

# THE MILITARY POTENTIAL OF THE REICHSWEHR IN EAST PRUSSIA IN JANUARY 1923

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## ABSTRACT

The year 1923 was a critical moment in the history of the Weimar Republic. Due to Germany's delay in paying war reparations, French and Belgian forces occupied the Ruhr region in January. Shortly afterwards the Lithuanians seized *Memel* (now *Klaipėda*), which in the Treaty of Versailles had been declared a Free City with a French Governor and garrison. German public opinion was outraged by this situation. In the press, a campaign against Lithuania was started. The article is devoted to publish the results of research on the military potential of *Reichswehr* in East Prussia in January 1923. The hypothesis concerning the military *Reichswehr* impossibility to influence the *Klaipėda* events has to be examined in this article.

KEY WORDS: military potential, *Reichswehr*, East Prussia, January 1923 events in *Klaipėda*.

## ANOTACIJA

1923-ieji metai tapo kritiniu laikotarpiu Veimaro Respublikos istorijoje. Vėluojant mokėti pralaimėto karo reparacijas, Prancūzijos ir Belgijos kariuomenė tų metų sausio mėnesį pradėjo karinės okupacijos operacijas Ruro (*Ruhr*) regione. Tuo pat metu Lietuva atsiėmė *Klaipėdos (Memel)* kraštą, Versalio sutartimi tapusį laisvuju miestu su Prancūzijos administravimu ir jos karine įgula. Vokietija buvo ištikta dar vieno šoko. Spaudoje prieš Lietuvą prasidėjo plati propagandinė kampanija. Straipsnyje pateikiamų tyrimų objektas – 1923 metų Vokietijos karinės galios Rytų Prūsijoje analizė. Buvo siekiama patikrinti hipotezę, kad Reicho kariuomenė po Ruro krizės buvo tiesiog per silpna pasipriešinti *Klaipėdos* įvykiams Rytų Prūsijoje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: karinė galia, Reicho kariuomenė, Rytų Prūsija, 1923 m. sausio įvykiai *Klaipėdos* krašte.

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## Introduction

The year 1923 was a critical moment in the history of the Weimar Republic. Due to Germany's delay in paying war reparations, French and Belgian forces occupied the Ruhr region in January. Shortly afterwards, another serious event took place, this time on the eastern border of Germany. The Lithuanians seized *Memel* (now *Klaipėda*), which in the treaty of Versailles had been declared a Free City with a French Governor and garrison. German public opinion was outraged by this situation. In the press, a campaign against Lithuania was started.

The unofficial attitude was quite different. At a meeting with Lithuanian representatives, the chief of the *Heeresleitung*, General Hans von Seeckt, reassured them that the *Reichswehr* would not undertake any action against the incorporation of *Memel* into Lithuania. His main motive was probably the perception that *Memel* could become a base for French influence in the Baltic region and could therefore threaten Eastern Prussia from the north, while Poland – France's ally – was a threat on the southern border of the province.

## German regular forces in East Prussia

In order to analyse the German regular forces in East Prussia, it necessary first to begin with the mobilisation of 1914. During peacetime, German forces in that region consisted of I<sup>st</sup> Army Corps,

with headquarters in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) and XX<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, located in the southern part of the province with the city of Allenstein (now Olsztyn) as its headquarters. These two corps comprised 16 infantry regiments, 10 cavalry regiments, 8 field artillery regiments and 2 regiments of foot artillery (heavy guns). Other units included 2 pioneer battalions and some air and rear-line formations (see: Rangliste der Königlich... :52-55, 108-111).

During the mobilisation of 1914 in East Prussia, 1 reserve division<sup>1</sup> was formed, as well as second line troops comprising 4 ½ battalions of infantry, 1 squadron cavalry and 8 batteries of artillery (mostly heavy) as the garrison of Fortress Boyen (Der Weltkrieg... 1925:362). The most important military group was, of course, the fortress Königsberg with 27½ battalions of infantry, 9 ½ squadrons' cavalry and 66 batteries of artillery, although most of these troops were regulars (Der Weltkrieg... 1925:361).

We may assume that the equivalent of 7 divisions was formed. These numbers were of course obsolete by 1923, but we may treat them as a maximum manpower pool for that region.

To perform the analysis, information about German *Grenzschutz* (Border Defence) from 1919 – 1920 can also be useful. The volunteers from East Prussian regiments as well as from the rest of Germany created a force that was – in the opinion of the German first Generalquartiermeister, General Wilhelm Groener – about 103.000 men strong. 72.000 of these soldiers were posted at the front (situation in April 1919) (Kabinettsitzung... 1971, doc. 52b:216n).

The regular forces of the Reichswehr in East Prussia were, of course, very weak. The whole province was also *Wehrkreis I* (Military District I), with the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (three infantry regiments, a field artillery regiment, a pioneer battalion, a motor vehicle battalion, a horse vehicle battalion, a communications battalion, a medical battalion and one attached squadron of cavalry) as its chief. In the area were also located two cavalry regiments from 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (see: Rangliste des deutschen... :10, 26-29, 52, 67, 79, 82, 86, 89).

The establishment strength of a standard German infantry division at this time was 410 officers and 10.830 soldiers, but, according to Polish intelligence data, in March 1923 in 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division there were only 396 Officers and 10.335 soldiers)<sup>2</sup>. The East Prussian cavalry regiments differed a little from their authorised strength, because they had fewer officers and more soldiers. As a result – according to the same source - the division consisted of 201 officers and 5.437 soldiers (while their authorised strength was 275 officers and 5.250 soldiers)<sup>3</sup>.

Fortress Königsberg was still modern and therefore an important facet of the East Prussian defence system. Not only were its forts prepared for an enemy attack, but under the terms of the Versailles Treaty, it was the only place in Germany to be allowed some heavy artillery: seven 10 cm canons, two 15 cm canons, thirteen 15 cm howitzers and two 21 cm howitzers (so called Mörser)<sup>4</sup>. These guns were officially deployed at fixed positions, but in case of need they could be easily used on the front<sup>5</sup>. In Königsberg, some anti-aircraft guns were also allowed.

<sup>1</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Reserve Division, which together with 36<sup>th</sup> Reserve Division formed I<sup>st</sup> Reserve Corps.

<sup>2</sup> Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe in Warsaw (CAW), I.303.4.2116. Analiza stanów liczebnych i składów Reichswehry pod względem wieku i wyznania.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> CAW, I.303.4.2837, Hipotezy w sprawie możliwości materiałowych Niemiec na wypadek wojny.

<sup>5</sup> According to the peace treaty that artillery was to be placed in fixed positions and unable to move. However, it is quite obvious that in case of conflict it would be placed at the front. Even the official German training regulations for the artillery gave precise instructions on how to use heavy guns in the field – al-

This brief description encompasses only legal existing regular forces in this area; it therefore does not do justice to the full forces possessed by the Germans here. Nonetheless, it is already clear from these numbers that Reichsheer troops were easily able to crush a Lithuanian uprising in Memel.

Although all military troops have already been mentioned, we must also pay attention to the police. Since policemen were not to be taken into military ranks, but to perform special activities as police, this force will be analysed here. Because of that the *Schutzpolizei* (Security Police) must be added to regular troops must the [don't understand this sentence]. It was a barracked formation, which was at the disposal of the Reich authorities. It consisted of 150.000 policemen and its job was to maintain order in the whole of Germany in case of unrest. In October 1920, 8.950 of these policemen were stationed in East Prussia and given the task to provide *Grenzschutz* in the province (Jun Nakata:106). Also, there had to be placed part of the Prussian *Landespolizei* (Country Police), which was under the command of the local Prussian government. Of course, police troops of both types were unable to be sent to the front line, but were able easily to replace soldiers securing rear areas, or provide *Grenzschutz* at the borders not involved in serious military conflict.

### Number of trained reserves

The pool of trained reserves was naturally much bigger than the number of regular forces. As early as July 1919, the *Reichswehr-Ausschuß* (the Council of the Reichswehr), which was to prepare the creation of the new German army, counted how many of the soldiers trained before 1919 and no older than 35 would still be able to be mobilised in the following years. According to its memorandum in 1923, there were approximately 1.100.000 reserves, who were born in the years 1889-1900, in the whole Reich<sup>6</sup>. The German Imperial Army consisted in 1914 of 25 army corps (Guards, I – XXI, and I – III Bavarian). In 1918, almost the whole district of 17th Army Corps, together with significant parts of the 5th and 2nd Army Corps districts were given to Poland<sup>7</sup>. France received the 15th and 16th and part of 21st Army Corps district. Since the Guards were recruited throughout Germany, the number of reserves should be divided into 20 remaining corps districts. As already stated, in East Prussia two corps were formed, so we can assume that in that province around 110.000 trained reserves were available. To that number also the trained reserves of the Reichswehr have to be added. According to that memorandum, with the assumption that 5% of the manpower would be released annually (as was allowed in the peace treaties) and only some of them available, those reserves were said to be about 18.000<sup>8</sup>. Since there were 7 *Wehrkreise*, we may assume that at least 2.500 of them were available in East Prussia. If we add up the previous numbers we arrive at possibly 112.500 trained soldiers in the reserve.

Potentially, people trained by various paramilitary *Vaterländische Verbände* (Fatherland associations) could also be added. However, in a fact – as Captain Fromm stated in 1925 in a series of secret lectures concerning military reserves, it was almost impossible to cooperate with these movements, despite the fact that many of their members were good soldierly material. Not only were there a great number of such organisations, but they were often in conflict with each other and

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though, officially these were presented as being only for *modern fortress warfare*, where position changes may occur. (see: *Ausbildungsvorschrift...* Heft 6:3; Heft 9:7).

<sup>6</sup> Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg (BA-MA), RW 1/16, Anlage 2. Stärkeberechnung der ausgebildeten Reserven.

<sup>7</sup> Later, in 1921, also part of Silesian VIth Army Corps district was given.

<sup>8</sup> BA-MA, RW 1/16, Anlage 2. Stärkeberechnung der ausgebildeten Reserven.

their leaders were in many cases too ambitious to subordinate themselves to any authority. As Captain Fromm stated, cooperation was possible and profitable for the army only with selected associations<sup>9</sup>. It has to be said, that, especially in Bavaria, the cooperation between the Reichswehr and the *Vaterländische Verbände* was quite close, but, at least in such form, was not approved by the chief of *Heeresleitung* and *Reichswehrministerium* (Ministry of the Reichswehr).

Another possible reserve pool was the so called "Black Reichswehr" created by 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in Berlin. By September 1923 this was quite a large force.<sup>10</sup> However, it was located in the area of *Wehrkreis III* and was not loyal enough to the authorities, as the so called *Buchrucker-Putsch* proved (see: Carsten 1966:168-169).

### Stored weaponry and equipment

In analysing the military potential of the German army, it is necessary also to consider other factors besides the number of trained reserves. Firstly, the problem of weaponry: the Treaty of Versailles strictly limited the number of guns, machineguns and ammunition supplies available to the German army. However, many were illegally stored throughout the Reich. It is probably impossible to state an exact number of hidden weaponry and ammunitions, but some interesting facts can be found even in official German documents. During the conference in Spa in July 1920, the German delegation produced a quite detailed account of military equipment. Quite a high percentage of every weaponry was said there to have been "thrown into the water or destroyed". In the case of Mauser rifles, the manufacturing numbers provided were from February 1918 and therefore eight months of war production was totally omitted<sup>11</sup>. In this way, it was possible to hide significant amounts of weaponry, so called "black reserves". It is also proof that from very early, the Germans planned to develop illegal supplies of war material.

Moreover, far from there existing any guarantee that weaponry referred to at the conference was destroyed, it appears that in many cases, the *Arbeitskommandos* (work troops) charged with this duty were in fact doing the opposite: they gathered and stored the weaponry<sup>12</sup>. According to Polish intelligence data, most of this weaponry was hidden at the Eastern German border: East Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania<sup>13</sup>. The German *Heeresleitung* hoped to be able to equip up to 21 infantry divisions with hidden weapons (Hansen 1978:49-50).

In case of conflict with Poland, *Wehrkreis I* was not only mostly threatened, but also cut off from the rest of the Reich. That fact convinced the staff of the *Wehrkreis* to undertake some economic preparations in order to secure production of various war materials in East Prussia. In 1921, the following actions were planned:

- a) establishment of a wire factory;
- b) the policy to attract the weapons trade to Königsberg and establish private weapons and munitions warehouses;

<sup>9</sup> See: BA-MA, RH 53-3/26.

<sup>10</sup> Craig: 402 stated that it consisted of *between 50 000 and 80 000 men*. These numbers are definitely too big.

<sup>11</sup> See: FMI, NS, 21/118.

<sup>12</sup> *Reichswehrminister* Otto Gessler said in the Reichstag in 1926 that these *Arbeitskommandos* were to gather, sort and destroy illegal equipment in Berlin, Silesia and East Prussia. But they were trained to create a reserve force (Craig: 402n).

<sup>13</sup> CAW, I.303.4.2820, Polska wobec niebezpieczeństwa zbrojnego ataku Niemiec.

- c) the establishment of a big weapons repair workshop, which should be than expanded into a weapons and hunting ammunition factory (Hansen 1978:46).

Former Major of the Police Gilbert was assigned responsibility for the realisation of these tasks. He was chief of a firm, “Sekura Bewachungs AG”, which provided security to military buildings in Königsberg, and in this way was known to the *Wehrkreis* authorities. He founded in Königsberg a branch of the big weapons trader Carl Bauer & Co, and rented necessary buildings to start production of the wire. For this second purpose he established in 1922 in Munich a firm, *Königsberg Drachtindustriegesellschaft m.b.H.* (Königsberg Wire Industry Company). Without any external source of money, *Wehrkreis I* was unable to run such an extensive program. However, the *Ostpreußische Heimatbund* (East Prussian Fatherland League), a local organisation of big landowners, was helpful and provided part of the necessary means. It is also possible, that local industry was involved in financing those preparations. Nonetheless, serious difficulties soon emerged. As a result of personal misunderstandings and conflicts with other participants on these projects, Gilbert not only resigned from taking part in these preparations, but also informed the public about them (Hansen 1978:46-47).

Although the preparations described above collapsed, quite a large amount of the hidden weapons was stored in East Prussia. Artillery weapons included 2 Becker guns (2 cm), 18 gun barrels for field guns (but only 17 locks [do you mean breeches rather than locks?] were available), 100 gun barrels for light field howitzers (100 locks available). As there was only a smaller number of carriages it was possible to put together only up to 51 field guns or howitzers. The number of spare parts and ammunition was even smaller, but for a short action against the “rebels” or even Lithuania it should have been sufficient. The Reichswehr in East Prussia could also form a heavy artillery battery from the available 7 barrels and 4 carriages for Mk 13 heavy howitzers. The 6 available carriages for 21 cm howitzer “lange Mörser” could be used to send into action those guns which were placed in the fortress of Königsberg, although their number was very small – only 2, as was stated before. One 15 cm canon could be used through similar means<sup>14</sup>. Reserves of infantry weapons were even more significant: 79.909 rifles, 5.188 carbines, 665 light machine guns and 737 heavy machine guns<sup>15</sup>.

There were no reserves of optical equipment in East Prussia<sup>16</sup>, but communication equipment was available in “great amounts”<sup>17</sup>. It is unknown, how much personal equipment was available at that time, because only one *Wehrkreis* reported his reserves, which were sufficient to raise 3.000 soldiers (because of a lack of coats – without coats, 7.000 could be raised)<sup>18</sup>.

The problem of ammunition has also to be considered. In the *Neben-Zeugamt* (Additional Arsenal) in Königsberg a part of the German legal munitions quota was stored. In 1923 it stored 460.900 cartridge-cases, 14.980 kg of gunpowder and 5.434.000 bullets, which allowed construction of quite an impressive amount of cartridges<sup>19</sup>. In contrast, the illegal black reserves of infantry ammunition were much smaller – in East Prussia they consisted only of 67.935 cartridges and

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<sup>14</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-1/25, Rohre, Protzen, Lafetten, Zubehörteile usw zu Geschützen.

<sup>15</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-1/25.

<sup>16</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-1/25, Optisches Gerät.

<sup>17</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-1/25, Nachrichtengerät.

<sup>18</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-1/25. Bekleidung und Ausrüstung

<sup>19</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-2/173, Wa. A. Nr. 212.23 geh. Wa.4. IIIa Durch In 2. an H.L.(Stab) Berlin, den 21. Juni 1923.

7.275 cartridges placed into belts for machine guns<sup>20</sup>. Nonetheless, for short and limited action, such as an intervention against the uprising in Memel would be, these amounts should have been enough.

### Mobilisation plans

Polish intelligence had analysed various hypotheses concerning the possibilities of German mobilisation, stating that the Germans were able to form 21 infantry divisions within 10 – 14 days, and a further 21 infantry divisions within 20 – 30 days<sup>21</sup>.

In reality, the Reichsheer prepared at that time two possible mobilisation plans. The aim of the first one, codenamed *Winterarbeit* (winter work), was to set up an army of 21 infantry divisions, basing on existing equipment reserves. The amount of cavalry divisions should not be changed. This was the *Notheer* (crisis army), designed only to deal with local conflict. The second project, codenamed as *Sommerarbeit* (summer work) was prepared for the case of a major conflict. It aimed to raise not only as many as 35 infantry divisions, but also some *Grenzschutz* formations and some army units. Both mobilisation plans also included the use of forbidden weapons such as air-force, anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank guns and heavy artillery (Hansen 1978:49-50).

The *Reichswehrministerium* (Ministry of the Reichswehr) ordered commanders of all *Wehrkreise* to start preparations for introducing *Winterarbeit*. These preparations took place with the approval of the local authorities of each German state. In most cases there were only oral agreements, but in Prussia (and in that way also in East Prussia) there was a paper arrangement called the *Gessler-Severing Abkommen* (Gessler-Severing Agreement<sup>22</sup>).

Thus, if it can be assumed that *Winterarbeit* enabled the Reichswehr easily to triple its strength, East Prussia, by the same calculation, could raise a force of 3 infantry divisions and 2 cavalry regiments.

Although this reinforcement was technically easy, given the available situation, politically it was fraught with difficulty. The preparations in Prussia should have started by the end of 1922, when the threat of the Ruhr occupation became more and more real. As Jun Nakata stated in his book about *Grenzschutz*, the first source-based date for them is 20<sup>th</sup> December 1922, when the Prussian Social-Democratic Minister of the Interior, Carl Severing, wrote a letter to Major Kurt von Schleicher and the Minister of the Reichswehr, Otto Gessler, in which he demanded that the Reichswehr should end its cooperation with the *Selbschutzorganisationen* (Self-defence organisations) (Jun Nakata:108).

Since it was necessary for the Reichswehr to cooperate with the Prussian state, a series of negotiations took place that led to the *Gessler-Severing Abkommen* (Gessler-Severing Agreement), signed on 30 January 1923, which forced the Reichswehr to break with private organisations before the 31 March 1923, but which simultaneously gave it the possibility of cooperating with the Prussian government, which had the potential to be much more effective (Jun Nakata:109).

The German plans did not foresee such a thing as partial mobilisation. The reason is quite easy to explain – if forces in *Wehrkreis* I were mobilised, it would become quite obvious for France and

<sup>20</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-1/25.

<sup>21</sup> CAW, I.303.4.2830, Sprawa mobilizacji niemieckiej.

<sup>22</sup> In some historical works this agreement is referred to as the *Seeckt-Severing Abkommen*. This name is, in fact, false. It was the Minister of the Reichswehr, Otto Gessler, who represented the army in this agreement with the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Carl Severing.

her allies that a big black reserve of weapons and equipment was also available in other parts of Germany. This could provoke a military intervention which would force the Germans to make war without preparation or to surrender and give back most of their illegal reserves<sup>23</sup>. We must be aware of that when analysing even a local situation, such as the uprising in Memel. The only way to increase the number of men in the ranks, without revealing the extra reserves, was to call for *Zeitfreiwilligen* (“time volunteers”), but their amount could not be significant and they could only guard barracks and other important objects in the country. It could have allowed the East Prussian Reichswehr to undertake an action with all regular forces, which in the opinion of the author, would have been enough to terminate the uprising. Troops could reach march readiness in one day, as stated by Polish intelligence, which gave the example of 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment in May 1923<sup>24</sup>.

### **Importance of the *Reichsmarine***

As the title of this article suggests, it is necessary to analyse not only the potential of the Reichsheer but also that of the Reichsmarine, an integral part of the Reichswehr. The conditions of the Treaty of Versailles made the German fleet quite small and obsolete in comparison to the pre-war period. But the presence of a force of six battleships, six cruisers, twelve destroyers and twelve torpedo boats<sup>25</sup> could be a significant argument in favour of intervention in Memel. The battleships were quite old pre-dreadnoughts and unable to fight with any modern counterpart of this class, but in the Baltic Sea region there was no equal enemy for them. Each of six battleships (excluding two allowed as a reserve) was armed with four 280 mm guns of main artillery, fourteen 170 mm guns of medium artillery – together 24 x 280 mm and 84 x 170 mm (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, Prekurat 1997:549). The cruisers could also provide approximately sixty 105 mm guns (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, Prekurat 1997:550). Of course, in case of major conflict, the fleet was unable to have any influence on the land campaign. It could only support land forces that fought near to the shore, which in the case of East Prussia would have meant that the whole land would have had to have been in the enemy’s hands.

In case of a war with France, the German naval forces were unable to undertake any action in the western theatre because of the much stronger French fleet. For such a situation, an interesting plan was developed – the reserves of the marine on heavy and anti-aircraft guns should be prepared for use by land forces, partially motorised and partially as heavy railway guns. However, the first preparations for this plan only began a few years later<sup>26</sup>.

### **Possibilities of exploiting German military potential in 1923**

As has been stated above, the German military potential – i.e. the number of trained people and the number of hidden weapons and equipment – in East Prussia was quite impressive. However, these numbers cannot reflect on the reality because in 1923 German mobilisation plans were at a very early stage. In the spring of this year, they decided to divide all war preparations into three stages: “strained external situation”, “border defence” and “state of war”. It was *Reichswehr-*

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<sup>23</sup> BA-MA, N5/10, Gedanken über den Krieg der Zukunft.

<sup>24</sup> CAW, I.303.4.2858, Mob. 2.pp w maju br.

<sup>25</sup> Such a fleet was allowed by Treaty of Versailles. Later agreements added some reserves to the active fleet: two battleships, two cruisers, four destroyers and four torpedo boats (see: Gadów 1936:128).

<sup>26</sup> See: BA-MA, RH 8/II/918, Zu z Nr 52/24/V. Betr. Lieferung, 1<sup>st</sup> february 1924; BA-MA, RH 8/I/913, Betr. Auswertung der Berechnung des Bedarfs an Inf. Mun. Für das angestrebte 21 Divisionen-Heer.

*ministerum* who was to decide about entering into the first stage<sup>27</sup>. Later, more complicated partitions were introduced. There were two main parts: industrial preparations and mobilisation<sup>28</sup>. They even did not start estimating how much personnel and material is needed. This was done much later – in 1925-1926<sup>29</sup>.

Even then, the Germans required 6–10 months to convert to a war economy. Importing weapons and ammunition from foreign countries (mostly from the Soviet Union) was not to be helpful at once. It would have taken approximately 4–6 weeks to transport war material from abroad and to equip German troops with it. Because of this delay, the Germans stated that they need supplies for at least the first six weeks of a future conflict<sup>30</sup>. Importing was not a good solution at all. No other country had the same weapon systems. As a result, two alternatives were possible:

- a) to import foreign weaponry and train German troops to use it – however, this would cause various complications in supplying forces (two weapon systems would be used);
- b) to supply technical data to start producing German weaponry in a foreign state – this would be a lengthy process and probably require as much time as if home production was started instead.

We may therefore form the conclusion that it was impossible for the Germans to gather enough war material for a major conflict quickly, especially if they were to defend themselves. In an offensive campaign, the situation would be much easier, as they could first prepare for the mass production of weaponry and then launch a conflict. However, in 1923 they were in defensive position.

Moreover, a further problem was that “trained reserves” were mostly ex- First World War soldiers, who in the five years after the end of that conflict had had no contact with the military. Even if we assume that they had not forgotten how to fight, we must be aware that tactics had developed and static warfare, with which most would have been familiar, was neither wished for by the Reichswehr, nor possible due to lack of weapons and material.

An overview of the possible progression of war in the 1923 crisis was provided by Major Joachim Stülpnagel in his well known lecture “Gedanken über den Krieg der Zukunft” (“Considerations about the future war”). He stated that the whole nation should participate in the war. Those who were unable to fight the enemy should work in factories, which produced military material. There should be *Grenzschutz* established by *calling all border populations to arms*. These troops were to be commanded by former officers and armed with *rifles and machineguns, perhaps with some artillery*. The first tide of regular troops should be sent to battle to slow down the enemy and gain time to raise second and third line divisions<sup>31</sup>.

Such use of potential described above could not lead to any success, especially when the enemy could use aircraft and armour against these quickly formed and poorly equipped troops.

## Conclusion

As shown above, the Germans had quite an impressive military potential in 1923, but they were unable to develop ways to use it. Because of the political situation, it was impossible to exploit it

<sup>27</sup> BA-MA, RH 8/1/896. Document from 5<sup>th</sup> April 1923.

<sup>28</sup> BA-MA, RH 8/1/896, Klarung der Kriegsvorbereitungsbegriffe, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1924; *ibid.* Begriffbestimmungen, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1925.

<sup>29</sup> BA-MA, RH 8/1887, Betr. Statistische Erhebungen und Listenführung der Stadt, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1925.

<sup>30</sup> BA-MA, RH 8/1/983, Nr 551/26 geh. Kdos. “Z” N. Stab, 9<sup>th</sup> november 1926.

<sup>31</sup> BA-MA, N5/10, Gedanken über den Krieg der Zukunft.



partially – it was only to be used in case of major conflict with France or Poland. According to the researched data, regular forces were strong enough to deal with an “uprising” in Memel.

This analysis can be used to support the thesis that German civilian and military authorities simply did not want to interfere in a “conflict” between “the rebels” and the French garrison. They preferred to chose the lesser evil of a “rebel” victory rather than intervene. Germany could only gain in that way: the possibility of establishing a bastion of French influence on the Baltic Sea ended and, unlike Poland, Lithuania was not claimed as an ally of France.

It is interesting that Joachim Stülpnagel in his above mentioned lecture, which he held in front of important officers of the Ministry of the Reichswehr in February 1924 considered Lithuania as a potential ally in war against France and Poland. The uprising in Memel did not affect German-Lithuanian relations, at least from a military point of view<sup>32</sup>.

Given the above data, it may be assumed that, had there been a possibility to reincorporate Memel into Germany after intervention against the Lithuanian action, resistance would have been undertaken, probably with a great chance of success – even only with regular forces isolated in East Prussia. Since such reincorporation was impossible, it is necessary to stress that any German military intervention against “the rebels” would be in a fact have supported the French position in the area of the Baltic Sea. Such an action was impossible for that declared enemy of France, Chief of *Heeresleitung*, General von Seeckt.

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## REICHO KARIUOMENĖS GALIA RYTŲ PRŪSIJOJE 1923 M. SAUSIO MĖN.

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#### Santrauka

1923-ieji metai tapo kritiniu laikotarpiu Veimaro Respublikos istorijoje. Vėluojant mokėti pralaimėto karo reparacijas, Prancūzijos ir Belgijos kariuomenė tų metų sausio mėnesį pradėjo karinės okupacijos operacijas Ruro (*Ruhr*) regione. Taip Vokietija buvo verčiama susimokėti savo skolas.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Netrukus rytines Vokietijos sienas palietė kiti nemalonūs įvykiai. Lietuva atsiėmė Klaipėdos (*Memel*) kraštą, Versalio sutartimi tapusį laisvuju miestu su Prancūzijos administravimu ir jos karine įgula. Vokietija buvo ištikta dar vieno šoko, ir vieša jos reakcija į šiuos įvykius buvo labai negatyvi. Spausdoje prieš Lietuvą prasidėjo plati propagandinė kampanija.

Tuo tarpu reali Vokietijos nuostata Lietuvos atžvilgiu buvo visiškai kitokia. Kariuomenės (*Heeresleitung*) vadas generolas Hans von Seeckt susitikimo su Lietuvos atstovais metu patikino, kad Reicho kariuomenė nesiims jokių akcijų prieš Klaipėdos krašto prijungimą prie Lietuvos. Galima manyti, kad pagrindinis tokios pozicijos motyvas buvo išvalga, kad kitu atveju Klaipėda būtų tapusi Prancūzijos įtakos Baltijos regione placdarmu. Tada Prancūzija būtų galėjusi grasinti Rytų Prūsijai iš šiaurės pusės. Tuo tarpu Prancūzijos sąjungininkė Lenkija ir taip jau buvo realus grėsmės šaltinis ties pietinėmis šios provincijos sienomis.

Straipsnyje pateikiamų tyrimų objektas – to meto Vokietijos karinės galios Rytų Prūsijoje analizė. Tyrimo išvados leidžia patikrinti aukščiau pateikiamą situacijos apibūdinimą. Kartu buvo siekiama patikrinti hipotezę, kad Rytų Prūsijos reicho kariuomenė buvo tiesiog per silpna pasipriešinti Klaipėdos įvykiams. Tyrimo metu buvo siekiama ir patikrinti, ar Vokietija turėjo pakankamos karinės galios atsiimti Klaipėdos kraštą po Ruro krizės. Juk tai galėjo būti pagrindinė generolo Hanso von Seeckto pasyvios laikysenos Lietuvos atžvilgiu priežastis.

Reguliarioji Vokietijos kariuomenė Rytų Prūsijoje buvo sudaryta iš I pėstininkų divizijos, kurią rėmė du artilerijos pulkai. Tai nebuvo labai didelės pajėgos, tačiau verta pabrėžti, kad jos bet kuriuo momentu buvo pasirengusios pradėti aktyvius karo veiksmus. Reikia neužmiršti, kad nereguliariosios pasienio apsaugos (*Grenzschutz*) kariuomenės pajėgos pasibaigus Pirmajam pasauliniam karui turėjo apie 140 000 kareivių. Iki 1914 m. Rytų Prūsijoje buvo dislokuoti du (I ir XX) Vokietijos kariuomenės korpusai. Jų pagrindu buvo įmanoma sudaryti naujus gerai apmokytų karo savanorių būrius. Konflikto su Prancūzija atveju Vokietija buvo parengusi du mobilizacijos planus. Pirmasis jų turėjo kodinį pavadinimą „Žiemos darbas“ („*Winterarbeit*“) – sudarant 21 pėstininkų ir 3 artilerijos divizijas su keletu pasienio kariuomenės junginių. Antrasis – „Vasaros darbas“ („*Sommerarbeit*“) – su 35 pėstininkų divizijomis, keletu artilerijos divizijų, pasienio pajėgomis ir rezerviniais kariuomenės padaliniais.

Buvo manyta veikti pagal „Žiemos darbo“ planą. 21 divizija turėjo būti apginkluota nelegalia ginkluote, surinkta visos Vokietijos teritorijoje. Dėl to būtų įmanoma suformuoti numatytą kariuomenę bei jos rezervus, ir tai palengvintų mobilizacijos programą. Tokie kariniai pasirengimai turėjo būti vykdomi visose Vokietijos karinėse srityse, taigi – ir Rytų Prūsijoje. Remiantis Lenkijos karinės žvalgybos duomenimis, Rytų Prūsijoje buvo įmanoma skubiai suformuoti 3 pėstininkų ir 1 artilerijos divizijas. Tokios Reicho karinės pajėgos jau galėjo sėkmingai kovoti su Lietuvos kariuomene. Papildoma karine parama čia galėjo tapti ir kituose Vokietijos kraštuose formuojami savanorių padaliniai – (*Freikorps*), kaip tuo metu jau buvo atsitikę Ruro žemėse.

Visi tokie kariniai pasirengimai būtų bevaisiai, jeigu Lenkija nebūtų laikiusis neutraliteto pozicijos. Todėl Reicho kariuomenės vadovybė susisiekė su Raudonosios armijos vadais ir gavo jų patikinimą, kad tarptautinio konflikto atveju Lenkija būtų neutralizavusi Sovietų kariuomenę.

*Gauta 2006 m. lapkričio mėn.*