive position at Kärla.

"To 2nd Lieutenant Balabayev.

To 2nd Captain Feodotov.

At 02:55, 13 October 1917, No. 2



Scheme 6: Events in Saaremaa on 13 October 1917.

The enemy has captured the Mustjala-Selgase-Pidula-Kihelkonna line with advance forces. The battalion, which consists of the 9th and 10th companies, the 3rd machine gun detachment, the pioneer detachment, and the trench arms detachment, together with two companies from the 426th Regiment, under the general leadership of 2nd Lieutenant Balabayev has to hold the position near Kärla village and to block the Kihelkonna-Kuressaare road for the enemy. The 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion is situated north-westward of Karida village, and its observation post is in Mõnnuste church. I shall be situated at Paevere manor.

The Dressing Station – by Paevere inn.
Password: Brest; countersign: Berdanka.
My deputies are Captain Gembitski and 2nd Captain Fedotov.
Commander of the 472nd Regiment
Colonel Arekhov.”

According to the received order, the units took up the positions. Over the night, reconnaissance was going well for the Russians, and also for the Germans. On the morning of 13 October, three German aircraft appeared, flying low from the direction of Kihelkonna, probably with a reconnaissance task, and, a little later, a column of about three battalions moving from the Kihelkonna direction was discovered. The column was stopped by battery fire. At about 14:00, it started to rain, which made observation impossible. Two reconnaissance patrols, each under the direction of an officer were sent out. From the right flank, the dispatched patrol reported that the enemy’s strong reconnaissance unit, who had already penetrated into the battalion’s rear, had forced the patrol back. The second patrol reported that the enemy’s column consisting of some battalions was moving along the road in the direction of Kääsla.

The same was also affirmed by the border guards. At about 16:00, the regiment commander ordered to withdraw to Kuressaare. The strong enemy’s group, which was enveloping the right flank, forced the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion to withdraw so quickly that, as the the battery’s commander asserted:

“... When I ordered to take down the telephone connection, the enemy was enveloping our right flank and threatened the battery. I hurried to the battery’s firing position where I found only 2 ammunition limbers which were being abandoned...”

The column, moving in the direction of Kärla, succeeded in capturing a part of the 9th and 10th companies. The withdrawal was covered by two freshly arrived squadrons of the Kuressaare Cavalry Battalion. The Commander of the 472nd Regiment intended to hold the position on the line of lakes, but the withdrawal became increasingly disorderly, whereby, in the words of the commander of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion, in nearing to Kuressaare, the situation turned out to be as follows:

“... The second in command reported that, by the information received from the inhabitants of Kuressaare, there are 7 enemy cavalymen in town, and that 30 scouts of the 472nd Regiment do not want to fight the enemy because the regiment commander had appointed them as the quartering staff. In the battery, there were 19 pistols and 72 short sabres as the armament for the complement; the battery's reconnaissance detachment did not have rifles. I went to the regiment commander to ask for assistance. Approaching the regiment, I saw neither companies nor platoons; it was moving in a single file or in batches without any military order; a few braver men were marching after the officers, whereas the remainder were moving, some with rifles, others without rifles. Parts of the regiment, reaching the battery, halted behind the battery, started to take off their boots and to eat tinned food. There were only machine guns at the transport unit. The regiment commander and the officers tried to draw up the companies explaining that it was necessary to drive only 7 cavaliers out of Kuressaare, but nobody stepped forward. The artillerymen, disgracing and abusing the infantrymen, demanded that the latter should give their rifles to artillerymen. The infantrymen did not give the rifles, saying that if the battery was so brave to order and demand, they should go forward themselves. When the officers saw that persuading with words did not help, they started to give orders and to demand; then the infantrymen were excitedly shouting that it was no more the old regime and that they could not be shouted at any longer. Then I called the scouts of the battery, uniting them with some mounted infantry and foot scouts, and this troop, with the regiment commander at the head, were deployed to come into contact with the enemy's dismounted cavaliers. Two were captured, while the remaining five invaded the battery's flank and started to fire at the battery. To get the battery out of the fire, I gave the order to trot. Letting the battery pass me, I saw that the infantrymen behind staying were fastening white flags to the bayonets so that all the road was white.

Because of the battery's advance, the enemy's fire did not cease, and our own infantry started to fire at the battery to force it to stop. The remaining non-commissioned officers, among them Sergeant-Major Kononov, also fell under the fire. It was also seen how they fired from rifles into each other's hands, which was evidently done after respective requests. During the drive one gun fell into a ditch whereby the sights and the drawing hook were smashed. The gun was damaged.

Hereby, I feel it my duty to explain that earlier, when the battle was going on at Käräla, the battery's officers and non-commissioned officers asked me to pass on many thanks to the 472nd Regiment whose two companies were fighting at Käräla, despite being influenced by the bad examples of the remainders from

two companies of the 426th Regiment who were withdrawing from the coast of Kihelkonna and the Tagalaht Bay.

When the battery arrived in Kuressaare, the regiment commander with about 20 cavalymen was driving in front of the battery, but there was nobody behind the battery. Considering what happened before Kuressaare, the battery's only way to escape was to move quickly to Orissaare and to hold the position there. But the speedy movement from Paevere to Kuressaare along the bad roads with exhausted horses, while sick infantrymen who could not be forced to come down were sitting on the gun carriages, made the forward movement very difficult. I ordered 8 horses for each gun, but this did not help either, because there was nothing to feed the horses, and there was no time either. It was becoming dark.

We received the information that the way ahead was controlled by the enemy, while, at the same time, the enemy was approaching behind us from northwest, lighting the way with rockets. Every kind of communication was lacking. Finally, the commander of the 472nd regiment moving in front of the battery disappeared without my knowing, and the battery remained alone – more correctly, not a battery, but 3 guns and 6 ammunition limbers. The scouts communicated that the regiment commander, together with a part of scouts, went through the woods by the side of the road because the way was blocked by the enemy.

The horses could not go any further and, not to leave the guns in enemy's hands, I decided to damage the guns; the gunners smashed the sights, while Corporal Ekstein buried the breechblocks."

So ceased the existence of Colonel Arekhov's group who defended the Kihelkonna-Kuressaare direction. The German 255th Regiment, whose task was capturing the Kärila position, got the information about the disposition of the Russians in the morning by air force reconnaissance. Based on the received information, the Germans made an enveloping attack from the north, whereby one company assaulted and wiped out the position. According to German information, 150 prisoners were taken and 5 machine guns captured. After capturing the Kärila position, the 255th Regiment continued the advance and arrived in complete exhaustion at Irase where they came to a halt.

How did the activity of the other Russian groups develop? After fighting on the line of resistance barriers, the group of the Commander of the 426th Regiment, Colonel Gvait, assembled near Sauvere in accordance with the order of the Commander of the 107th Division. The above group started movement in the Haeska direction at 06:30 on 13 October, but was stopped by the Germans before

reaching Haeska. A German formation appeared from the Sauvere direction, surrounded and captured the group.

The group of Lieutenant-Colonel Prokopovich, which included the 5th and 12th company of the 472nd Regiment, and two guns of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion, had to assemble at Uduvere. The 5th company arrived at Uduvere at 24:00. The soldiers were absolutely demoralized as affirmed by the commander of the 5th company:

“...without waiting for my arrangements, the company dispersed into the village in darkness. Only 20 men remained with me. I sent those men to secure the perimeter around the village, while I myself gathered the men from the houses. With great difficulty, we succeeded in gathering 30 people by 02:00.”

At 08:00, the commander of the group Lieutenant-Colonel Prokopovich arrived at Uduvere and explained the situation and gave the task:

“...Our regiment (i.e., the 472nd) is withdrawing to the Orisaaare position. The 426th Povenets Regiment is withdrawing with battle. The enemy has landed near Kihelkonna and Maasi. To enable the withdrawal of the 426th Regiment, the 5th and 12th companies have the order to move from Uduvere village in the northerly direction.”

A troop of 2 officers and 20 soldiers was sent out for reconnaissance. At 08:30, the companies started to move. On the way, the column was joined by 2 companies of the 426th Regiment. After marching about 1½ kilometres, the column encountered Germans, about which the Commander of the 5th company communicated the following:

“... It was impossible to repel the enemy, as the men ran back many times, leaving even the artillery exposed. Lieutenant-Colonel Prokopovich ordered to gather a company to secure the artillery. I gathered 40 men from my own company with whom I protected the artillery. The Germans appeared from behind, opened fire and captured a part of Uduvere village. The artillery platoon started to fire at the enemy with shrapnel. On the arrival of darkness, the artillery drove away. By 21:30 on 13 October, 12 people had remained with me; we were the last to leave Uduvere village...”

The activities of the Russian group operating at Uduvere had also finished with a disorderly withdrawal. But the Russian activity in that region had still caused a certain delay in the German advance. Namely, the German 17th and 138th Regiments, which united at Sauvere and continued the advance from there under joint command as the 65th Infantry Brigade, were attacking the direction of Uduvere. Near Uduvere village, the battalion of the advance force of the brigade fell under intense Russian rifle and machine gun fire. The favourable terrain there provided good fields of fire for single machine guns. Russian machine gun fire caused losses in the German battery, which was trotting about 800 metres away to the front of the Russian position situated near Uduvere village. The Germans seeing that the attack from the front is bound to be met with heavy losses, decided to envelop the Russians. For this, the Commander of the 138th Regiment dispatched one battalion into action, two companies of which had to envelop the Russians from the north and one company from the south. In addition, the commander of the brigade decided to direct one more battalion into action with the objective to envelop the Russians from further north, to cut off their withdrawal and to create contact with the cyclists. The enveloping manoeuvre of two German battalions from the 138th Regiment, simultaneously with the hand grenade assault from the front, forced the Russians to withdraw from the position before the battalion, directed by the commander of the brigade, could take action. According to the German data, they captured about 1000 men, 8 guns and a large number of machine guns. In defiance of the arrived dusk, the 65th Brigade continued the advance and arrived in the Mustla and Putla areas where they stayed overnight in bivouacs between 22:00 and 23:00.

After small encounters with the Russian cavalry units, the German 2nd company of the 1st Cyclist Battalion penetrated southward of Kaarma and made contact with the 138th Regiment. The cyclist company remained to operate on the right flank of the regiment, covering this flank against the attacks from Kuressaare.

The 1st cyclist company, attacking in the direction of Uduvere, collided with the superior Russian forces and was repelled by Russian artillery fire. The 4th and 5th cyclist companies operating in the direction of Kõljala captured some prisoners, but were forced to withdraw northward under pressure of Russian superior forces by afternoon.

The events on the wide front of the 1st Cyclist Battalion proved to the Germans that the Russians had decided to break through towards the north-eastern direction in order to reach the Tika and Orissaare area and thence Muhu Island.

The German column of the 4th and 5th Cyclist Battalions advanced in the general direction of Orissaare and did not encounter any Russians at all. The advance of these battalions was very difficult, whereby very many bicycles were damaged. For the night, the 4th Battalion stopped at Karja and the 5th Battalion near Mujaste.

What was happening in the Orissaare area?

The 2nd Cyclist Battalion and the 18th Assault Company, forming the so-called Winterfeldt Troop, stood defending the causeway between Muhu Island and Saaremaa. The first encounter with Russians was with the covering force of the transport, which arrived near Põide on the morning of 13 October. Later, there were 6 machine guns from the 472nd Regiment under the command of an officer and the 5th Kronstadt close support battery. From the complement of the transport, and from the 1st Park of the Field Artillery Brigade, a troop was formed which was going to clear the way to the causeway with the help of artillery and machine guns. The battery opened fire upon the villages of Levala and Ariste. Under the cover of this fire, the troop advanced and forced the Germans to withdraw. Directly at the proximity of the causeway, the Germans tried to hold the Russians once more, but their situation became more and more difficult. Although the flank of the Germans was protected by the sea on one side and by the swamp on the other side, the defence of a 7-kilometre-long front still created difficulties for the weak force, because parts of it were thinly manned and many undefended areas depended on the conditions of the terrain. In consequence, small Russian groups succeeded in penetrating the German line of defence. The change in tactics of the Winterfeldt Troop improved the situation temporarily. The Germans were running out of hand grenades, which drove the Russians back with a moral effect rather. Ammunition was also running short for Germans. Considering these circumstances, the weariness of their forces, and the Russian numerical superiority, the commander of the troop decided to withdraw from the end of the causeway in the north-westerly direction. The situation of the Germans was critical. The expected assistance by naval forces had not arrived.

Having become acquainted with the development of events inland Saaremaa, let us now contemplate the activity of the German 131st Regiment, which had the task of conquering the Sõrve peninsula. The units of the regiment were in contact with Russians in the Mõnnuste area. Coordinating his activity with the 255th Regiment, which was attacking in the Kärila direction, the commander of the 131st regiment left a weak cover for Mõnnuste and turned with the regiment southward of Taavi in the direction of the Sõrve peninsula. Without any large encounters, the

regiment arrived at the Sõrve-Kuressaare highway at night and, during the day, cut off the withdrawal to Kuressaare for the Russians situated on the Sõrve peninsula. The regiment commander got information from a local German merchant that the Sõrve peninsula was occupied by the Russian 425th Infantry Regiment.

Although the withdrawal route from Sõrve to Kuressaare was cut through, the Russian crews of the Sõrve peninsula batteries decided at their meeting to resist to the last man. But they still asked for destroyers and transports to be sent in case the batteries should be disabled, so that it would be possible to leave the peninsula. The command of the fleet promised to do this if the situation worsened.

2. The Arrangements by Russian High Command

The activity's centre of gravity of the Russian high command was focused on October 13th upon how to transport reinforcements to Saaremaa in order to bar the German advance, and later to throw the German forces back into the sea. Decisive steps for this were taken by the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, who, arriving to Kuivastu, characterized the situation as follows:

"To Chief of Staff of Naval Forces.

The situation on the Muhu Strait Position on October 13th at 10.00.

The enemy has penetrated into the rear and has cut by Orissaare the connection with Muhu Island. The enemy's units are 10-12 kilometres away from Kuressaare. The Headquarters of the 107th Division's is going to Levala. I have no more information about our troops. It must be considered that the parts of the 107th Division, except the garrison of Sõrve peninsula, have been dispersed and are unfit for fighting. For saving the situation, I consider necessary the dispatch of one cavalry division and of one infantry division, together with artillery, to Kuivastu. My position until the stand at Haapsalu will be on transport "Libava" where is the only connection with the rear.

No. 407.

Sveshnikov."

After the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position himself personally explained on Hughes apparatus to the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet the situation, and the necessity to go to Haapsalu in order to direct the dispatch of reserves to a position decided on with the general consultation of senior leaders and the members of soldiers' committee on October 12th at 18.00. After the above

report the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet allowed the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position to go to Haapsalu to accomplish the accepted decision.

For strengthening the forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, many orders were given. But from these orders, it appears that actually on October 13th, the troops of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position could rely only on their own force.

On October 13th at 01.05 the Chief of Staff of Land Forces sent a telegram:

“To Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Operative.

On October 13th in the evening, will arrive to Haapsalu at your disposal, one infantry regiment. At the same time will be transferred from Tallinn to Orissaare the Battalion of Death. Also, I suggest to utilize the 470th Regiment for strengthening the Orissaare Position.

12th October, No. 2340/op.

Krusenstern.”

Meanwhile General Henrikson¹³ was appointed as the new commander of the Land Forces, located at Haapsalu, who gave on the 13th October the following order:

“Order No. 1. Confidential.

To the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, on 13 October 1917 (Map 3 versts in one inch).

The enemy has landed on Saaremaa, in the Tagalaht and Küdema Bays region, has moved with advanced troops to Sauvere, the Kärila line, dispatching the reconnaissance units on motorcycles to Haeska estate, Taaliku estate and Orissaare regions. At Hiiumaa, the situation is unchanged. In order to take up the Orissaare position securely and to clear the eastern part of Saaremaa of enemy, on the 14th October will arrive to Muhu Island the Battalion of Death, the 470th Dankovsk Regiment, and the 2nd Tallinn Single Border Guard Squadron; the 471st Kozelsk Regiment will be taken to Haapsalu.

13 Nikolai Henrikson (1871–1941), Major General (G. S.), 1917 Commander of the 109th Infantry Division, later Commanding Officer of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet. 1918 joined the Red Army, in the beginning of 1920s Chief of the Land Forces Department of the Operations Department of the Baltic Fleet Headquarters (editor’s note).

Every moment lost is dangerous, because this will allow the enemy to undertake new efforts and will aggravate our situation, therefore I am ordering on October 15th a decisive attack to force the enemy back to the coast. For that:

1) Major General Ivanov has to concentrate the 426th and 472nd Regiment with field artillery to Putla and Kõljala village regions in order to undertake the attack in the Sauvere, Kärla direction, with the objective to throw the enemy back into sea, and with that to make contact with the 425th Regiment defending Sõrve peninsula.

2) Major General Martynov¹⁴ with the 425th Regiment under his command, with the Battalion of Death, and 2nd Single Border Guard Squadron, has to hold securely the Orissaare bridgehead position, and to clear the island westward up to the Triigi, Putla line;

3) under General Martynov's command will be given the Headquarters of the 118th Division;

4) to organize without delay the reconnaissance: a) General Ivanov – in the direction to Tõrise, Sauvere up to encountering the enemy establishing the location of his forces and their size. b) General Martynov – in the direction to Taaliku, Leisi, Tagavere-Pamma and Tagavere-Haeska;

5) General Martynov has to establish a reliable connection with the Headquarters of the 107th Division which is situated at Levala estate;

6) Commander of the 107th Division and General Martynov have to establish as quickly as possible the telephone and telegraphic connection with Kuressaare, Orissaare estate and Kuivastu;

7) My position at Haapsalu, the reports to be sent through the Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. Termly reports to be sent: the operative ones at 08.00, 15.00 and 21.00, the reconnaissance information at 03.00 and 21.00.

Major General Henrikson.

Correct: Chief of Staff, Krusenstern."

To the above order were given the following supplementary orders.

"To Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

For speedy transportation of the Battalion of Death to Muhu Island the Commander of the Land Forces has ordered to hurry with the embarking of the battalion.

¹⁴ Zachari Martynov (1861–1944), Major General, 1916-1917 Commander of a brigade of the 118th Infantry Division, later commander of same division. Died in Yugoslavia (editor's note).

13th October, at 2340, No. 2722/op.
Chief of Staff of Land Forces Krusenstern."

"To Commander of the 425th Regiment.

Copy to Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position. The Commander of Land Forces has ordered to inform that all measures have been undertaken in order to throw the Germans back into the sea from Saaremaa; to Saaremaa have been dispatched reinforcements. Hold Sõrve peninsula until the last possibility.

No. 2716/op.

Chief of Staff of Land Forces Krusenstern."

But herein before described events show that these arrangements were too late to save the parts of the 107th Division which had arrived at night on October 13th in the Pöide region.

Having become acquainted with the activity of land forces, we will now contemplate concisely the activity of the naval forces.

3. The Activity at Sea

About the naval forces, we can say that the activity of German naval forces concluded on October 13th with the same results as the previous day. The Germans could not stay at Kassari Bay, therefore they had to give up on that day the support of their land forces in defending the causeway.

With that, the Russian fleet had accomplished its task, and command of Kassari Bay belonged to them. The Russians decided to block Soela Strait, but this failed, for accomplishment of this task, the appointed ship "Latvia" ran aground by Rukkirahu, and the sailors of the second ship "Pripyat" refused to lay out the mine barrage, explaining that all the destroyers have already left Kassari Bay and due to the rain it is impossible to prepare the mines for laying. Also, the commanding officer's threatening and then requests did not have any influence. Soela Strait remained open.

4. The Summary

Summing up the activity on October 13th, we see that the Germans blocked the way for withdrawal for the Russians situated on Sõrve peninsula, reached with their main forces northward from Kuressaare, while in the causeway region they barely held the previous positions, and the western end of the causeway was held by Russians. The Russians were withdrawing in great disorder in the direction of Muhu Island.

III. The Events on October 14th in the Causeway Region and on Sõrve Peninsula

1. Events in Causeway Region

On the 14th October, the main objective of German activity was the strengthening of the Winterfeldt Troop in the causeway region. Although the command of German land forces did not have exact information about the situation in the Orissaare region, still it was clear from air reconnaissance that the causeway was in Russian hands. For its capture, it was decided to undertake great efforts. The German 65th Infantry Brigade and the 255th Regiment were situated about 40 kilometres from the causeway, but in spite of the distance, and tired state of the regiments, the order was given to continue the movement on the night of the 13/14th of October in the general direction of Muhu Island. The 65th Infantry Brigade was directed via Tika to Orissaare, while the 255th Regiment had to move via Kõljala to Põide.

At the same time, the main object of the Russians was strengthening the forces of the islands, for which many orders were given, above all to the commander of the Battalion of Death, Commander Shishko.

“To Commander Shishko.

You have to establish connection with the signal station of Kuivastu, either by foot or mounted messengers. All the orders in your name will be given to the signal station of Kuivastu. Also you must submit all the reports to the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position through the signal station of Kuivastu. According to my knowledge, at Kuivastu are about 13 border guards, who will remain under your command until uniting with the Headquarters of the 107th Division. Under your command will be the Battalion of Death, and the units of the 470th Dankovsk Regiment, until the arrival of a senior commander. Appoint one officer who has to organize companies from dispersed men and troops, who you will meet on the way; the organized companies must be handed over to the command of the Commander of the 107th Division.

October 14th, No. 0475 Sveshnikov.”

“To Commander Shishko.

You have the task: 1) to occupy the Orissaare position securing your own right flank; 2) if possible to establish contact with the Commander of the 107th Division, for which you have to organize the telephone connections according with the advance; 3) occupying the Orissaare position, send the reconnaissance to Maasi

and Taaliku region in order to clear whether the supply depot, and the artillery depot at Tumala are intact; 4) try as quickly as possible to establish communication with the Commander of the 107th Division, who according to existing information is moving via Räägi, Tagavere to Orissaare.

14th October, No. 02476. Rear Admiral Sveshnikov”.

On October 14th at 14.00 the majority of the Russian transports are concentrated at Pöide. The Commander of the 107th Division ordered to take the transports into the woods by Pöide church, so that they would not interfere with the battle. At night on October 14th also the 6th battery of the Field Artillery Brigade, 2 guns from the Sveaborg Artillery Regiment, 2 squadrons of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Division, each with 60 horses, and the remainders of the 426th and 472nd Regiment arrived to Pöide. About the withdrawal of the above units, we get the picture from the descriptions of the participants:

“... On the way we saw the sad picture of the withdrawing Russian army: the soldiers were walking without order and without officers, likewise were the transports without leaders, in consequence on the whole way were thrown expensive items, even rifles and ammunition boxes ... At 08.00 on October 14th, the 6th battery of the brigade arrived to Pöide. By the explanation of the battery commander, the battery withdrew together with the infantry; meeting on the way the enemy's units lying in ambush, the battery commander asked the infantry to send out advance guards, but the infantry refused categorically. So the battery had to penetrate with its own vigour to Orissaare. The battery's arrival to Orissaare raised the spirit of the troops, but the leaders, knowing well the weak moral of the infantry, did not want to begin the battle.”

(2nd Lieutenant Kazanski of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion).

“... At last, at about 14:00 we arrived to the remnants of the division (2 assault companies, 1 squadron, 6 guns from the 6th battery of field artillery brigade, and 2 guns of the Sveaborg artillery), which were in action by Pöide. Almost the whole crew of the battery went voluntarily with rifles and machine guns into the trenches to help and encourage the infantry ...”

“The Sveaborg artillery battery and one platoon from the 1st battery, which were situated in Uduvere region, started to move only then when the infantry raised white flags. The battery and the platoon moved throughout the night in the direction of Orissaare, whereby on the way we saw abandoned guns of the 1st

battery, which was subordinated to me, and which had been pushed into the ditch by the drivers. The enemy was not seen.”

(The Commander of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion)”

“...The order was given to the infantry for withdrawal. It was dark and I could not gather up my men who were withdrawing together with the infantry. The wardens of the horses had left together with my horse so I was compelled to walk in the direction of Kuressaare. Arriving on Kuressaare-Kuivastu highway, I met the artillery and the transports of the cavalry division and I moved together with them in the direction of Orissaare. At the same time, Kuressaare was in the fire in many places. In the evening the fire was opened upon us from Levala region. The transport stopped; evidently, not more than 15–20 Germans had occupied the road by the edge of the wood. The infantry did not want to attack the Germans. Then the guns were placed in position and the fire was opened on the hostile machine gun; it was shelled for about 1 hour, but the enemy’s machine gun was not silenced. After that a troop of soldiers gathered and shouting “hurrah” assaulted the enemy; the Germans withdrew, leaving behind 2 killed . . .”

(2nd Lieutenant Kull of the Kuressaare Border Guard Cavalry Battalion, who had been dispatched with 20 men from Kuressaare to Haeska region to cooperate with the company of the 472nd Regiment).

The Commander of the 107th Division organized from the arrived units a troop, for the command of which was appointed the commander of the 6th battery of Field Artillery Brigade, and who decided to penetrate to the causeway. The enemy was at that time holding on with weak units the Iruste-Välja-Ariste line.

The action developed by the explanations of the participants was as follows:

“... On October 14th at about 08.00 the battery took a concealed position in Sombi village region, while the infantry took the position northward from Pöide church. After shelling the hostile positions by artillery, one company of the Mosalsk Regiment captured Iruste village, where were only a few Germans; the infantry situated right from Kuivastu highway did not move further then Pöide church, because the Germans opened up with machine gun fire from Ariste village.

At about 10:00 the battery of Captain Taube, which had the site in front of the church, opened fire whereby the first grenades fell upon Levala village, i.e. behind our infantry. I was at the same time by the Mosalsk Regiment situated in trenches

from the Swedish time.¹⁵ by Välja village, and noticed that the infantry situated eastward from the highway started to withdraw in the direction of Pöide church and Sombi village. I exhorted the infantry men that they should stay, but this did not give any results.

The battery shelled all the targets the infantry wished and with that the activity ceased. At about 15:00 two companies were built up from the transport units of the Mosalsk and Povenets Regiments, and at 17:00 the battery opened fire again, but the infantry did not advance. At 18:00 I noticed from the observation post the enemy's approaching reinforcements who were advancing in thin columns in the direction of Tumala estate. I opened fire upon them; hits were observed, after which the enemy's units dispersed. At about 19:00 2-3 enemy companies together with machine guns appeared in the Ariste village region. At 20:00 I stopped the firing owing to darkness. Our infantry set some villages on fire. I went to the Headquarters of the 107th Division at Sombi village, where the situation was recognised as hopeless. Company commanders reported that the men refused to go on reconnaissance, are asking for food, and that some of the men have arbitrarily left the position. At night, the enemy penetrated into Veere and Uuemõisa villages, whereas on October 15th at about 07:00 a.m. the enemy appeared also from the direction of Kuresaare, keeping the communication with the units in Tumala estate with signal flares. At Sombi the remaining units of transport fell into the German hands."

(The Commander of the 3rd battery of the 107th Artillery Battalion).

"... The efforts of the whole conducting personnel and the fire of eight guns of a battery was in vain because the infantry did not even capture these villages from which the enemy was forced out by artillery fire. The commander of the division and the officers were encouraging the firing line but the infantry did not move. Gunfire was heard from the direction of Orissaare, we were expecting assistance from Muhu Island, but this did not arrive. At night the infantry men informed that they are cold and left the position, so that the position was manned only by officers with machine guns ..." (The Commander of the 1st battery of the 107th Artillery Division).

The commander of the Land Forces characterized the situation in his telegram as follows:

15 Evidently the explaining commander took the old Pöide stronghold as trenches.

“To Chief of Staff of the Northern Front.

Copies to the Chief of Staff of the 12th Army, to the Commander of the 42nd Corps, to the Commander of the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress, to the Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, to the Chief of Staff of Sveaborg Fortress, to Colonel Veselago¹⁶ at Kärda.

I have familiarized myself together with Lieutenant Colonel Afanasyev on the situation in Muhu Island and in Orissaare region, whereby I have got the following picture from the situation.

1) Until daybreak of 14th October, the western part of the causeway was in German hands. Based at Orissaare estate the enemy kept this region under machine gun fire. The enemy consisted about 100 cyclists and motorcyclists with machine guns. In the morning of October 14 from “Grazhdahin”, “Slava” and “Bayan”, a detachment of sailors, about 80–90 men strong, succeeded in capturing the causeway and forced the enemy to withdraw to Orissaare estate. The conduct of the formed detachment was laid upon the Chief of Signals Lieutenant Commander Prestin, who had the assistants 2nd Lieutenant Ivanov and Lieutenant Pomazanski of the 107th Division. The advance of the detachment was barred by the enemy who had occupied Orissaare estate, equipped with machine guns. Arriving at about 13:00 on the causeway, and having familiarized myself with the situation, I ordered to support the detachment with artillery fire and was brought over causeway two light guns and two armoured cars. The battery platoon and the armoured cars opened fire setting on fire some houses in Orissaare estate, which enabled the detachment of sailors to advance a little, but very soon they were stopped by machine gun fire from the Orissaare direction. At about 17:00, the companies of the 3rd Battalion of the 470th Regiment, who had been ordered to support the advanced units, started to advance towards the causeway. At about 17:30 at Kuivastu the Battalion of Death was disembarked. I explained the situation to the battalion commander Shishko, and ordered him to advance in Orissaare direction, to take over the conduct of the advanced units and to capture Orissaare estate. Execution of this task could begin in the morning of October 15th.

2) In Muhu Island I met the Kronstadt close support battery, who had crossed at night on 13/14th October the causeway with fighting, having fired all their ammunition; the battery commander was wounded and the battery had lost a lot of men, horses, and one gun. The countenance of the men was warlike, but the

16 Alexander Veselago (born 1875), Colonel, 1917 Commander of the 427th Pudozh Regiment, acting Commander of the 107th Infantry Division and Commander of the defence of Hiiumaa. 1918 joined the Red Army (editor’s note).

horses were extremely tired. I ordered the battery commander to bring the battery in order, to give him the possibility to rest, and to dispatch the less tired platoon on the causeway at the disposal of Commander Shishko.

3) At 18:00 arrived news that our reconnoitring patrol passing through the swamp which is southward from Orissaare has met a border guard who had been sent out by the Chief of Staff of the 107th Division. According to his explanation the Divisional Headquarters is situated 12–15 kilometres, and the units of the division about 30–35 kilometres in a southwestern direction from Orissaare.

4) The 471st Kozelsk Regiment has delayed the embarkation of echelons, and with their transportation caused by the [revolutionary] agitation, therefore a single transport had not been despatched until the twilight. After the exhortation by the fleet delegates and myself, at last one echelon is ready for transportation, waiting for departure on the clearing of the situation at sea.

15th October at 0430, No. 019/op. Henrikson."

The course of events on the causeway on October 14th is described by the Commander of the 3rd Battalion of the 470th Dankovsk Regiment Colonel Rudnev as follows:

"In the afternoon of October 13th, the Chairman of the Committee of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position asked me by telephone to give the order to the company of the 3rd Battalion, situated in Virtsu, to go to Muhu Island, where the assistance is needed. Receiving the according permission from the regiment commander, I dispatched the company. One hour later the regiment commander gave the order to dispatch one company more and immediately following this, the order to concentrate the whole battalion and without delay to move to Virtsu for dispatch to Muhu Island. At that time, the battalion was performing guard duties on the coast and was dispersed. The companies were assembling to Virtsu in the manner of echelons. At night on 13/14th October the transportation of the battalion to Muhu Island was carried out, whereby one of the companies at first did not agree with the night crossing, stating the reason that, they do not wish to be dispatched into a trap on the island, and that the enemy's submarines are able to sink them on the crossing; later the company agreed with the passage. In order to gain a general view of the situation on Muhu Island I went to the Main Committee at Virtsu, where sailor Brezgunov from the warship "Grazhdanin" was appointed to me as a permanent representative of the Committee. On October 14th, in the morning, I went together with this representative, who always stayed by me, to Muhu Island, whereas the companies arrived to Kuivastu one by one in the order how they had

assembled to Virtsu. Arriving to Muhu Island, some of the companies had already arrived to causeway; I directed there also the remaining units of the battalion. On the way to the causeway we met soldiers driving back with the lorries. Arriving about 6–7 kilometres away from the causeway, appeared a very low flying German aircraft which opened fire on us. A little later we met at first single and later bands of soldiers coming back, a great many of whom were without rifles. Despite the exhortations and asking from the representative of the Committee and myself these soldiers did not think at all to return, but they hurried to Kuivastu. The reason for withdrawal was, as it appeared later; the penetration of hostile ships into Väike Strait and the shelling of our rear from there. About one kilometre away from causeway we met the machine gun detachment of the Dankovsk Regiment under the command of an officer together with a big group of soldiers. With great difficulties we succeeded in stopping the majority of them, and to move them back together with the machine gun detachment in the causeway direction. At the same time there approached from the direction of the causeway our armoured car, which, arriving to our place stopped and one of the crew members informed us that the Germans have landed in Muhu Island and are moving in the direction of Kuivastu. This information was of course false and was put into circulation for provocation purposes. In spite of my opposition, all the soldiers turned around and were hurrying back to Kuivastu harbour, whereas by me remained only four men. I moved forward together with them; before reaching the causeway, I met two naval officers, from them I got the information that five guns have been left by our men on the causeway. I ordered the naval officers to put in order at least one of the guns for firing, and used my signallers for gun crew.

At the same time arrived the reconnaissance detachment of the Battalion of Death, about which I felt a sincere delight. Very soon the reconnaissance patrol established that the causeway is free of enemy. I gave the order to cross the causeway and to occupy on Saaremaa the bridgehead with the radius of at least 1 kilometre. On the causeway the soldiers found one of our armoured cars which was taken to Muhu Island. As there were relatively few Germans against us, I decided to assault on October 15th at 09:00 the Orissaare estate. But at 04.30 arrived the Commander of the Battalion of Death Commander Shishko, who informed that owing to the tiredness of the men he has decided to abandon the western part of the causeway, to afford to the men some relief, but in the evening of the same day the same place will be recaptured. I argued against this incorrect action, but this did not give any results because by the order of Admiral Sveshnikov I was subordinated to the commander of the Battalion of Death. Leaving my own

1st company to Commander Shishko, I left about 11:00 to the village 2 kilometres away where the remaining companies of my battalion were situated. Here were gathering also these soldiers who previously had run away in panic. From them I heard that the sailors had impeded the soldiers, who were assembled at Kuivastu, to retreat to Virtsu [over Suur Strait]. A lot of the soldiers did not return to the position but moved along the coast of Muhu Island in a northern direction in order to find some fisherman's boats for crossing the Strait.

On the way to my battalion, I found in the ditch of the highway one more armoured car (adapted from a lorry) from which hereinbefore mentioned provocative information had been given off. Considering that the enemy shelled from Väike Strait our trenches, I sent, after respective agreement with Commander Shishko, one of my companies from the causeway in northwestern direction for the defence of the coast, where small hostile reconnaissance patrols could land inconspicuously."

At it is clear from the above descriptions the German situation on the 14th October in the morning was comparatively difficult.

The 4th and 5th Cyclist Battalions arriving improved the situation, but also the Russian forces were increasing. The attack also started from Muhu Island; the attack was being supported by the 10" coastal battery of Muhu Island, for which an observation post in the causeway region was established. At that moment 6 German torpedo boats arrived to Väike Strait, and by shelling the causeway, relieved the situation of the Germans considerably. In Kassari Bay at the same time, battles between naval forces were going on. The Germans strengthened there with a battleship, who took up position in the entrance to Soela Strait, approaching Kassari Bay as near as the draught allowed. This allowed the Germans to manoeuvre more freely in Kassari Bay, also with the arrival of the aforementioned ships at a critical moment to assist the forces operating in the causeway region. And so the fighting for Kassari Bay had finished with the success of the German naval forces.

At 14:00 the advance forces of the German 17th and 138th Regiment arrived to the region of the troops defending the causeway. The regiments had marched 9 hours in succession and covered 36 kilometres. The fighting started for the previous positions. At 19:00 the Germans succeeded in capturing the end of the causeway and other previous positions. The attempts of the Russian Battalion of Death to break through did not give any results. The German order of battle appeared as follows: the frontline was occupied by cyclists and by assault companies, when behind them in reserve the 18th and 138th Regiment were concentrated who represented themselves as two fists in the state of readiness.

The 255th Infantry Regiment, who was moving along the Kuressaare-Orissaare highway, arrived at night at Kapra behind the Russian front. The regiment was tired from their great efforts, the regiment commander was wounded in his leg, and therefore it was decided to break the advance and to wait for morning. The regiment had carried out a march of 53 kilometres during the last 24 hours.

2) The Events on Sõrve Peninsula

How were the events developing during October 14th in the region of Sõrve peninsula? An interesting picture is provided by descriptions of the participants.

“... On October 14th, at about 01:00 information about the arrival of Germans into Salme region was received from our reconnaissance. The regiment commander ordered the 5th and 7th company to occupy the position in Anseküla region at once. The mood of the soldiers was good, and the companies began to execute their task resolutely.”

“... At 13.00 the commander of the mounted reconnaissance patrol arrived back to the Headquarters of the regiment reporting that in Salme region the hostile cyclist reconnaissance has appeared, about 25 men strong.

Later the information from the advance companies about the hostile approach to Anseküla began to arrive.

At 14:00 the information was received from the commander of the 2nd Battalion, that German negotiators of truce had arrived to him, and the order was given to bring them into the Regimental Headquarters at Iide village.

The German negotiators arrived to the Headquarters at about 16.00 in the name of the commander of the landed German forces to Saaremaa, in order to prevent the bloodshed, presented the demand for capitulation, on the condition that if all the batteries, stores and weapons are left intact, then to the whole garrison will be guaranteed survival, and imprisonment free of any labour obligation.

The regiment commander Colonel Bordzyakovski, his deputy Lieutenant Colonel Androsov, Navy Captain Knüppfer, the Regiment Committee, and representatives of the batteries of the Sõrve peninsula took part in the negotiations.

The Regiment Committee and also the leading personnel gave a negative answer; the regiment will oppose until the last possibility.

After the end of the negotiations, from the regimental coastal signal posts the information about the approach of enemy ships started to arrive, from which a section (among them 3 bigger ships) is concentrating at south-west of Ohessaare, and a part near Lõu Bay.

From the Regimental Headquarters the order was given by telephone to the batteries on Sörve peninsula via Captain Knüppfer to open the fire at once. The fierce firing started between batteries and hostile ships which lasted 40 minutes ...”

“... I arrived at 20:00 to Captain Knüppfer’s Headquarters in Mõntu harbour. Very soon the troops, 5–10 men of each crew of the coastal battery No. 43 started to assemble, who had decided to abandon the battery, asserting that with only 4 guns it is impossible to fight against the whole enemy’s fleet. Despite of insistence of Captain Knüppfer that it is not allowed to leave Sörve peninsula defenceless, the crews did not return to the battery; substantiating this because the two guns, which had today done the firing are out of order, the magazines are not protected and may at any moment be blown up, also the crew by the guns is not protected, and our fleet, who should now assist, is missing by the peninsula. On October 15th at about 02:00 the commander of the 42nd battery together with the sailors from the same battery arrived to Mõntu harbour in order to invite the crew of the 43rd coastal battery back to his battery. But this also did not give any results.

Subsequently the question was raised what to do next, because the abandonment of the battery does not signify the escape. Voices were heard who demanded to embark the transports and go to Kuivastu. As the only representative from the 425th regiment, I pointed out that this small troop is not authorized to make the final decision, because besides the batteries there are still 3500 soldiers of the 425th Regiment on the island; the abandonment of the batteries and the departure from the island would be a betrayal of the Kargopolsk men who are bravely executing their fighting task. This course should be discussed with representatives of the Kargopolsk Regiment. With that agreed, at 05:60 was held a new deliberation where representatives of all the batteries and the Kargopolsk Regiment took part. Here it was decided that all, including the 43rd battery, have to return to their positions.

Further action on the peninsula I could not watch. I only know that in the morning of October 15th, the majority of the crew of the 43rd coastal battery returned to the battery, but very soon left again ...”

(The accountant of the 425th Regiment Deputy Military Clerk Magunov).

“... At 05:00 on October 14th the enemy’s squadron was observed from Sörve lighthouse, the main force of which was formed by three “Kaiser”-type ships. The alarm was given, all the men occupied their positions and I undertook the conduct of the 3rd turret.

After the battery's second salvo, the enemy opened fire upon us; the shells fell near the second line magazines which affected the crew alarmingly. The crew were discontent that the enemy's ships had been allowed to approach so near to be able to shell the battery. When the enemy's shells fell in the proximity of the 1st turret, the crew of my turret ran away. I ran after the men in order to invite them back, but this did not give results. Only the rifle fire of the crew of the 4th turret, and threats that all runaways will be shot made the crew return to their places. The further firing of the battery was not satisfactory, part of the crew had succeeded in running away into the woods, and those who remained were acting badly under enemy fire. When the enemy's shells began to fall close to the battery, the crew ran away again and this time for good. With me inside the turret remained only 3 men, with whom the continuation of fire proved to be impossible.

During the firing interval I noticed that the crew decided to assemble for meeting. Seeing that the mood of the crew did not seem good, I invited by telephone Lieutenant Bartenev, who conducted the battery's fire, to take part in the deliberation, where the latter also appeared together with the representative of the Battery Committee. On the deliberation was marked that the battery's situation is hopeless; continuing the fire the battery will be destroyed by the enemy, assistance is hoped from nowhere, the officers are traitors, therefore it is necessary to evacuate from Saaremaa. After that I replied to the crew that the officers are sharing with the men the sorrows and the joys, whereas everybody's solemn duty is to oppose the enemy until the last shell. After that I got such answers which showed that the battery's crew will no longer fight. I reported to Lieutenant Bartenev about the necessity to destroy the guns. But Lieutenant Bartenev still hoped to raise the spirit of the crew.

During the night, the majority of the crew departed to Mõntu harbour; in the morning they somehow arrived back assembling again for consultation. Now I came to the conviction that the crew of the battery had changed to an undisciplined band of cowards who cared only for themselves. The crew was against the demolition of the battery fearing revenge by the Germans. The execution of the battery's demolition was allowed only on condition that the crew will be guaranteed the possibility of departure from the island.

After this consultation, representatives of the destroyers "Ukraina" and "Voyskovoy" arrived, who earnestly recommended that the crew stay, promising to send reinforcements from the fleet crew. Despite this, the majority of the crew still departed to Mõntu harbour, whereas Lieutenant Bartenev ordered to prepare for demolition of the battery. At 16:00 the sailors relayed the order of the commander of the defence of Sõrve peninsula for demolition of the battery. During the time, when

the battery was prepared for demolition, a troop of sailors arrived, many of whom were drunken. The sailors were shouting that the Germans are withdrawing, and from somewhere is coming a new crew for the battery, so they do not allow the battery to be destroyed. At about 17:00 the enemy's fleet started to shell the battery from heavy guns; the shelling lasted with intervals of about 20 minutes.

After the firing ceased, Lieutenant Bartenev left the battery together with the officers and sailors, the demolition of turrets did not succeed and he was to wait for his orders for blowing up the magazines.

Together with the remaining officers we decided also to leave, because we alone would not be capable of carrying out the demolition. When we were on the way to Mõntu harbour, some German aircraft arrived above the batteries flying low, some of which even landed near to the hangars. On the way we met the battery commander with whom we moved through the woods in order to protect ourselves against the machine gun fire of the German aircraft.

I departed from Mõntu in the rowing boat of the destroyer "Stere-gushchiy". At the same time the enemy shelled the lighthouse and set it on fire."

(The turret commander of the 43rd Battery (Navy) First Lieutenant Goncharevskiy).

"On October 14th at about 05:00 it was communicated that in the proximity of Tõrju village the enemy's fleet appeared, consisting of three "Kaiser"-type battleships and some torpedo boats. The firing began between coastal battery No. 43 and the enemy fleet. The hostile fleet approached from 125 cables to 90 cables, which did not enable battery No. 40 to open fire. Whereas the majority of the enemy's short rounds fell close to our battery, the battery's crew was ordered to leave the battery and take shelter. One of the enemy's first shells fell upon the aerodrome, after which aircraft took to the air and flew away. The firing lasted 1 hour and 10 minutes, after which the enemy departed. The shelling influenced the crew's mood. There was no information about the actual situation at Saaremaa and contradictory rumours began to spread, each more threatening than the last. This all made the crew very depressed. News was received that battery No. 43 decided to give up fighting; this information was confirmed by a sailor dispatched from the 43rd battery. At night the battery's crew assembled for a consultation and decided to send the following telegram:

"The situation on the island is critical, we wait for rapid assistance, the arrival of the fleet would save the situation." With the sending of this telegram the retaining of the anxious contingent of the crew was succeeded until the morning.

A delegate was elected to influence the other batteries to stay. In the morning of October 15th, I was informed that the enemy's fleet again has appeared in the same place, that the crew of coastal battery No. 43 has left and that the battery will no longer open fire. After that, in the morning, the majority of the crew of coastal battery No. 40 left in the direction of Mõntu. At about 12:00 Captain Knüppfer gave the order to prepare the battery for demolition, whereby coastal battery No. 40 would be blown up first. The order for preparation was executed, but the demolition was delayed. At 14:30 two enemy battleships opened fire from 12" guns upon the battery, the majority of the short rounds fell again in the region of the battery No. 40. At 17:00 the German ships departed in the northern direction. During the shelling the hangar was ablaze and there was a fire in coastal battery No. 43. With cooperation from the remaining crew, we completely demolished coastal battery No. 40. After that, we assembled at Mõntu harbour whence I left together with 7 men in the boat of destroyer "Turkmenets Stavropolskiy".

(the commander of the 40th battery Lieutenant (Russian Navy 1st Lieutenant) Lindebek).

In such way were developing the events in the coastal batteries of Sõrve peninsula until their demolition.

Regarding the action of the Russian 425th Infantry Regiment, then this revealed a certain resistance to the German 131st Infantry Regiment throughout the whole day. The Russian defence was favoured by the narrowness of the peninsula. The Germans, seeing that a powerful attack would incur losses, started to negotiate with the Russians, promising good conditions during imprisonment, as we have seen from the descriptions of the participants. The negotiations ended without results, and therefore the German battleships started the shelling, whose effect on moral was huge. Despite the efforts undertaken, the Germans did not succeed in finally capturing Sõrve peninsula.

On October 14th, the Germans landed about 80 men on Hiiumaa. After an exchange of fire with the Russians, they collected food and clothes and in the evening returned to their ships.

Making the general summary of the activities on October 14th we see, that:

- the German situation in defending the causeway improved considerably;
- main body of the Russian force in Põide region was situated between Germans;
- half of Sõrve peninsula was captured by Germans and
- the command in Kassari Bay belonged to Germans.

IV. The Capitulation of Russian Main Forces to Germans in Pöide Region. The Events on Sörve Peninsula on October 15th

1. The Capitulation of the Russian Main Forces

On the morning of October 15th, the situation in the causeway region was especially interesting. Both the Russians and the Germans were not aware of the strength of their opponent.

Also, the Germans did not have information about their 255th Regiment situated in Kapra region, and the other way around – the regiment knew practically nothing about what was happening in the causeway region (Scheme 7). Early in the morning, from the northern part of the German forces the reconnaissance patrols were dispatched that came under intense Russian fire. The Russians had a good position on the line of Kahutsi-Levala.

The Russian breakthrough soon started in Levala region, but overblowed after two attempts. A little later, an assault by a Russian cavalry detachment of 200 men supported by machine gun and artillery fire was carried out, but this failed, too. Being afraid that the Russians will succeed in escaping over Väike Strait, either to Muhu Island or to the mainland, thanks to the gloomy weather, the Germans decided to start with the general attack from the north at 11:00. The order for this was given by the newly arrived commander of the division, after personal reconnaissance on the spot. But communication with the 255th Regiment operating in the south had not been established. The activity of German forces operating in the north turned out as follows: the 138th Regiment attacked in the direction of Kahutsi, enveloping the Russian left flank; the 17th Regiment was directed against the Russian right flank, and from the front were attacking the cyclists. The German attack from the north was supported by two light batteries.

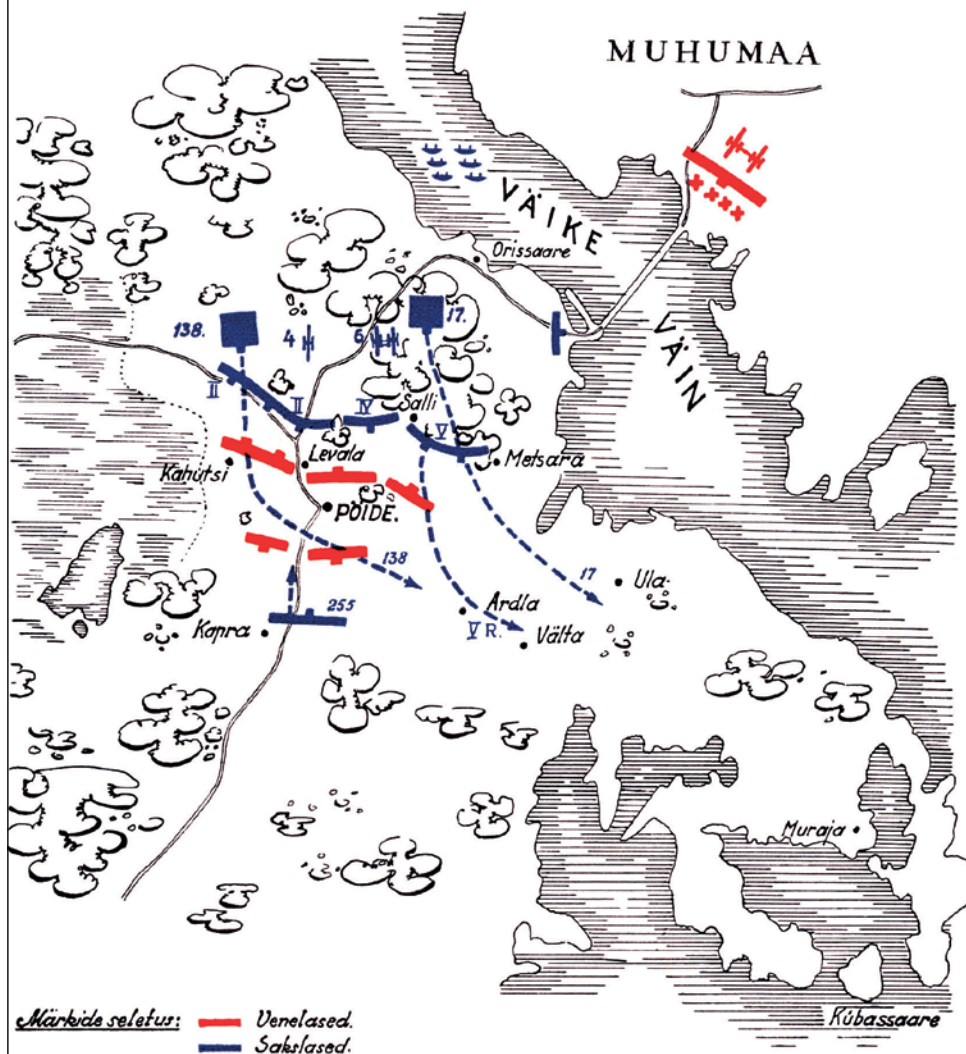
(During the attack, German poet Walter Flex, company commander of the 138th Regiment, was killed, and buried in Pöide churchyard.¹⁷

The German 255th Regiment, after an unsuccessful attempt at night to capture a Russian field battery, remained in a holding situation. Also the Russians did not show any particular activity. Only small skirmishes took place.

The situation of the 255th Regiment was made more difficult by the circumstance that the supporting artillery fire was missing, as well as cavalry for reconnaissance and communication. The machine gun companies had not yet arrived and ammunition began to run out.

¹⁷ In 1940 his remnants were reburied to the Garrison Cemetery in Königsberg; a memorial stone in Pöide churchyard was renewed in 1997 (editor's note).

SÜNDMUSTIKU ARENEMINE SAAREMAAL 15. 10. 17.



Scheme 7: Events in Saaremaa on 15 October 1917.

When at 11:00 artillery firing was heard from the north, the 255th Regiment started with the general attack. An artillery platoon arrived, too, and went straight into the battle. The Russian infantry fire became more and more feeble. There was a disorderly running of Russians here and there, and panicked shooting was heard. When the 255th Regiment at about 14:30 was in full attack mode, everywhere on the Russian side white kerchiefs and flags, the sign of capitulation, began to appear.

So surrendered the commander of Russian 107th Division with the remnants of his force. Before the surrender at night on October 15th, when it was clear, that the entire besieging is expected every minute, the division commander gave to all officers, who did not want to surrender, the permission to leave and to attempt separately to penetrate the German lines. To 2nd Lieutenant Kull of the Kuressaare Cavalry Battalion the task was given to push through Germans in the direction of Orissaare with two mounted patrols and to forward the report with the request to send assistance to the senior military commander on Muhu Island. 2nd Lieutenant Kull explained his interesting enterprise as follows:

“... I received the order to penetrate in Orissaare direction with two mounted reconnaissance patrols in order to hand over to the senior military commander on Muhu Island the request for sending assistance. I arrived to Kärü farm with small losses, where I dispatched my men on a fisherman’s boat over Väike Strait to Muhu Island. Whereas I did not want to leave my horse, I decided to proceed on horseback over the causeway, for which I moved to Kärner village accompanied by an orderly and an NCO; here I fell under enemy fire, the advance was impossible, we turned around, and for the evening arrived back to Kärü farm from where I crossed the Strait at night by boat. Moving on October 16th via Suuremõisa to Kuivastu, I did not meet our forces on the way. I arrived to Kuivastu at 10:00 and gave to General Martynov verbally the contents of the report dispatched with me because I had torn the written report during the encounter with Germans at Kärneri village ...”

So received General Martynov, situated in Muhu Island, the last information about the situation in the operational area of the 107th Division. After that every kind of communication with the 107th Division ceased. As the higher command was interested about the fate of the 107th Division, the following instruction was given:

“To Admiral Bakhirev.

As communication with the Staff of the 107th Division is missing, I beg you to inform, whether there is a possibility to dispatch voluntary scouts to Kunnati Bight

on a steamer in order to carry out reconnaissance in Kõiguste estate direction to obtain some information about the Headquarters and units of the 107th Division, who on October 14th have been in Levala region.

Haapsalu, 15th October, No. 026.

The Commander of Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet Henrikson."

But this enterprise did not give any results.

2. The Events on Sõrve Peninsula

The events on Sõrve peninsula on October 15th developed as follows.

The German 131st Infantry Regiment began to attack at 10:00. The Russians were strongly fortified, whereas the Germans had only one battery. The regiment commander decided at first to send out patrols, under the command of officers, to establish the enemy's exact disposition. The Russians opened intense fire upon the patrols, but a little later were withdrawing themselves without any stronger pressure. The Germans occupied the positions left by the Russians, but could not advance further. In order to force the Russians to surrender with kindness, the Germans began again with the negotiations. But these did not give any results. The Russians decided in their meeting to demolish the 12" battery and escape to the ships. The demolition of the battery was not successful because the crew did not execute the order, and went to Mõntu harbour to escape to the ships. In the harbour, the assembled Russians were a very good target for the German aircraft who repeatedly attacked them.

Meanwhile, the German battleships began to fire again. The shelling lasted 2½ hours and was very intensive.

For destroying the 12" battery, the Russians sent on October 15th the battleship "Grazhdanin" to Sõrve peninsula, who shelled the battery from 12" and 6" guns from a distance of 30–40 cables. She could still not destroy the battery, despite firing at short range. In the morning of October 16th, an officer of the 12" battery together with some men went to the battery and found that the guns were still intact, despite the environment being full of shell-holes. The detachment started with the frantic work of destroying the battery, and more or less succeeded before the arrival of Germans.

3. Arrangements by Russian High Command

Notwithstanding the German success, the Russian High Command still continued strengthening the forces on the islands, as it appears from documents, quoted

below. How much the Staff of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet was informed about the events, is clarified by the following telegram

“To Chief of Naval Staff of the Northern Front.

Copy to General Quartermaster of 12th Army, to Chief of Staff of the 42th Corps, to Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, to Chief of Staff of the Peter the Great’s Naval Fortress, to Chief of Staff of Sveaborg Fortress, to Colonel Veselago and to Chief of Staff of the Fleet. Operative, Urgent, at 22:00.

The Germans have shifted their artillery to Orissaare estate, and opened fire in the direction of causeway into the rear of our units; also the enemy’s torpedo boats shelled the causeway. The difficult and dangerous situation of the units defending the causeway has forced them to withdraw to Muhu Island. There is no information about the 107th Division; the situation in Hiiumaa is unchanged up to now. At 12:00 approximately 80 men from an enemy torpedo boat landed near Sõru. Sailor of the coastal battery No. 43 who arrived from Sõrve peninsula on a steamboat, informed that enemy’s units advancing from north to Sõrve peninsula have been stopped by the units of Sõrve garrison until in the morning of the October 15th. From Lõu Bay towards northwest is a large enemy cruiser who is shelling with heavy calibre guns the isthmus of Sõrve peninsula, and the batteries located there; our batteries have not yet suffered, according to information from the same sailor, the Germans sent one officer and some soldiers with flags of truce, but they have not been accepted. Roomassaare harbour is in German hands, and they have machine-gunned our steamboats towing one of the barges loaded with flour. During the day, from the Estonian Regiment, 3 echelons arrived, which have started to embark into the transport vessels. One battalion of the 470th Regiment has refused the embarkation on a transport for conveyance to Muhu Island, and the soldiers have dispersed; this circumstance has delayed the embarkation of the Estonian Regiment and its departure, so it will now be dispatched in the morning of October 16th.

Haapsalu, 15th October, No. 041/op.

Chief of Staff of the Land Forces Krusenstern.”

As it appears from this telegram, the general course of events was known to the Russian Command. Only information about the 107th Division was missing, which is absolutely self-evident when the division was surrounded by Germans and had surrendered.

As on previous days, so also on October 15th on the Russian side there was ongoing energetic activity for strengthening the forces. The Estonian Regiment

was subordinated to the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position with following order:

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The Commander of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet has ordered to give the Estonian Regiment under your command and to dispatch it without delay to Hiiumaa. The instructions for transportation of the Estonian Regiment from Haapsalu must be given by you. At present at Haapsalu station are three echelons and in the stations nearby two more echelons, which will be taken to Haapsalu when the railroad will be free. Please inform Chief of Staff of the Land Forces about the dispatch of transports. The echelons must be taken to Hiiumaa, into Heltermaa harbour. For getting the necessary destroyers for convoying the transports, communicate directly to Admiral Bakhirov.

No. 028/op. 15th October, at 1330.

Chief of Staff of the Land Forces Krusenstern.”

Whereas the strengthening of the forces of Hiiumaa was already in progress then also the Russians started to strengthen the defence of Vormsi island.

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The Commander of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet has ordered to dispatch from the complement of the Estonian Regiment, one company and two machine guns, to Vormsi island for repelling the enemy’s smaller units, and for defending the coastal battery No. 30.

15th October, at 1520, No. 033. Krusenstern.”

Summing up the above, we see that almost the entire Saaremaa on October 15th had fallen into German hands. The principal objective of the Russian high command on October 15th was to strengthen the defending forces situated in Hiiumaa.

V. The Final Capture of Saaremaa by the Germans, and the Organizing of Defence on the Mainland by Russians on October 16th



Scheme 8: The Muhu Strait Fortified Position after fall of Saaremaa on 16 October 1917.

On October 16th, Saaremaa fell entirely into German hands. During the day only small engagements took place on Kübassaare and Muraja peninsulas, but the Russians also had to surrender here. The German 131st Infantry Regiment began to advance on Sõrve peninsula at 08:00 and found the Russian positions abandoned in Palli region. At 10:00 the Russian 425th Infantry Regiment surrendered. Sõrve peninsula was conquered, together with the 12" coastal battery (No. 43) situated there, which had great importance, not only in defending the Gulf of Riga, but also had to an important role in the entire Muhu Strait operation. During the day small engagements occurred in the causeway region situated between Muhu Island and Saaremaa, also involving warships and aircraft.

The situation of the Russians defending Muhu Island became critical at 20:00, when a larger body of Germans appeared on the causeway, whose movement was supported by ships with artillery fire. The majority of Russians fled from the trenches in order to find some cover inland. Only the Battalion of Death and some sailors remained. The Germans were repelled.

Whereas the recapturing of Saaremaa with a counterattack with such forces was impossible, the command of Russian land forces decided to defend Muhu Island, Hiiumaa and Vormsi island, and to fortify the coast of mainland against landings (Scheme 8) for which the Commander of the Land Forces gave the following order.

"Order No. 2.

To the Land Forces of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Haapsalu, October 16th 1917, At 21.50.

(Map 10 verst in one inch).

The enemy has conquered Saaremaa during the last days; his advance forces are in Orissaare estate. Our fleet is operating in Muhu Strait waters, and in the Gulf of Riga. The enemy's strong naval forces are west off Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. I order the forces, subordinated to me, to defend tenaciously Muhu island, Hiiumaa, and Vormsi Island, securing the mainland against hostile landings. For that:

1) Muhu Strait Fortified Position – the 427th, 470th and 471st regiment and the Estonian Regiment, the Battalion of Death, the Kronstadt close support battery, the Austrian Battery, together with 1½ squadrons of the Kuressaare Cavalry Battalion, and with the 2nd Tallinn Single Squadron under the general conduct of Rear Admiral Sveshnikov, to defend tenaciously Muhu Island, and Hiiumaa, and Vormsi Island, to hinder the landing of enemy in that region, paying special attention to the defence of the coastal batteries. Position's Headquarters – at Haapsalu.

2) The brigade of the 45th Division together with the Artillery Battalion, the 19th Don [Cossack] Regiment, the 4th Squadron of 2nd Tallinn Border Guard Regiment – under the conduct of Major General Kreidtner,¹⁸ defend the coast from Põõsaspea up to the mouth of Kasari river (incl.); to pay special attention in defending Haapsalu region and the direction Keila-Haapsalu. After the arrival of echelons for deployment in Haapsalu, Veneküla region, the Divisional Headquarters to lodge, at Veneküla.

3) The 4th Don Cossack Division (except the 19th Regiment), together with the Artillery Battalion, and the 5th Squadron of 2nd Tallinn Border Guard Regiment, to defend the coast from the mouth of Kasari river up to Vaiste estate (incl.), paying special attention to the direction of Risti-Virtsu; Divisional Headquarters at Lihula.

4) The Commander of the Peter the Great's Naval Fortress, under whose orders will go the 44th Infantry Division to defend the region of Paldiski harbour and the coast from Põõsaspea headland towards the east.

5) The communication roads: for the brigade of the 45th Division Tallinn-Keila-Risti-Haapsalu; for the 4th Don Cossack Division Raasiku – Angerja – Rapla – Märjamaa – Vana-Vigala – Lihula – Virtsu.

6) The boundary between the areas of operation of the Peter the Great's Naval Fortress and the brigade of the 45th Division: Tallinn-Klooga-Risti-Põõsaspea; between the brigade of the 45th Division and the 4th Don Cossack Division: Tallinn – Saku – Vardi – Kullamaa – the mouth of Kasari river; between the 4th Don Cossack Division, and the 12th Army: Lelle – Jakobi¹⁹ – Vaiste.

7) The Staff of the Land Forces is located at Haapsalu.

8) The reports to send daily in accordance with the order No. 1414 of the Chief of Staff of Commander-in-Chief.

Commander of Land Forces Major General Henrikson.

Chief of Staff Colonel (G. S.) Krusenstern.”

Therewith a special sector was organized from Muhu island, Hiiumaa, and Vormsi island, when the western coast of the mainland was divided into three independent sectors, whose commanders were subordinated directly to the Commander of the Land Forces Major General Henrikson. So the commander of the mainland sector of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Major General Kreidtner, was not subordinated to the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. To

18 Gustav Kreidtner (1869–1919), Major General, from June 1917 Commander of a brigade of the 45th Infantry Division. 1918 joined the Red Army, fell in a battle (editor's note).

19 I. e. Pärnu-Jaagupi (editor's note).

the latter only the forces operating in Muhu Island, Hiiumaa, and Vormsi island were subordinated. The site for the headquarters of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was fixed as Haapsalu. But at the same place also the Headquarters of the Land Forces was situated.

The situation, when two higher Headquarters, both conducting the same forces, were located in the same place, hindered the directing of the units because many orders were passed without the knowledge of the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position, likewise some reports also arrived directly to higher Headquarters, i.e. to the Headquarters of the Land Forces, which is proved by the following instruction:

“To the Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

To the Commander of the Land Forces has become evident from the reports of General Martynov that he is reporting directly to the Commander of the Land Forces while copies are sent to you. The Commander of the Land Forces has ordered to inform General Martynov and Colonel Veselago that such kind of reporting is not correct. The copies must be sent to the Chief of Staff of Land Forces and to Admiral Bakhirev, but the original text to you.

16th October, No. 666. Krusenstern.”

The Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position reported to the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet about the originating of the above doubled authorities as follows:

“To the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet.

I am in an inescapable and unpleasant position. Being at Haapsalu, I should carry out some kind of duties and make arrangements; by the order of the Commander of the Land Forces on the mainland, situated forces of the position are subordinated to General Kreidtner, and Colonel Tõnisson,²⁰ who are not subordinated to me. I have no communication with the islands. The entire decaying of the moral of the troops situated in Hiiumaa does not afford to continue with the fighting activity. On the other hand, without the corresponding order I cannot go to Tallinn. I am reporting therefore that you should not get the opinion

20 Aleksander Tõnisson (1875–1941), Colonel, 1917 Commander of the 1st Estonian Regiment of Estonian national formations of the Russian Army During Estonian War of Independence Commander of the 1st Division, Major General. 1920 and 1932–1933 Minister of War. 1934–1939 Mayor of Tartu, 1939–1940 Mayor of Tallinn. Executed by the Soviets (editor’s note).

as if I am executing here some kind of duties; whereas at my disposal are missing the transportation means and full command, I cannot evacuate the demoralized garrison of Hiiumaa because the transportation is subordinated to the Commander of the Mine Division, who is executing also evacuation in accordance with the situation, directing all to Lapviik.

No. 02606. Sveshnikov.”

On the bases of the previous day’s instruction, the 1st Estonian Regiment had to go to Hiiumaa. But later this order was altered and the units of the 1st Estonian Regiment were directed to Muhu Island, where they arrived on October 16th. The units of the Estonian Regiment were well by their disposition, and also by their appearance, much better than the other troops, but also here was noticeable the paralyzing effect of the environment.

The moral standard of the other units was very low. In the region of Kuivastu harbour was the amassing of troops, transports, equipment, etc.; the soldiers were sitting around log fires and when the building of fires was prohibited, owing to air attacks danger, then they replied that they are rather ready to suffer the consequences of aircraft attacks than to give up the warming of themselves.

The 1st Battalion and machine gun detachment of the 1st Estonian Regiment first arrived to Kuivastu. The battalion moved inland to Muhu Island and arrived in the evening at Soonda village where they stayed overnight. The machine gun detachment remained at Kuivastu. The 2nd Battalion arrived on Muhu Island without supply train. In order to get the supply train immediately onwards next day in Kuivastu, the battalion stayed overnight at Kuivastu in the open. To the units of the regiment the task to defend the causeway was allotted, but later this task was altered.

From the arrival of the units of the 1st Estonian Regiment, and from the later given tasks, we get the general picture from the next descriptions:

“... The 1st and 2nd Battalion of the 1st Estonian Regiment together with “Colt” machine gun detachment, the detachment of trench weapons, the detachment of infantry and mounted reconnaissance, and a part of supply train landed on October 16th at about 1500–1700 at Kuivastu on Muhu Island. In Kuivastu harbour was a lot of soldiers who tried to save themselves in our ships in order to escape to the mainland. This circumstance interfered strongly with the disembarkation. In the region of Kuivastu harbour and estate were units of the Kozelsk and Dankovsk regiments, together with the supply trains in bivouac. The Estonian Regiment

finished the disembarkation in the evening and stood near Kuivastu where the regiment was greeted by General Martynov. On the same night we got the task. The 1st Battalion was ordered to defend the northwestern coast of Muhu Island on the right hand of the Battalion of Death; the 2nd Battalion had to stay in reserve in the interior of the island. Infantry and mounted reconnaissance detachment and machine gun detachment had to stay with the 1st Battalion. The 1st Battalion started with a march on the evening of October 16th. The 2nd Battalion, consisting of the 5th, 6th, and 8th company, stayed overnight near Kuivastu.” (Lieutenant Rebane of the 1st Estonian Regiment.)

Whereas with the dispatch to Muhu Island of the 1st Estonian Regiment, which was foreseen for strengthening Hiiumaa, the garrison of Hiiumaa remained without reinforcements, then the Command of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet decided to send there also one battalion.

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

The Commander of the Land Forces has ordered to dispatch the battalion of the Dankovsk Regiment not to Muhu Island, but to Hiiumaa, to the command of Colonel Veselago.

October 16th, at 1700, No. 059. Krusenstern.”

The main purpose of Russian activity was therewith to strengthen demoralized forces in Muhu Island, and Hiiumaa, and on Vormsi island. But unfortunately the forces, which were detailed for strengthening of the defence, were not much better than the forces already situated on the islands. One can say that in some units the disorder had spread to the same extent as on the islands.

Summing up the events on October 16th, we see that Saaremaa had fallen into German hands during 5 days. Whereas the area of Saaremaa is 2709 sq. km, then it is impossible to imagine that such an area was so swiftly conquered with fierce battles. Likewise, we can say about the capture of the Russian 107th Division, that this was not an usual encirclement, but that the Germans were dealing with a demoralized mass of Russians, whose combat capability had diminished to nothing. There were still single attempts to break through, but these attempts had been initiated by the instinct of the masses. Feeling their inability, the mass, who had changed to a herd, made some last desperate efforts to save themselves. But these were doomed to fail from the beginning, because the most important factor in the combat, the morale, was missing.

VI. The Fall of Muhu Island

After conquering Saaremaa, the Germans had three main objectives:

- to break through the Irbe Strait with the fleet,
- to capture Muhu Island and
- to capture Hiiumaa.

In the morning of 17th October, the Germans had reached so far with the mine sweeping in Irbe Strait that they could start the breaking through the Irbe Strait into the Gulf of Riga. This was favourable as the Sõrve battery did not function anymore. For this, a larger formation of 28 ships was assembled, two battleships among them.

In order to raise the mood of defenders on Muhu Island, the Russian fleetm despite their weakness, decided to engage in a battle with the German ships. The fighting started between the two fleets and finished with the Russian withdrawal. The Russian battleship "Slava" got a number of effective hits, was seriously damaged and ran aground in Suur Strait. The ship was abandoned and the ship's ammunition blown up.

The Russian fleet withdrew in a northerly direction and the channel in the Muhu Strait was blocked with the sunken vessels. The development of the events in Muhu Island is closely connected with the German breakthrough into the Gulf of Riga, because this resulted in a paralyzing effect on the defenders of Muhu Island. Seeing the ships retreating in the northern direction, some of which were burning, among the defenders of Muhu Island arouse the feeling of feebleness – the inability to save oneself resulted in the loss of the last bit of hope.

In the capture of Muhu Island German 38th and 255th Regiment and one cyclist battalion participated. The description of the development of the situation on Muhu Island on October 17th, we get from the written reports of the participants:

"In the morning of October 17th, the enemy's fleet continued shelling from the causeway region. Lieutenant Poranzonov deployed 2-3 guns on the position at the abandoned causeway, and opened fire on the enemy ships. At 15:00 I received the following order from General Martynov by telephone: "Sõrve peninsula has fallen; enemy's fleet entered the Gulf of Riga and is moving in the direction of Muhu Strait. Send officers to the northern part of Muhu Island to find the positions for the battalion of the Estonian Regiment, the Battalion of Death, and your 3rd Battalion on Mõisaküla-Tupenurme general line. Left from you two battalions of the Kozelsk

Regiment and two battalions of the Dankovsk Regiment will be located. The new position must be occupied when darkness arrives. Leave the rear guard on the causeway until daybreak, thereafter the causeway must be demolished. I shall go with my Headquarters from Kuivastu to Raugi. My order must be forwarded to the Commander of the Battalion of Death Commander Shisko, and to the Commander of the Estonian Regiment."

I have executed all orders and at the beginning of darkness the battalion moved to the new position at Tupenurme, where we halted in order to wait the arrival of Commander Shishko."

(Lieutenant-Colonel Rudnev, 470th Regiment.)

"On October 17th I received the order to abandon the company's present positions at the beginning of darkness and to move into the northern part of Muhu Island. I executed the order and on the same day at 18:00 I joined my battalion at Tupenurme region. As far as I remember, the battalions were situated as follows: according to the order of the commander of the Battalion of Death, on the right flank was the Battalion of Death, then two companies (the 11th and 12th company) of the 3rd Battalion of the Dankovsk Regiment, one battalion of the Estonian Regiment, the 2nd Battalion of the Dankovsk Regiment, and on left flank the battalion of the Kozelsk Regiment."

(Commander of the 10th Company of the 470th Regiment Captain Chelishchev).

"In the morning of October 17th the order from General Martynov arrived to disembark the 2nd Battalion. When the whole battalion at 07:00 assembled near Kuivastu on the open field, three German aircraft appeared on the horizon. At the same time the first information arrived about the approach of the German fleet to Muhu Strait. Our transport vessels stopped the unloading and went behind Kesselaid. The regiment commander remained on a ship, too. In order to be concealed from the aircraft, all the companies and detachments dispersed and hid themselves in the bushes, but when the aircraft had dropped the first five bombs upon the supply train on the road, the battalion fled. The whistles and shouting of officers did not help, on the whole field were speeding carts and machine gun vehicles, people were confused, and there arose such a panic which I had not seen before. Not earlier than about one hour later, after the aircraft had disappeared from the horizon, was it managed to assembly the battalion into the wood.

At 08:30, the Strait came under the first salvoes from the German battleships. "Slava" and "Grazhdanin" fought until about 11:00, after that they withdrew behind Kesselaia island. After the departure of the ships General Martynov ordered the troops to withdraw on the line of Vahtraste village and to form therewith two detachments. The first one under the command of Commander Shishko was being composed of the Battalion of Death, of the 3rd Battalion of the 470th Dankovsk Regiment, and one battalion of the Estonian Regiment; the second detachment was commanded by Colonel Mironov and was being composed of the 2nd Battalion of the 470th Regiment, two battalions of the 471st Regiment, and the 1st Battalion of the Estonian Regiment.

The Headquarters of General Martynov, and of the second detachment, was to be situated in Raugi village. The withdrawal was to be executed under the cover of the Battalion of Death.

The withdrawal of the left detachment was carried out in an extremely disorderly manner – a band of brigands was moving, not soldiers. Arriving at 18:00 to Raugi and seeing the sunken "Slava" and two transport vessels, the soldiers were gripped by a fear that any opposition is useless. But this was not openly discussed.

Two battalions of the Kozelsk Regiment and one battalion of the Estonian Regiment were ordered to hold the position. General Martynov ordered to send in front of the position the reconnaissance detachment of the 470th Dankovsk Regiment, but the detachment did not go forward, as it appeared later, and stayed behind the position.

At 21:00, the commander of the Kozelsk Regiment came to the Headquarters, and reported to General Martynov that the battalion is refusing to hold the position, and has decided to surrender to the Germans without a battle; the soldiers had alleged the reason for their decision was that sooner or later they will fall into German hands, and therefore there is no reason to create excessive invalids. General Martynov ordered the battalion commander to return to his post and to hold with the battalion the allotted region. At about 22:00 the representatives of the company committees of the same battalion arrived, who informed General Martynov that they will not take part in the fighting. The general's pleas and exhortations did not get any results. The soldiers' repeated one thing: we do not have artillery, and without it we do not start to fight."

(Captain Krotkov, 470th Regiment.)

"In the morning of October 17th above Kuivastu one German aircraft appeared, but this flew back soon. About one hour later appeared five or six Germans aircraft

and began to bomb Kuivastu. The bombing caused great panic among the troops. Altogether approximately 20 bombs were dropped. The troops and transports fled into the nearby woods, and the ships left Kuivastu harbour region in the northern direction. The 3rd company of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Estonian Regiment, assembled in the woods off Kuivastu about 3 kilometres, continued their advance towards the centre of Muhu Island. All the time 3–5 German aircraft were seen above the island. In order not to fall a second time under the fire of the aircraft, we hid ourselves in the bushes when they appeared. At about 11:00–12:00, rumours circulated that the German fleet has invaded the Gulf of Riga, and a squadron composed of 22–24 ships is approaching Muhu Island. This rumour made the soldiers depressed. Soon started the battle at sea, 4–5 kilometres from Kuivastu. On Kuivastu road, it was possible to watch the battle. Our fleet, which was moving slowly northward, was all the time surrounded by high water columns. From time to time was heard a very loud rumble, which probably was caused by the firing of heavy calibre guns. The smoke above our warships, and the withdrawal of our fleet in a northerly direction ascertained that we have lost the battle at sea. Particularly this circumstance affected the mood of the men very vigorously. Among the soldiers rumours circulated that the Estonians have been sent deliberately to Muhu Island in order to get rid of them. The panic was also caused by the transports of the Kozelsk and Dankovsk Regiments, who at the same time were speeding from Kuivastu towards the causeway, from whence they were speeding back 1½ or 2 hours later not knowing where to or what for.

The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Estonian Regiment continued the advance and at about 15:00 or 16:00 arrived to Soonda region where it halted. The battalion commander went to find out where the battalion had to stand. Soon at Soonda, was received the instruction from a mounted orderly, after which we had to return to Raugi in order to remain there in reserve. One of the officers of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Lieutenant Jaik, went to Raugi harbour to General Martynov in order to elucidate the authentication of this instruction. Not waiting for his return, the 2nd Battalion also started to move in Raugi direction. Halfway we met 2nd Lieutenant Jaik, who affirmed that the battalion has been ordered to stand in general reserve in Raugi region. By the same order, all the troops in Muhu Island had to withdraw northward to hold the position on the general line of Mõisaküla-Tupenurme-Lõetsa-Lalli, and to remain there in defence to wait the arrival of our fleet, which was going to save us. In the evening, on the way to Raugi, we saw three of our ships which were in flames; one of them had to be “Slava”. Near Raugi were so many soldiers of the Dankovsk and Kozelsk Regiments, that the 2nd Battalion of

the Estonian Regiment did not have a chance to stay at Raugi as it was ordered, but had to go to the nearby woods. They stayed in bivouacs there. The night was so dark that the only way to move was by feeling your way around. Together with the commander of the 8th company, we chose a place to bivouac, and then we went to General Martynov who had ordered all the officers to a consultation.

On the way to the General we met a field kitchen and transport vehicles of the 8th company. The company commander asked me to show them the way and went himself further. I stayed behind and went to look for the General's quarters. The soldiers did not know the General's location but asked me from which regiment I am. Hearing that I am from the Estonian Regiment, they asked me to tell to the company committees of the Estonian Regiment, that the company committees of the Kozelsk and Dankovsk regiments have decided to surrender tomorrow, at once when the enemy appears, and the committees of the Estonian Regiment should consider the same.

I replied to them, that I am an officer and this question does not concern me, I refused their proposal, and I went to search for General Martynov. A little later I met company commander already returning from General Martynov together with one officer of the 8th company.

From my colleagues, I heard that the 1st Battalion of the Estonian Regiment has been ordered to defend the Mõisaküla-Tupenurme line, that the Battalion of Death had to withdraw at 21:00 from the causeway and to defend on the eastern flank of our 1st Battalion; eastward from the Battalion of Death on Raugi-Lõetsa-Lalli line had to defend the units of the Kozelsk and Dankovsk regiments. The reconnaissance patrol, left by the Battalion of Death upon the causeway, had to stay there until in the morning. Nevertheless, despite the desperate situation, General Martynov had decided not to surrender voluntarily but to fight with the help of those who still wished to ..."

(Lieutenant Rebane, 1st Estonian Regiment.)

"... In the evening of October 17th, General Martynov gave the following order: the 1st Battalion of the Estonian Regiment had to man the position on Mõisaküla-Põitse line. The "Battalion of Death" has to withdraw from causeway at 21:00 and to man the position on Põitse-Tupenurme line; the battalions of the Dankovsk and Kozelsk regiments had to take up the Tupenurme-Lalli line. The 2nd Battalion of the Estonian Regiment had to stay in general reserve in Raugi village. General Martynov said to his assembled officers that he will fight together with those who have remained by him.

The General placed his hopes upon the 1st Battalion of the Dankovsk Regiment, the Battalion of Death, and two battalions of the Estonian Regiment, thereby believing that the fleet will save us. But at the same time the company committees of the Dankovsk and Kozelsk regiments decided not to resist but to surrender when the enemy appears.”

(2nd Lieut. Jaik, 1st Estonian Regiment).

on October 17th the Russian defending forces in Muhu Island were drawn back therewith near the Raugi harbour. Thereby the commander of the defence General Martynov had at first the hope to organize the resistance, but the company committees decided to surrender without resistance. The impulse for such decision was given by the defeat of the battle at sea. The steps of the High Command on October 17th were directed mainly to solve the following important questions:

- the evacuation of Muhu Island and Muhu Strait,
- the preparations for the evacuation of Hiiumaa and
- the organization of the defence on the coast of mainland. A series of orders was given for this from which the most important are following:

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Copy to Chief of Staff of Naval Forces, to Admiral Bakhirev and to General Martynov. Commander of the Naval Forces has ordered to take all forces away from Muhu Island except one battalion, who has to stay and will leave only at the last moment. Commander of Land Forces has ordered: 1) to dispatch urgently to Raugi and Kuivastu harbours ships with a small draught for transporting the troops; 2) the Estonian Regiment to go to Virtsu, all the others to Rohuküla; 3) to leave on Muhu Island the Battalion of Death. All efforts should be done for transporting the horses to the mainland.

No. 089, October 17th, at 13:30. Krusenstern.”

“To Navy Captain Afanasiev, 17th Oct. at 14:00.

I prescribe to you to keep ready all free transport vessels for the evacuation of the troops from Muhu Island; the ships which are not free to clear for the same purpose when possible. The troops should be dispatched to Virtsu and Rohuküla in accordance with the situation and to accelerate the evacuation.

Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position Sveshnikov.”

“To the Commander of the Estonian Regiment.

Start immediately with the disembarkation of the embarked battalion and assembly the men at Kiltse estate. You yourself report at positions Headquarters (hotel “Salon”) to receive the instructions, to the same place dispatch also some horsemen for the communication.

Chief of Staff of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Reek.”

From the abovementioned arrangements, it appears that the High Command gave up the defence of Muhu Island. Considering the mood of the troops, such a decision would be assumed sooner or later. Simultaneously, with the evacuation of Muhu Island the evacuation of the Muhu Strait had also to begin.

“To the Commander of Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

Copy to General Kreidtner.

By the order of the Commander of Land Forces, I declare for exact execution the copy of the telegram of the Commander-in-Chief of the Naval Forces:

“I order to begin with the evacuation of Muhu Strait, whereby: 1) to dispatch the warships in accordance with the situation to the northern coast; 2) the floating means, not necessary for evacuation, to send away already now; 3) to destroy the barriers defending the Muhu Strait channels, and to prepare the blocking of the Strait in different places by sinking the floating means which are impossible to take away; 4) to take away everything valuable from Rohuküla; 5) to prepare the demolition of Rohuküla, especially, the demolition of the quays.”

No. 1687/op. Razvozov.

Chief of Staff of Land Forces Kruzenstern.”

Whereas the evacuation of Muhu Strait was closely connected with the defending of Hiiumaa, then in addition to the above instruction, the telegram for preparing Hiiumaa for evacuation followed:

“Cancel the transportation of forces to Hiiumaa. The lighthouses and batteries must be prepared for demolition. In case of the enemy landing in Hiiumaa, begin with the evacuation and demolition.

No. 1686/op. Razvozov.”

When the decision was accepted to give up the defence of the islands, then began the organization of the coastal defence on the mainland.

“To the Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position. Copies to General Kreidtner and to Regiment’s Committee.

The Commander of the Land Forces has ordered that the defence of Haapsalu and Rohuküla has to be concentrated in the hands of the Commander of the Estonian Regiment Colonel Tõnisson and will be subordinated to him: each one battalion from the Estonian, Kozelsk, and Dankovsk regiments, and the Sea Battalion. Operationally and also in other domains Colonel Tõnisson will be subordinated to General Kreidtner, whose Headquarters are at Taebla estate. To General Kreidtner will be subordinated also the Brigade of the 45th Division, together with the Artillery Battalion, assembled in the Haapsalu-Taebla region. The Headquarters of Land Forces is located at Risti.

October 17th, at 1840, No. 095. Krusenstern.”

“To General Kreidtner, Colonel Tõnisson, Copy to Commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position.

I appoint under your command one battalion from the Estonian Regiment, two battalions from the Dankovsk Regiment, one battalion from the Kozelsk Regiment, and the Battalion of Death. The battalion of the Estonian Regiment has been ordered to deploy at Kiltsi estate, one battalion of the Dankovsk Regiment at Haapsalu, and the second in at Mägari, and the battalion of the Kozelsk Regiment at Parila estate.

Soon the departure of our destroyer fleet from the Muhu Strait is expected, therefore the enemy can make an attempt to undertake a landing in Haapsalu region. Favourable locations for landing are at Haapsalu ness, at Rohuküla, on the coast from Rohuküla southward up to Mäeküla, and in Matsalu Bay at Kalaküla.

In addition to my order No. 2 to the task given to you to defend the coast from Põösapea (Spitham) up to the mouth of Kasari river, I order you to hold firmly the Haapsalu region, and to secure the roads from Taebla estate to Haapsalu and Kalaküla; for that, to join the command of the battalions of the 470th, 471st and Estonian regiments in the hands of Colonel Tõnisson. He is obliged to execute the task in Haapsalu-Parila-Mäeküla region. To place on the coast and on more important roads observation posts, whereas the remaining force has to be deployed outside the range of the ships’ guns.

The brigade subordinated to you has to assemble in the region allotted to you, and has to prepare a reserve position on Rannaküla – Võnnu estate general line. The repelling of the landing has to be carried out actively and with strengthened forces in the direction of the landing area.

The Headquarters of the Land Forces will be situated at Risti railway station, where it will organize the telephone communication. Beforehand, establish the communication with Colonel Tõnisson. The reports as by the order No. 1414 of Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief.

October 17th, at 2000, No. 097. Commander of the Land Forces Henrikson."

Summing up, we see that on October 17th the Russians lacked every kind of means for defending the islands, therefore it was decided to begin with their evacuation and organisation of the resistance to the Germans on the coast of the mainland began.

On October 18th, the German circle around Russians started to wrap up, which could not be hindered by any power. The situation was entirely ripe for surrender: the Russian soldiers were waiting with white flags in their hands, and when the Germans appeared, they surrendered without opposition. The development of the events on October 18th is reflected in the descriptions of participants:

"After manning the position in the morning of October 17th, I was informed from the Battalion of Death that there is not a single unit on their left flank. Going to inspect, it appeared that the information is correct. I decided to go to Raugi in order to settle the question. Arriving at Headquarters I saw that the soldiers had hung white flags everywhere, and are holding sticks to which had been fastened white kerchiefs, pieces of curtains and different kind of white rags. Arriving to General Martynov he explained that "the situation is critical, because the soldiers have finally refused to hold the position; for him has been nothing left than to surrender to fate, and to preserve the life of those soldiers who have remained faithful to their duty. I am compelled to inform you for transferring to your battalion to the Battalion of Death and to the Estonian Battalion, that the weapons must be laid down." Saying this, the General burst into tears. Leaving the Headquarters and mounting my horse I turned to the soldiers, and here quite a lot, and said: "Who wishes to capitulate has to destroy his arms," to which they replied: "Why destroy, there is no need to destroy, the Germans will then treat us more mercifully."

Because some units did not hold their position, the Headquarters remained without protection from the southern direction. Arriving to my battalion, on the Tupenurme-Kallaste line, where also the Battalion of Death was situated, I decided to take the last action, i.e. to send the negotiators to the Germans. Talking it over with my neighbour, Commander Shishko, the latter agreed with my proposal. As the negotiator, I dispatched Captain Shchelishchev and 2nd Lieutenant Tamman.

The negotiators had to say to Germans that we have decided not to surrender and we shall fight until the last man unless our conditions are accepted: we should be left to leave with our arms to the mainland without any interference.

A few moments after the departure of the negotiators a horseman arrived, who informed me that the Germans are at Raugi and have captured the situated forces and Headquarters. The detainment had been carried out by a quite small reconnaissance patrol. Taking into consideration the fall of Raugi and in connection with the uncovering of our left flank, we undertook steps to secure our flank, and we made a left flank towards the sea. At the same time there appeared ships on the horizon, rapidly approaching the northern coast of Muhu Island. These ships were our minesweepers, and were covered by two old type destroyers. As I heard later, these ships came to save us on their own initiative.

Owing to the shallow water, the minesweepers could not approach the coast and stayed about 3½ kilometres off Raugi towards the west, sending boats to the coast which rushed to help the existing units."

(Lieutenant Colonel Rudnev, 470th Regiment)

"In the morning of October 18th the mood of everyone was very depressed; and conversations about surrender without resistance were heard. At about 08:00 appeared one of the soldiers of the Tallinn Assault Battalion (Battalion of Death), and he informed that the battalion will hold the position and will begin with digging in, and called our soldiers who did not wish to surrender in the name of the battalion to come to them at their position. The soldiers of our battalion asked for time to think it over.

Meanwhile, among the soldiers were many kinds of rumours, whereby all were talking about how everywhere have been put out white flags. The men of the Dankovsk Regiment were particularly alarmed by the rumour that the men of the Battalion of Death will not allow our soldiers to surrender, and who will try to do so, will be shot. Lieutenant Colonel Rudnev, who did not have any instruction for further actions, went to Raugi to the Headquarters of General Martynov in order to get some instructions. At about 10:30 he returned and informed that he had received personally from General Martynov the order for surrendering, whereby the regiment commander Colonel Mironov had been present, but before the surrender, the weapons must be made useless.

At the same time there arrived again a soldier from the Battalion of Death, who called us to come to their assistance more quickly.

The situation, which was really very critical, became more complicated, because the men of the Battalion of Death were protesting against the capitulation. Then arose, among the officers, the idea to begin negotiations with the Germans. Among the assembled officers were two officers who had mastered the German language. One of them was me and the second was the Commander of the 9th company, 2nd Lieutenant Tamman.

We consented to undertake the duties of the negotiators, and we went on horseback first of all to Commander of the Battalion of Death, in order to get from them also the acceptance. The Commander of the Battalion of Death agreed with the proposal and ordered to present to the Germans the following: "If the Germans agree to transport us (The Battalion of Death) to the mainland together with the weapons, then I, and all of us, will take an oath not to take part any more in this war; if they do not agree with this condition, then inform them that we shall fight until the last man." All this was told by battalion commander entirely calmly, and with a strong voice in front of the whole Battalion of Death. The soldiers approved the words of their commander unanimously.

Our soldiers (3rd battalion of the 470th Regiment), almost at full strength except the 12th company, who had already dispersed on the previous night, took their caps off when we departed and sent us away with the words: "Good journey! Sir, try to do all that is possible!"

The time could be 10:30 or 11:00 when having ridden about 3-4 kilometres we saw about 300 metres away a part of our supply train consisting of 8-10 vehicles. Drawing nearer, we saw that 2 men with rifles were ready to fire from the transport. The men were without overcoats but in helmets. I recognized them as Germans, I raised my hand and pointed to the white band round my arm. The Germans simultaneously put the rifles to the position of the "order" making the sign that they have recognized us as the negotiators, one of them gestured with a hand. Informing them about the reasons of our coming, we asked to send for an officer.

We were answered that the officer is arriving at 12:00.

The Germans were altogether 5 men, one of them was a Pole.

Waiting for the officer we stepped into a house with the soldier of Polish origin, who related to us that they have been brought from the Belgian front at the beginning of September to Liepāja, where they waited quite a long time for dispatch to Saaremaa. On September 28th they landed at Tagalaht Bay, from there they have ridden on bicycles to Orissaare within two days, and they have not met on the way a single Russian soldier. To Muhu Island they arrived last night at

about 02:00 over causeway. Altogether there were no more than 30 men in the reconnaissance detachment.

Soon we were informed that their officer had arrived. Coming out from the farmyard we saw four riders headed by an officer. All the riders had on the high helmets with the badge of the Death Hussars.²¹ We introduced ourselves reciprocally, and when the officer knew the purpose of our coming, he told that he does not have the authority to hold the negotiations and suggested to wait the arrival of the senior officer. After about 45 minutes arrived a young, well-dressed General Staff officer, a cavalry Captain. At the same time when we were introducing ourselves, arrived a military car from which stepped out an elderly gentleman, in a military doctor's uniform, who, as it appeared later, was actually the divisional parson. The conditions of surrender of Commander Shishko presented by us, evidently made the Captain think, because he did not want to decide the question himself, but suggested to take the car and to drive to Viira where the brigade Headquarters was situated. On the way to Headquarters, the parson recommended us to do everything possible so that the men of the Battalion of Death would surrender without bloodshed. By Viira the car stopped and after waiting about 20 minutes, the already known Captain came, and told us that the General is interested in whether we are familiar with the state of the actual situation. Looking at his wrist watch, the Captain remarked that he is waiting with every minute on the news about the complete surrounding of our forces; that there are no prospects of escaping, the artillery had arrived already to Muhu Island, and after a couple of hours everything is finished; the General does not accept any conditions, but is demanding unconditional capitulation not later than at 13:30, whereby the weapons should be assembled to one place and the companies have to move to Viira. Repeating this twice, the Captain suggested us to return, and we were driven back to the place where we had earlier left our horses, but we did not find them there; it appeared that two German soldiers had taken the horses and had ridden further on reconnaissance. By the order of parson, one of the vehicles (a part of the first line transport of the Estonian Regiment) was unloaded and given to our disposal.

Heading to Tupenurme, we met once more one German officer to whom, by his words, we could forward the reply given by the Battalion of Death. With him were two soldiers on our mounts. Arriving to the battalions' position, we found it empty. Later meeting a soldier, we learned that all our men had gone to the coast.

21 The image of the death's head was on the cap badge of two Prussian cavalry regiments, the 1st and 2nd *Leib-Husaren-Regiment* (editor's note).

Upon my question as to where is my company, I had the reply that the company had gone to Raugi to surrender.

I looked for my battalion commander and reported to him the results of the mission, after which I went to the Commander of the Battalion of Death Commander Shishko to whom I repeated the same. The Commander took me to the soldiers and turned to them with the following words:

“Men! The Captain, who has presented to the Germans the conditions of our capitulation has returned, and informed me that the Germans do not accept our conditions, but are demanding we put our weapons down and surrender. What to do?”

From everywhere were heard the calls of soldiers: “Never! We shall resist!” After that Commander Shishko turned to me and said: “Have you heard? This is our reply”.

Considering the question, whether to go to the Germans in order to forward to them the reply of the Battalion of Death or not, I decided on the advice of Lieutenant Colonel Rudnev not to do this. It appeared that in the meantime our minesweepers had approached the coast. From the minesweepers to the shore, the boats could not take more than six men on board, and this caused panic. In order to get to the boats, the soldiers went breast deep into the water to meet them. Every approaching boat was seized by tens of hands ...”

(Captain Shchelishchev, Commander of the 10th Company of the 470th Regiment)

“...In the morning of October 18th, the soldiers of the Dankovsk and Kozelsk regiments decided to surrender voluntarily, forcing us also do the same, on pain of being. We assembled on an open field at Raugi village. Soon appeared seven German soldiers and a Sergeant Major. I went together with two other soldiers to meet them and communicated our decision to surrender voluntarily. We were ranged in a column and were taken away. On the way to Lõo village on Muhu Island I met German troops and transports.”

(M. Lootsmann, Private of the Estonian Regiment).

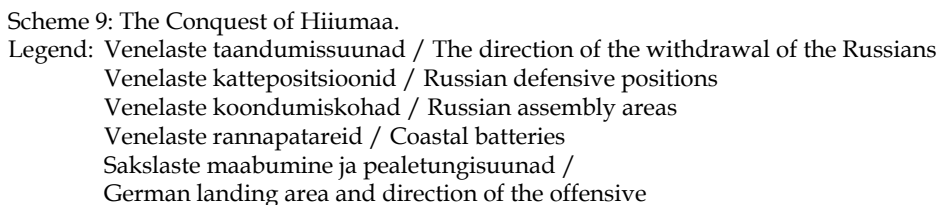
“...In the morning of October 18th, I drove to Pallasmaa to get from the battalion commander information about the situation. The battalion commander had gone to General Martynov. Arriving back to the 2nd company, soldiers informed me that German cyclists are approaching from behind from the direction of the sea, and any resistance is useless, because our fleet has left, and the German warships

are surrounding the island. Company commander Lieutenant Tamm hearing that the Germans are coming from behind gave the order to the nearest 2nd platoon to make the defence behind a stone wall, but the soldiers replied that any resistance has no meaning. Immediately after that 15–20 German cyclists appeared. The soldiers surrendered without any resistance. The Germans took us with them to Paistu, where the 3rd and 4th platoons joined us. I do not know, how many other companies of the Estonian regiment have surrendered. In the morning of October 19th, we were joined with a general column of the prisoners of war, in which could be a total of three to four thousand men.

(2nd lieutenant Jõesaar, Estonian Regiment).

Muhu Island also fell without resistance. At the same time the German fleet broke through the Irbe Strait and therewith the command of the Gulf of Riga belonged to them. The Germans had achieved the most important objective of their operation.

HIIMUMAA LANGEMINE.



The actions in Hiiumaa took place between the Russian forces of defence and the German 17th Infantry Regiment together with one cyclist battalion (Scheme 9). A general picture of the developments in Hiiumaa is given by the report of the commander of the defence in Hiiumaa:

“On 12th October at 06:00 in Küdema the enemy fleet about 50 ships strong was observed from the Sõru border guard post. At first they were taken for our own ships, but upon inquiring from Tallinn, the reply came that there are no Russian ships in this region. The coastal battery No. 34 opened fire at once upon the enemy’s fleet, destroying with a second salvo one torpedo boat. But at the same time, the battery fell under the concentrated fire of the enemy fleet, and soon all four guns were silenced. The officers and several men remained by the battery, but the rest of the complement left towards inland. Through the enemy’s fire, 2 men were killed and 6 wounded. After destroying the battery, the enemy began to carry out the landing in Sõru and Emmaste estate region.

In that region I had two companies of infantry and four machine guns, which had the task to defend the front of 15 kilometres. Receiving the information about the enemy’s landing, I made the arrangements for moving the sector’s reserve, the 5th company to the most endangered point. In addition to that two companies from the northern sector were sent to Sõru. Together with the arrived forces, the landing was liquidated and the coast cleared of the enemy. After destroying the battery, the enemy’s fleet took position in a single line formation between Sõru and Kõpu headland.

On the same day, the enemy bombarded Kõpu lighthouse. On 13–14 October the enemy blockaded the western coast of Hiiumaa and did not undertake any active operations. The forces on the island occupied the new starting line from the western entrance of Soela Strait up to the sea. The enemy fleet and our fleet had engagements. On October 15th there was some excitement in the left sector in Sõru-Emmaste region. The enemy’s torpedo boats shelled our advanced trenches from light guns. At the same time, the enemy fleet captured the western entrance to Soela Strait and their torpedo boats appeared in Kassari Bay. The information arrived about the fall of Saaremaa. On October 15th German small forces landed in the Sõru-Lepiku region, but they were forced to return to the ships very soon. In my disposal was only a small garrison with weak artillery, and I asked for reinforcements as quickly as possible to continue the successful fighting. It was promised to dispatch into my disposal the Estonian regiment, one battalion from the Dankovsk Regiment, two Austrian field batteries, two 6” guns, and two 75 mm

guns, to replace the 34th battery. But actually until the fall of island neither forces nor artillery did not arrive.

In the morning of 16th October, the enemy's battleships opened intensive fire on the frontline trenches from Vanamöisa village up to Emmaste estate. After the preparation artillery fire the enemy landed reconnaissance parties who later returned to their ships. In order to avoid losses from the enemy's artillery fire, the companies moved back 4 kilometres, leaving the guard on the coast.

In that fighting the commander of the 5th Company Ensign Savelyev was killed, Ensign Raksimovich was being contused and some tens of soldiers wounded. At the same time the enemy finally conquered Kassari Bay and became the master of the southern coast of Hiiumaa, sending into the rear of our forces in Sõru, Emmaste region, scouts and proviant officers. The news about the enemy's appearance into the rear of the position made the forces nervous and undermined their stability. In the evening of October 16th the hope of the men of the arrival of reinforcements and artillery disappeared. There arrived newspapers, from which I could only confiscate a portion, which painted the fate of Hiiumaa in very dark colours.

The premature evacuation of some military establishments (wireless telegraph, seaplane flights) affected the other units badly. The garrison's moral was also weakened by the the fact than any real support from our fleet was missing. "We are ready to fight," the soldiers said, "but give us the means of defence, and tell us what use Russia has from our resistance."

On October 17th, two battlecruisers and some torpedo boats started to bombard the coast from Vanamoisa to Emmaste from 8" and 10" guns with increasing intensity. We replied with rifle and machine gun fire. After preparation artillery fire the enemy landed, advancing soon inland. The forward companies were acting energetically, the Commander of the 1st company, 2nd Lieutenant Grachev, led the counter-attack. All the officers of the 5th company fell or were wounded, whereby company commander 2nd Lieutenant Liblikas was killed.

On the same day at about 12:00 the German landing in Kassari island region was reported, which appeared as a signal for a general withdrawal to the nervous and depressed units.

Fearing being surrounded, the forces of the left sector withdrew over Pühalepa to Heltermaa harbour, leaving the rear guard, consisting of two companies, and one artillery platoon in Käina region.

Due to the fall in spirits of the left sector, I ordered on October 16th to evacuate Kõpu peninsula to shorten the western front and to turn battery No. 47 temporarily

useless for exploitation, which was also executed. Companies situated on Kõpu peninsula assembled on the isthmus.

On October 17th, the order arrived from the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet to pay special attention to the defence of batteries No. 38 and No. 39 on Tahkuna peninsula, because those batteries had to cover the fleet's withdrawal into the Gulf of Finland. On the basis of this order I reinforced Tahkuna sector with one company.

On October 18th, the situation had emerged as follows. All the forces of the left sector had assembled to Heltermaa harbour secured by smaller guard units in the Pühalepa and Käina regions. The soldiers of the left sector were not in any condition for fighting, and part of them forcibly took to the steamers and boats going over to the mainland; the ones who remained demanded their transportation from the island. The committees and officers had a lot to do in order to prevent summary justice and robbery.

In the morning of October 18th, in accordance with my order, five companies of the right sector assembled in full order to the isthmus of Kõpu peninsula on the line of the Kõrgesaare village. On the same day, two companies in Tahkuna region heard that the soldiers of the left sector are in Heltermaa harbour and are going over to the mainland; this news was sufficient for them to abandon their positions, and go to Kärkla where it was hoped to find ships for crossing to the mainland. The opposition of myself and the members of committee did not help. About 1000 people assembled in the evening in Kärkla. I reported with a telegram to the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet that the regiment has lost its combat capability, I do not have forces to defend the island, and therefore it is necessary to evacuate the troops from the island. The Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet replied that for the evacuation the transport "Elba" will be sent to Heltermaa and the "On" to Kärkla. Simultaneously I received the order to defend Tahkuna peninsula together with the batteries No. 38 and 39 until the last chance, whereby this sector could be evacuated only after demolishing the batteries.

At night on October 18th, the situation on the island was as follows. A part of the forces of the left sector was in Heltermaa harbour, the forces of the right sector were in Kärkla region, the units of mounted reconnaissance and border guard in Pühalepa and Käina region. At the batteries No. 38 and 39 in Tahkuna and Lehtma were the units of the 2nd naval artillery battalion, and some soldiers of various units who had agreed to share the fate of the island until the end.

The transport "Elba" arrived to Heltermaa harbour In the morning of October 19th and the troops of the left sector, the guns, and machine guns were embarked to

the ship. At 13:00 the transport departed conveyed by the last squadron of torpedo boats who had left Kassari Bay. Already about at 15:00 in the Hiiumaa region and on the way to Rohuküla was not a single warship, and the whole sea in that region was under German control.

In Kärdla harbour the troops of the right sector waited in vain for the arrival of the transport "On", because she was sunk before arriving to the harbour. The officers and the members of the committees had great difficulty in keeping order among the restless soldiers. Some soldiers tried to plunder the wool mill in Kärdla, but the sailors prevented the devastation. A part of the right sector troops, particularly the 12th company was keeping order exemplarily. In the morning of October 19th the news arrived that the infantry and artillery of the enemy is landing in Emmaste region. In the evening of October 19th, when the promised transport did not appear, the troops of the right sector moved over Pühalepa estate to Heltermaa harbour in order to find some ships. But it was already too late. The enemy's advanced units in Pühalepa region had cut off the road leading to Heltermaa harbour, and when the column arrived to the above region, it was surrounded by the enemy, and a part was annihilated and the remainder captured. Only a few soldiers and officers succeeded in escaping this trap.

In the morning of October 20th, the whole island, except Tahkuna peninsula, was under German control. At 18:00 I drove, accompanied by some officers and soldiers, to the region of Lehtma batteries No. 38 and 39 where it was decided to provide the last resistance. At 10:00 the enemy's advance units captured Kärdla, sending patrols and cyclist units in the northwestern direction. It was decided to demolish the batteries, magazines, and fortifications, because it was impossible to resist and to defend the batteries, whereas the last defenders of Hiiumaa were going to leave to Vormsi island with two small tugs and three sailing ships. At 14:00 the embarkation of the men was completed. During the embarkation the particular care was shown by the commander of the 2nd Battalion (Navy) Lieutenant [Russian Lieutenant Captain] Nikolayev and construction engineer 2nd Lieutenant Gornov.

At about 14:00 the ships casted off just at the moment when the German advance troops arrived to Lehtma harbour. On the island remained only a necessary complement – sailors under the leadership of (Navy) Lieutenant Nikolayev, Engineers Gornov and Kister and commander of the Battery No. 39 2nd Lieutenant Montlevich.

The transports succeeded in arriving to Vormsi at lighthouse at 18:00, in spite of the missing protection of the warships. After a night march lasting 24 hours, the

last defenders of Hiiumaa arrived to the eastern coast of Vormsi island to Norby and Söderby harbours, from where they were transported to the mainland.

The demolition party left behind executed their task brilliantly, destroying all the guns and stores after which they sailed to Paldiski.

Generally, the troops of Hiiumaa opposed the enemy from the 12th until the 20th of October. During the first five days the infantry repelled with losses the hostile landing attempts. Only when the enemy's advance units penetrated far into the rear, and when the soldiers saw that help will not arrive, the morale of the complement fell and all assembled in the harbours in order to get to the mainland. Nobody wanted to be captured.

The soldiers told that they are ready to fight for the motherland, but only if it brings benefit to Russia. Also, the premature evacuation of some establishments, such as the Headquarters' commandant administration, the seaplane flight, and a part of wireless station, harmed the defence of the island and the mood of the troops.

In the first days of the blockade, Headquarters received information about the situation in Saaremaa, and on mainland from position's Headquarters or from the Headquarters of the Land Forces of the Baltic Fleet. Beginning from October 17th, communication ceased between Headquarters, and the Headquarters of Hiiumaa garrison was unaware of the development of the events. From that date onwards, communication was held with the Commander-in-Chief of Baltic Fleet via wireless, by Signals Chief (Navy) Lieutenant [Russian Senior Lieutenant] Yelachich.

Particular discipline and manliness was shown by the coastal battery No. 39, commanded by its commander Sub-Lieutenant Montlevich. The officers, soldiers, sailors, and committees of the garrison of Hiiumaa did everything possible in order to come out from the catastrophic situation with honour.

On the first days, the soldiers fearlessly repelled the enemy. Until the last minute nobody thought about surrender. Timely support from the Baltic Fleet and sending of reinforcements, particularly artillery, would have delayed for a certain time the fall of the island. The arrival of transport in due time would have saved thousands of lives.

Now it is difficult to establish the casualties. The biggest number of the losses falls to the 427th Pudozh Regiment, from where were saved about 30 officers and 1200-1500 soldiers. The casualties of other units are small. All the batteries and other valuable buildings have been demolished.

Colonel Veselago."

The report of Colonel Panteleyev describes the events in the southern part of Hiiumaa more accurately. The above report, as well as the extracts from the officers' comments, describe the events in Hiiumaa similar to how it appears in the report of the commander of defence Colonel Veselago.

"At about 07:00 on October 12th strong cannonade from Sõru region was heard. Arriving to Kärđla communication exchange, it appeared that the connection with the 34th battery has ceased; from Kõpu lighthouse it was replied that the enemy's fleet is bombarding the coast and is moving towards Kõpu. I reported this to Colonel Veselago. Also the connection had ceased with the commander of southern sector Captain Kalnitski-Patenko, who was the commander of the 2nd Battalion of the 427th Regiment.

From Kõpu peninsula I was informed that the German fleet is approaching to southern coast of Kõpu peninsula. Regiment commander Colonel Veselago decided to drive there together with the members of regiment's committee in order to encourage the soldiers, and left me to execute the duties of the commander of the island's defence. Before that was given the order to the 1st field battery to deploy to Luidja village, and to the reconnaissance detachment from Kõrgessaare estate to the position of the 12th company near Puski.

At about 10.00 I dispatched Ensign Sokolov with a car together with the technicians to Sõru, and ordered to fix the communication with the commander of the 2nd Battalion in any case. A little later I succeeded in contacting the commander of the 2nd Battalion by telephone, from whose explanations appeared that the 34th battery had resisted the Germans only for a short time, and that the enemy's fleet consisted of 1 battleship, 1 large cruiser, and 14 torpedo boats. When the 34th battery was silenced, the fleet carried the fire over upon the coast from Emmaste estate up to Tohvri estate. The 7th and 8th company of the 427th Regiment did not withstand the fire and withdrew; the Commander of the 2nd Battalion earnestly required reinforcements, so I gave the order to the platoons of the 5th company ($\frac{1}{2}$ company) located at Putkaste to deploy without delay to Emmaste estate when the platoons of the 5th company situated at Pühalepa had to be ready for leaving.

In addition, I dispatched in the disposal of commander of the 2nd Battalion two platoons from labour detachment under the command of 2nd Lieutenant Shibo, a member of the regiment's committee. The Commander of the 2nd Battalion asked repeatedly for permission to withdraw, but as the situation was not clear, I considered it to be not permissible. Soon there arrived information about the landing of $1\frac{1}{2}$ battalions of the enemy near the 34th battery; I did not pay any

particular attention to this information; as it later appeared, my opinion was correct because by the 34th battery had landed only a small German group from a torpedo boat, probably with the task to damage the guns, which were still in working order.

I have information that when the complement left the battery, three guns were still eligible for fighting, but when I inspected the battery on October 14th, it appeared that the breech-blocks of three guns had been damaged with some heavy item. On the evening of October 12th, it was succeeded to force he companies to return on general line of Viiterna-Viiri; the 8th and 5th companies put the guard out along the coast, when the 7th company together with labour detachment was assembled in the farms. By the order of Colonel Veselago I went at night on October 13th to Emmaste estate and took over the conduct of the southern sector.

In the morning of October 13th, the situation in the southern sector was unchanged. The enemy's ships were as follows: one two-funneled battleship was about 12 kilometres off Sõru border guard post, a little closer was an armoured cruiser, whereas in the mouth of the Strait along the coast were seen 14 torpedo boats. At about 11:00 on October 13th, from Kassari Bay seven of our ships appeared, and the firing started with the enemy. The firing lasted 15-20 minutes, after which our ships left in the eastern direction; our ships were pursued by about ten enemy torpedo boats. Beginning from that moment the Germans penetrated freely Soela Strait. On October 15th, our four torpedo boats stayed south-eastward off Tärkma but they did not engage Germans. On the 14th, 15th and 16th of October the German ships shelled the coast from Tärkma up to the farms; in that region were situated advance forces who withdrew during the shelling.

On October 15th the actual strength of the southern sector consisted of the 7th, 8th, and 1st companies, half of the 5th company, and half of the 2nd company (the labour detachment at had already arbitrarily dispersed). Staying voluntarily with me were 40 border guards, two guns of the 1st field battery, and 16 sailors.

At about 10:30 on October 16th, the enemy started again to bombard Viira and Reheselja villages. The 7th and 8th company, and half of the 5th company, did not endure the fire and withdrew. Commander of the 8th company Ensign Savelyev was killed by an accidental shell; after that happened it was no longer possible to take the company back to the positions. The elucidation and orders by commanders of the 2nd Battalion Captain Kalnitski-Patenko, by the regiment priest, and by Sergeant Kovalenko from the 8th company committee, did not give any results.

On October 16th the situation was as follows:

1) a part of the detachment which landed from the German torpedo boats was in Lepiku village and in Sõru border guard house.

2) Commander of the 7th company Ensign Voitinski succeeded somehow to gather his company at the farms;

3) the 8th company was in Tilga village and decided to withdraw finally.

Any means did not help. If my position had not been on the frontline in Nemo post office, the soldiers would have executed their threat and would have killed me for that that I had ordered them to front line. My explanations that firing is a common phenomenon in the war did not help.

On October 16th I ordered the commander of the 1st company to put out outposts on Metsalauka-Viira general line. But as there had remained only 32 men in the company, only the blocking of the Käina road at the post office proved to be possible. By the parish government house the road was blocked by the men remaining in the 5th company, commanded by the Commander of the 2nd battalion. But the men withdrew at night and in place remained only the Battalion Commander together with an orderly, and a telephonist.

I reported the situation to regiment commander Colonel Veselago who allowed us to withdraw on October 17th to the general line at Jausa. On October 17th at about 15:00-16:00 the Germans moved with larger forces from Emmaste estate towards Nemo where the advance guard of the 1st company, and a machine gun platoon were located. The 1st company did not hinder the approach of the German firing line but withdrew; the machine gun platoon opened fire on the enemy but having fired some belts also withdrew.

My Headquarters was situated from October 15th at 12:00 onwards in Tilga village.

Saaremaa had already fallen, and the coast of Hiiumaa had been captured by enemy forces; from the refugees the information was received about the landing of artillery by the Germans, and what was the main thing - the soldiers had lost every kind of will to resist. I decided in accordance with the instructions received from Colonel Veselago, to withdraw to Käina position.

Before the withdrawal I received information from border guard that off Valgu village had landed about 40 German sailors who are moving inland. For liquidating this I dispatched voluntary sailors, whom I have not seen since.

At 18:00 I started to move my unit, more correctly the remains of the unit, towards Käina; the movement was covered by two rear guard patrols with altogether 8 men from the 1st company, commander of the 1st company 2nd Lieutenant Grachev, myself, and one cart with telephone-telegraph equipment. I

arrived to Käina at 20:00. The last soldiers of the 1st company left already at 23:00 despite of my explanations and requests to stay at Käina if only until the morning. At Käina only my staff and a platoon of the 1st field battery stayed overnight. To Kärđla I drove with a car sent for me. After my report, Colonel Veselago at once asked the permission by telephone for the evacuation of the island. The consent for evacuation was received, but in Kärđla we waited in vain for the arrival of the transports. The unrest started to ferment, threats were heard on the address of officers, and the plunder of the food store began. In order not to become a prisoner, I left the island on October 17th, at 17:00 in a small boat together with two officers and two soldiers."

(Colonel Panteleyev)

"With the withdrawal of the right flank to the Isthmus of Kõpu peninsula the mood of companies fell. In some regions only officers remained in place, when their pleas did not influence the soldier at all."

(Commander of the machine gun detachment of the 427th Regiment - Ensign Vasilyev).

"After taking off the sentries I moved to the Isthmus of Kõpu peninsula in order to execute here the task allotted to me. On the way I gathered from the soldiers' conversation that the latter intend to leave the island. Arriving to the above region, the 3rd platoon demanded to take the whole company without delay to Kärđla, threatening otherwise to leave without the officers. My exhortations did not help. I reported this to the regiment commander by telephone; the regiment commander ordered me to stay. I let the decision of the regiment commander know to the platoon, pointing out that who does not want to fulfil his duty can go, but the officers will stay here. This was influential, and the soldiers stayed. In the morning the regiment commander arrived, explained the situation, and indicated that the defence of the island is inexpedient, and for the transportation of the soldiers to the mainland transport has been demanded. In order for the regiment to be nearer to the evacuation point, the regiment commander ordered us to assembly in Kärđla."

(Commander of the 2nd company of the 427th Regiment 2nd Lieutenant Korolev)

"During withdrawal to the Isthmus of Kõpu peninsula the mood of the soldiers fell and they demanded to continue the withdrawal. With great difficulty it was succeeded to reassure them. In the morning of October 18th, the mood of

the soldiers became worse, under the influence of soldiers who had deserted from other companies. There were many arbitrary leaves, and it was considered that with the appearance of the enemy the situation will become much worse. After some hours, the regiment commander gave the order to withdraw to Kidaste line. But as the other units moved from Kidaste immediately further, our company did not stop there either, and left for Kärddla without asking permission from the officers."

(Ensign Titov, 2nd company of the 427th Regiment.)

"All the enemy ships opened fire upon the 34th battery, which was silenced after 15–20 minutes. The sailors of the 34th battery dispersed. The desertion of the sailors caused a panic in my half-company, from where the soldiers left in smaller groups. A small number of men stayed by me, I took them to the first half-company but this also had dispersed, except the company commander and Ensign Stamm. Company commander tried once more to summon back the men who had assembled at Haldreka border guard post, but he did not succeed."

(Ensign Bobrov, 7th company of the 427th Regiment.)

From the above reports, and particularly from the written explanations, it appears that the defenders of Hiiumaa also did not represent a disciplined fighting force. The positions were left arbitrarily, and soldiers withdrew to the harbours on the western coast, waiting for transports in order to escape to the mainland. Due to the transports coming late, among the Russians panic was rife. At the same time the commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position was placed in a very difficult situation because the means of evacuation and the command authority had been given altogether to other persons, notwithstanding that the responsible commander of the position was Rear Admiral Sveshnikov. Proof of this unpleasant situation is in the following report:

"To the Commander of the Land Forces. The evacuation of units from the island has ceased, and as the part of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position on the mainland is subordinated to General Kreidtner and Colonel Tõnisson, as well as all the means of evacuation and the commanding authority are belonging to Tõnisson, I consider my functions have been terminated and myself being dismissed. Therefore, I beg your permission for a part of my Staff to go to Tallinn into the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet.

19th October, at 0600, No. 02607. Sveshnikov."

To this report the following instruction arrived:

“To Admiral Sveshnikov.

I transfer the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet:

“Admiral Sveshnikov has to go to Tallinn.”

Flag officer Lieutenant Shents.”

The commander of the Muhu Strait Fortified Position Rear Admiral Sveshnikov, could consider himself responsible for all the operational and other arrangements which were made until his departure from Kuressaare. Henceforward Rear Admiral Sveshnikov considered himself responsible only for the tasks which were laying upon him in respect of the evacuation of the troops. With the fall of Hiiumaa the fate of the Baltic Islands was decided for this time. They were now under the power of a new master. The entire operation had lasted only 9 days, and now when the islands had been captured with only small casualties, the establishment of new order with an iron fist began.

D. The General Summary

In making a general summary, first we have to recognise the low morale of the Russians as the principal factor which fixed the direction of the development of events on the Baltic Islands in October 1917. If we would observe the above events from the point of a mathematician, who is interested only in figures, we could come to some other conclusion. But we know that in war the numbers very often play a secondary part altogether, and other factors are more decisive.

We know that morale is a most important factor in the war. We know the influence of the morale of the fighters, as well as of the whole nation bears upon the course of the war activities. We have seen hereinbefore that the situation of the morale in the Russian army, as well as in the nation, was low. The ongoing war, revolution, and the abating authority of the Provisional Government ruined the army as well as the whole nation. Therefore, it is very dangerous as a dry mathematician to contemplate these events, because this will lead us to entirely erroneous conclusions. There, where the opponents by their morale are more or less equal, will not arise so big errors in the evaluation of rival forces by numbers; on the present occasion, one side had a morale with a value of almost zero. It is also necessary to point out that the Russians had too small a force for defending the long coastline. But on the other hand, we also know that with numerally weak forces numerally strong ones are defeated. That is particularly valid in case of the combined operations, but only on the condition that the defenders have a strong morale. If the defender is able to keep morale high and remain unshaken on the coast, despite overwhelming artillery fire from the ships, and will stand his position, then we can say that success by landing, that is by the most difficult phase of a combined operation, is very questionable. We can easily assume that if the Russians had in Saaremaa one decent unit, then the events would have developed entirely differently. But such an unit was missing.

Reinforcements were brought in, but they were so ruined that they started to rob on the way. Morally strong fighters were missing on the spot, and there were also no possibilities to bring them from somewhere else. With the German landing started a disorderly withdrawal which finally turned into a panic retreat. The principal reason for the panic retreat was the fear of becoming cut off from the mainland. The entire force defending Saaremaa took the direction towards Muhu Island in order to escape to the mainland. The mainland was this magnet which drew the demoralized mass of Russians. From there the last light of hope

for saving shined. It is expressively clear that the defending of islands and isolated areas demands fighters with a strong morale. To become frightened, and isolated, added to the feeling of ignorance due to the inadequate reconnaissance and communication. Unknown danger always affects the consciousness in a greater manner than the danger which is known before. Ignorance of the size of the danger deepens the panic. Therefore, the forces brought for the reinforcement also did not want to go to meet the obscure future expecting them. On every possible occasion soldiers tried to save themselves by violently intruding onto ships, rowing with boats and logs into the open sea in order to escape to the mainland. When the possibilities were lacking for escape, then they decided to surrender, which was done without hesitation when the Germans appeared.

Being acquainted with the morale of the Russians, we can say that the Germans overestimated the Russians. They put into action large forces and exhausted them with long marches. Although German intelligence was well organised, the German High Command did not believe that the Russian moral was completely ruined. Therefore, in order to justify their overestimation, they are described the events on the islands as battles, mentioning only slightly that the moral situation of the Russians was very low. This gives an entirely erroneous picture, which is especially dangerous when people who took part in the events are no longer among us, those who saw the situation first hand, and who have lived through the struggles of this time. Young people, who will investigate later the descriptions only from one side, which are written with a certain aim, may get entirely the wrong idea about what actually happened.

These pages reflect the authentic notes of the period in as accurate manner as possible as they have been preserved from that time. These pages wish to reflect only a part of that soul and of that spirit which ruled the fighters at that time. Only in such a way is it possible to refresh the events authentically.

Appendix 1

The calculations are made considering that the enemy is carrying out a landing operation in only one section.

Landing site Company		At site				After 2 hours				After 4 hours				After 6 hours			
		Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery
1,	Punniku, Panga	1	4	2/8	6	—	—	—	—	2	4	2/8	6	3	10	2/8	12
2,	Küdema laht	3	6	2/8 ²⁾	6	3	10	2/8	6	4	16	2/8	12	—	—	—	—
3,	Tagalaht bay	2	12	—	12	—	—	—	—	8	34	—	12	9	34	—	12
4,	Kurevere, Kihelkonna	2	—	—	20	2	10	—	³⁾ 0/20	3	10	—	0/20	5	22	—	12/20
5,	Kollinge	1 ¹⁾	6	—	—	1	6	—	6	2	12	—	6	4	22	—	6
6,	Karala	0/1	—	—	—	0/2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1/2	12	—	—
7,	Mühanina	1	6	—	2	1/1	8	—	2	3/1	14	—	2	—	—	—	—
8,	Tiirimetsa	2	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	4/1	14	—	2	—	—	—	—
9,	Lõo	1	—	—	4	7	—	—	4	7	20	—	10	9	32	2/8	16
10,	Türju, Jämaja	4	12	2/8	6	4	20	2/8	6	4	32	2/8	12	8	32	2/8	12

After 8 hours				After 10 hours				After 12 hours				Next day				Notes
Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	Company	Machine guns	Mortars and mine throwers	Artillery	
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	20	2/8	12	13	36	4/16	22	<p>¹⁾ In the company row squadrons are separated by a slash.</p> <p>²⁾ In the mortars and mine throwers row mine throwers are separated by a slash</p> <p>³⁾ In the artillery row anti air artillery is separated by a slash</p>
—	—	—	—	8	26	2/8	12	14	42	4/16	22	—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	50	2/8	22	—	—	—	—	
9	28	—	12/20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
8	28	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	44	2/8	22	
6/2	24	—	8	—	—	—	—	12/21	40	2/8	18	—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	9/1	30	2/8	12	13	40	2/8	18	—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	10/1	30	2/8	12	—	—	—	—	14/1	40	2/8	18	
12	32	2/8	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	12	32	2/8	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	

Appendix 2

The Russian Naval Forces in the Gulf of Riga in October 1917.

No.	Type	Name	Notes
1) BATTLESHIPS			
1.	Battleship	Grazhdanin	Built 1901, 13,300 t 18 knots, 4-12", 12-6", 20-75 mm
2.	"	"Slava"	Built 1903, 13,600 t, 18 knots; 4-12", 12-6", 20-75 mm
2) CRUISERS			
3.	Cruiser	Bayan	Built 1907, 8000 t, 21 knots; 2-8", 8-6", 20-75 mm
4.	"	Admiral Makarov	Built 1907, 8000 t, 21 knots; 2-8", 8-6", 20-75 mm
5.	"	Diana	Built 1899, 6800 t, 19 knots
3) MINE DIVISION			
6.	Leader	Novik (flagship)	
<i>a) 11th Flotilla</i>			
7.	"	Pobeditel	
8.	"	Zabiyaka	
9.	"	Grom	
<i>b) 12th Flotilla</i>			
10.	"	Desna	
11.	"	Samsun	
12.	"	Leitenant Ilyin	
13.	"	Kapitan Izylmetyev	
<i>c) 13th Flotilla</i>			
14.	"	Izyaslav	
15.	"	Avtroil	
16.	"	"Konstantin"	
17.	"	Gavriil	
<i>d) 4th Flotilla</i>			
18.	Leader	General Kondratenko	
19.	"	Pogranichnik	
<i>e) 5th Flotilla</i>			
20.	Destroyer	Vsadnik	
21.	"	Amurets	
22.	"	Finn	

No.	Type	Name	Notes
23.	"	Moskvityanin	
24.	"	Emir Bukharski	
<i>f) 6th Flotilla</i>			
25.	"	Stregushchi	
26.	"	Donskoi Kazak	
27.	"	Zabaikalets	
28.	"	Voiskovoy	
29.	"	Ukraina	
30.	"	"Turkmenets Stavropolski	
31.	"	Strashnyy	
<i>g) To the division attached ships</i>			
32.	Transport	Pechora	
33.	"	Oka	
34.	"	Libava	Divisional Staff
35.	"	Vodoley No. 1	
36.	Lighter	Lava	Hospital
37.	"	No. 4	With mines
38.	Cutter	Dozorniy	
39.	"	Ilim	
40.	"	Moryak	
4) THE THIRD FLOTILLA OF PATROL SHIPS			
41.	Steam boat	No. 1	
42.	"	No. 2	
43.	"	No. 3	
44.	"	No. 4	
45.	Motor ship	No. 2	
46.	"	No. 3	
47.	"	No. 8	
48.	"	No. 9	
49.	Depot ship	Tralshchik No. 12	
5) THE BRITISH SUBMARINES			
50.	S/M	S 26	
51.	"	S 27	
52.	"	S 32	
6) THE PATROL SHIP DIVISION OF THE BALTIC			
<i>a) The 8th Destroyer Flotilla</i>			
53.	Destroyer	Likhoy	

No.	Type	Name	Notes
<i>b) The 11th Destroyer Flotilla</i>			
54.	"	Gromyashchiy	
55.	"	Silnyy	
56.	"	Deyatelnyy	
57.	"	Delnyy	
58.	"	Storozhevoy	
59.	"	Razyashchiy	
<i>c) The 2nd Patrol Ship Flotilla</i>			
60.	Dispatch boat	Barsuk	
61.	"	Gornostay	
62.	"	Vydra	
<i>d) The 3rd Patrol Ship Flotilla</i>			
63.	"	Horek	
64.	"	Laska	
<i>e) The 1st Patrol Cutter Flotilla</i>			
65.	Patrol cutter	S. K. 1	
66.	"	S. K. 2	
67.	"	S. K. 3	
68.	"	S. K. 4	
69.	"	S. K. 5	
70.	"	S. K. 6	
71.	"	S. K. 7	
72.	"	S. K. 8	
73.	"	S. K. 9	
74.	"	S. K. 11	
75.	"	S. K. 12	
76.	Depot ship	B. K. No. 1	
<i>f) The 2nd Patrol Cutter Flotilla</i>			
77.	Patrol cutter	S. K. 16	
78.	"	S. K. 17	
79.	"	S. K. 18	
80.	"	S. K. 19	
7) THE MINESWEEPER DIVISION OF THE BALTIC			
<i>a) The 2nd Flotilla</i>			
81.	Destroyer	Prytkiy	
82.	"	Retivyy	
83.	"	Rezvyi	

No.	Type	Name	Notes
<i>b) The 3rd Flotilla</i>			
84.	Minesweeper	Minrep	
85.	"	Udarnik	
<i>c) The 4th Flotilla</i>			
86.	Minesweeper	Kapsyul	
87.	"	Gruz	
88.	"	Krambol	
<i>d) The 5th Flotilla</i>			
89.	Minesweeper	Tralshchik No. 3	
90.	"	Tralshchik No. 8	
91.	"	Tralshchik No. 23	
<i>e) The 6th Flotilla</i>			
92.	Minesweeper	Planeta	
93.	"	Tralshchik No. 11	
<i>f) The 1st Minesweeping Motorboats Flotilla</i>			
94.	Motorboat	No. 2	
95.	"	No. 3	
96.	"	No. 5	
97.	"	No. 7	
98.	"	Tralshchik baza No. 7	
<i>g) From the 2nd Mine-Sweeping Motorboats Flotilla</i>			
99.	Motorboat	Tralshchik baza No. 10	
		i) Auxiliary ships at the Division	
100.	Minesweeper	Tralshchik No. 4	
8) MINELAYERS OF THE BALTIC			
101.	Minelayer	Amur	
102.	"	Volga	
9) NET-LAYERS			
a) The 1st Flotilla of Netlayers			
103.	Netlayer	Zeya	
104.	"	Bureya	
b) From the 3rd Flotilla of Netlayers			
105.	Netlayer	Pripyat	
10. GUNBOATS			
106.	Gunboat	Khrabryy	
107.	"	Grozyashchiy	
108.	"	Hivinets	

No.	Type	Name	Notes
11. THE AUXILIARIES BY AIR DIVISION			
109.	Tug	Aviun	
12. FROM THE BALTIC TRANSPORT DIVISION			
<i>a) The 3rd Transport Flotilla</i>			
110.	Transport	General Zimmerman	
<i>b) The 6th Transport Flotilla</i>			
111.	Transport	Obsidiyan	
112.	"	Vasiyan	
<i>c) Transport Flotilla</i>			
113.	Collier	Buki	
114.	"	Glagol	
115.	"	On	
116.	"	Pokoy	
117.	Supply ship	Sukhona	
118.	Attached ship	Vodoley No. 2	
13) THE DIRECTORY OF THE PILOTS AND LIGHTHOUSES OF THE BALTIC			
119.	Transport	Artelshchik	
120.	"	Samoyed	
121.	Tender	Brigitovka	

Note: The List is based on data from Alexei Mikhailovich Kosinski's book "Моонзундская операция Балтийского флота 1917 года," Leningrad, 1928.

The Sources for the Illustrations

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Schemes can be found online:

<https://www.baltdefcol.org/files/nikolaireek/>

Lieutenant General Nikolai Reek was the grandfather and founder of the 'Estonian School' of military education and thinking. General Reek's influence in the development of the new generation of officer education in Estonia has been remarkable. He emphasized practical training and stressed learning from numerous case studies and battles. He was an author of some of the case studies, such as "The Defence and Conquest of Saaremaa in 1917," well-known also as Operation Albion, published in the final 1937 edition. Furthermore, General Reek shaped the instruction of Estonian officers' leadership and decision-making skills at the tactical level by scrutinizing Western sources from France, Belgium, and Germany. These were reformulated into manuals that replaced the outdated pedagogical methods that had been inherited from Russian Empire. General Reek can be considered one of the greatest military thinkers, writers, and teachers of his time, and as such, it is worth reading and discovering the relevance of his thoughts today.

Brigadier General Ilmar Tamm
Commandant of the Baltic Defence College

Lieutenant General Nikolai Reek was a pioneer and founding father of Estonian military literature and military science, who, as an experienced senior officer, was very productive in this field. Although he was not the only Estonian officer of his time to publish military research, his writings stand out in terms of the number of aspects covered and in their magnitude as well. Contemporary military and civilian leaders would benefit from the rediscovery of the legacy of General Reek. Here, you can find a number of time-tested observations and findings, especially in the field of leadership. It is only to be welcomed that the works chosen by the controversial general and pioneer of Estonian military science now reach the table of international readership, which in turn allows for a more holistic of their content and general meaning.

Dr. Andres Seene
Historian and publisher of the Nikolai Reek's memoirs in Estonian

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