

A DIVIDED ARMY: THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF BUILDING THE LATVIAN ARMED FORCES (NOVEMBER 1918 TO APRIL 1919)

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ABSTRACT

When the People's Council of Latvia gathered in Riga on 18 November 1918 to proclaim Latvia's independence, the Latvian Provisional Government did not yet have an army capable of defending it, and the entire territory claimed for the future Latvia was still under the control of German troops. In late 1918 and early 1919, the subsequent building up of the first army formations of the Republic of Latvia took place under extremely challenging circumstances. The government lacked financial resources, weapons, equipment and ammunition, while the Red Army advanced rapidly from the east. Initially, the armed forces were formed based on a compromise reached with Germany and according to the principle of ethnic division. After the loss of Riga and the withdrawal to Liepāja in January 1919, a new line of division emerged: Latvian military units loyal to the Provisional Government were simultaneously formed in two distant regions, in the Liepāja area and in Estonia. The article aims to analyse the impact of both these factors on the development of the Latvian armed forces and the course of the Latvian War of Independence.

KEYWORDS: Latvian War of Independence, Latvian Provisional Government, Latvian armed forces, Red Army, Baltic-German combat units.

ANOTACIJA

Kai 1918 m. lapkričio 18 d. Rygoje susirinkusi Latvijos Tautos Taryba paskelbė Latvijos nepriklausomybę, Latvijos laikinoji vyriausybė dar neturėjo kariuomenės, galinčios ją apginti, o visa teritorija, pretendavusi tapti būsimąja Latvija, tebebuvo kontroliuojama vokiečių kariuomenės. Vėlesnis pirmųjų Latvijos Respublikos kariuomenės formuočių kūrimas 1918 m. pabaigoje ir 1919 m. pradžioje vyko itin sudėtingomis sąlygomis. Vyriausybei trūko finansinių išteklių, ginklų, įrangos ir amunicijos, o Raudonoji armija sparčiai veržėsi iš rytų. Iš pradžių ginkluotosios pajėgos kurtos remiantis kompromisu, pasiektu su Vokietija, ir vadovaujantis etninio suskirstymo principu. 1919 m. sausio mėn. praradus Rygą ir vyriausybei pasitraukus į Liepoją, atsirado nauja takoskyra – Laikinajai vyriausybei lojalūs latvių kariniai daliniai vienu metu formavosi dviejuose vienas nuo kito nutolusiuose regionuose – Liepojos srityje ir Estijoje. Šiuo straipsniu siekiama išanalizuoti abiejų šių veiksmų įtaką Latvijos ginkluotųjų pajėgų raidai ir Latvijos nepriklausomybės karo eigai.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Latvijos nepriklausomybės karas, Latvijos laikinoji vyriausybė, Latvijos ginkluotosios pajėgos, Raudonoji armija, Baltijos vokiečių kariniai daliniai.

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On 6 July 1919, after the victory at the Battle of Cēsis, the Northern Latvian Brigade commanded by Colonel Jorgis Zemitāns (1873–1928) marched into Riga. It was ceremoniously greeted in the city centre by officers of the 1st Latvian Separate Brigade (also called the Southern Latvian Brigade), led by Colonel Jānis Balodis (1881–1965). Four days later, on 10 July, both brigades were merged, forming the unified Latvian army. The Southern Latvian Brigade became the 1st Division of the newly formed army (the 1st Kurzeme Infantry Division), while the Northern Latvian Brigade was renamed the 2nd Division (the 2nd Vidzeme Infantry Division). Both of these brigades were formed under different political circumstances far apart from each other. They had different uniforms, weaponry, equipment and organisational structures. The purpose of this article is to examine ethnic and geographical factors in the process of the formation of the Latvian armed forces from November 1918 to July 1919 when the Latvian army was officially established.

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Founded on 18 November 1918, the Republic of Latvia, like other newly established countries in the region, was drawn into a series of military conflicts following the end of the First World War in Central and Eastern Europe. The primary and most complex task for the new states was the formation of their armed forces in the difficult conditions of political chaos and amid the lack of resources. Latvia was no exception in this regard, and the process of establishing the armed forces of the Republic of Latvia has many similarities with other countries in the region. However, there were also significant differences in Latvia's case, and special attention will be paid to them in this article.

One of these aspects was the ethnic division within the armed forces. Estonia also had a strong local German military formation (Baltenregiment) and was home to substantial 'white' Russian forces, which were united in the Northern Corps (later the Russian Northwestern Army). However, despite the mutual suspicion, and even some conflicts, the situation did not escalate into open warfare, unlike in Latvia.

Another important aspect was the geographical division, as Latvia's armed forces were being formed simultaneously in western and northern Latvia and Estonia. In fact, two autonomous national armies were being established, although formally coming under one government. This situation did not occur either in Estonia or Lithuania, and it was determined by the political and military circumstances of the time, which created unique conditions that were distinct from those of the neighbouring countries. This culminated during the Battle of Cēsis in June 1919, when the German and Estonian armies clashed in central Latvia. The German army actively utilised units formed from local Latvian Germans (Baltic Germans), while the Latvian and Russian formations established in western Latvia maintained neutrality. Meanwhile, on the Estonian side, an important role in these battles was played by the

other part of the Latvian army, units formed in northern Latvia. As a result of the battle, Germany suffered a defeat, allowing the previously separate parts of the armed forces of the Republic of Latvia to unite and create an integrated Latvian army.

Historiography

The time of the War of Independence (1918–1920) was one of the most chaotic in the history of Latvia and the Baltic. A seemingly rich historiography has been devoted to the mutual struggles between countless political actors and military formations, but the multifaceted nature of the historical events provides researchers with opportunities to enrich this with ever-new discoveries: both the exploration of lesser-known episodes, and the reassessment of existing interpretations of the war.

The early phase of the Latvian War of Independence, the formation and operation of political structures and military formations in the first months following the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia, is the least-studied period. German and Baltic German historians have produced significant studies concerning the operations of the German army and the Baltic Landeswehr at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, complemented by many published memoirs.¹ During the Soviet period, considerable attention was paid to the history of the Latvian Soviet Rifle Division, or the Latvian Red Riflemen, and the fighting in Latvia.² British and Latvian historians have examined the operations of the British navy in the Baltic Sea in late 1918 and early 1919.³ Russian, Estonian and Latvian historians have looked into the activities of the

¹ *Die Baltische Landeswehr im Befreiungskampf gegen den Bolschewismus. Ein Gedenkbuch.* [Hrsg. von Wilhelm von FIRCKS, Eberhard von PANDER, Percy VOCKRODT, Reinhard WITTRAM.] Riga, 1929; *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps.* Bd. 2: *Der Feldzug im Baltikum nach der zweiten Einnahme von Riga.* Berlin, 1937; GRIMM, Claus. *Jahre deutscher Entscheidung im Baltikum, 1918/1919.* Essen, 1939; GRIMM, Claus. *Vor den Toren Europas 1918–1920: Geschichte der Baltischen Landeswehr.* Hamburg, 1963; BISCHOFF, Josef. *Die letzte Front. Geschichte der Eisernen Division im Baltikum 1919.* Berlin, 1935; GOLTZ, Rüdiger von der. *Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum.* Leipzig, 1920.

² *Latvju revolucionārais strēlnieks.* 1. sēj. Red. Roberts APINIS, Vilis STRAUSS, Kirils STUCKA, Pauls VĪKSNE. Maskavā, 1934; *Latvju strēlnieku wehsture.* 2. sēj. 2. d.: *Strēlnieki Padomju Latvijā.* Red. Pauls WIHKSONE, Vilis STRAUSS, Kirils STUZKA. Maskavā, 1934; BĒRZIŅŠ, Valdis. *Latviešu strēlnieki cīņā par Padomju Latviju 1919 gadā.* Rīga, 1969; *1919. gads Latvijā.* Atb. red. Anatolijs BĪRONS. Rīga, 1969; DRAUDIŅŠ, Teodors. *Latviešu strēlnieku cīņu ceļš, 1917–1920.* Rīga, 1961; *Latviešu strēlnieku vēsture (1915–1920).* Red. Jānis KRASTIŅŠ. Rīga, 1970.

³ BENETT, Geoffrey. *Freeing the Baltic 1918–1920.* Barnsley, 2017; DUNN, Steve R. *Battle in the Baltic. The Royal Navy and the Fight to Save Estonia & Latvia 1918–20.* Barnsley, 2020; HOVI, Olavi. *The Baltic Area in British Policy 1918–1921.* Helsinki, 1980; *Latvijas Neatkarības karš 1918.–1919. gadā: Lielbritānijas kara flotes ziņojumi = Latvian War of Independence 1918–1919: Reports of British Royal Navy.* Sast. Ēriks JĒKABSONS, Klāvs ZARIŅŠ. Rīga, 2019; ANDERSONS, Edgars. *Angļu flote Baltijas jūrā.* *Universitas*, 1958, Nr. 5, 30.–35. lpp.; FLETCHER, William A. *The British Navy in the Baltic, 1918–1920: Its Contribution to the Independence of the Baltic Nations.* *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1976, Vol. 7, No 2, pp. 134–144; JĒKABSONS,

Russian Northern Corps, which operated briefly in eastern and northern regions of Latvia.⁴

However, the establishment and initial activities of the armed formations of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Latvia have only been incompletely studied. This is largely due to a lack of sources: much of the documentation was destroyed during the evacuation of Riga in the early days of January 1919. Additionally, Latvian historians in exile after the Second World War did not have access to Latvian archives.⁵ There is also a subjective aspect: historians preferred to study the victories of the Latvian army rather than its initial failures. Moreover, for many contemporaries, this was personally a quite sensitive period: many Latvian soldiers deserted from the armed forces of Latvia to join the Red Army. Others, who deserted from the Red Army in the summer of 1919 to join the Latvian army, were reluctant to highlight the earlier period of their careers. For example, General Mārtiņš Peniķis, the most active researcher of the Latvian War of Independence during the interwar period, who was appointed head of defence for the Kurzeme region, fled abroad at the most critical moment for the Latvian state in January 1919 and only returned to Latvia after five months.⁶

After the restoration of Latvia's independence, historians paid little attention to the events of late 1918 and early 1919 and the War of Independence as a whole. Researching the interwar period and the Second World War was much more attractive. The situation changed radically as the centenary of the Latvian state approached, bringing the events of the War of Independence to the public eye. The National Archives of Latvia published a series of collections of documents about these events, including a large number of previously unpublished documents regarding the beginning of the War of Independence.⁷ There were also other significant source publications and studies concerning the examined period.⁸

Ēriks. Rīga 1918. gada beigās–1919. gada sākumā un Lielbritānijas karakuģu eskadras vecākā virsnieka liecība par situāciju. *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2016, Nr. 3, 140.–172. lpp.

⁴ CHAPENKO, Aleksandr. *Istoriia russkogo antibol'shevistskogo dvizheniia na territorii Latvii v 1918–1919 gg.* Murmansk, 2006; ROZENTAL', Reigo. *Severo-zapadnaia armii. Khronika pobed i porazhenii.* Tallin, 2012; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. Latvija un Krievu Ziemeļu korpus (Judeniča Ziemeļrietumu armija), 1919–1920. *Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata*, 2001, 2. sēj., 54.–84. lpp.; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. Latgale vācu okupācijas laikā un pulkvež M. Afanasjeva partizānu nodaļas darbība Latvijā 1918 gadā. *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 1996, Nr. 1, 42.–50. lpp.

⁵ KRIPĒNS, Arvīds. *Kalpaka bataljons un Baloža brigāde.* Sidneja, 1963.

⁶ *Latvijas atbrīvošanas kara vēsture.* 1. sēj. Virsred. Mārtiņš PENIĶIS. Rīga, 1938; PENIĶIS, Mārtiņš. *Latvijas armijas sākums un cīņas Latvijā līdz 1919. gada jūlijam.* Rīga, 1932; PENIĶIS, Mārtiņš. Cīņas Baltijas valstīs: 1918. g. beigās un 1919. g. sākumā. *Militārais Apskats*, 1932, Nr. 1, 17.–33. lpp.

⁷ *Cīņa par brīvību: Latvijas Neatkarības karš (1918–1920) Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva dokumentos.* 1.–3. d. Sast. Ēriks JĒKABSONS, Jānis ŠILIŅŠ. Rīga, 2019–2021; *Cīņa par brīvību: Latvijas Neatkarības karš (1918–1920) Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva dokumentos.* 4. d. Sast. Ēriks JĒKABSONS. Rīga, 2023.

⁸ *Franču pulkvežleitnanta Emanuela Diparkē atmiņas. Misija Latvijā, 1919–1920.* Zin. red. Ēriks JĒKABSONS, Kaspars ZELLIS. Rīga, 2019; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. *Latvijas un Amerikas Savienoto Valstu attiecības 1918.–1922.*

The origins of the Latvian armed forces

The independent Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in Riga on 18 November 1918. The legislative body of the republic was the People's Council of Latvia (PCL), and the executive body was the Latvian Provisional Government, led by Kārlis Ulmanis (1877–1942). The constitutional basis of the new state was formed by the main Latvian political parties, which agreed on a common political platform, leading to the establishment of the PCL. The platform's Article 6 stipulated that the defence of the state would be ensured by an irregular force, the Militia (called also the Defence Force, or *Apsardzības spēks*).⁹ At that time, the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party, one of the most influential Latvian political parties, opposed the formation of a regular army, fearing it could be used by anti-democratic forces. Pauls Kalniņš (1872–1945), the leader of the Social Democrats, suggested that an army could be formed temporarily if it was decided by the Latvian Constitutional Assembly, elections to which were scheduled for the coming months.¹⁰

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Initially, the formation of the Defence Force was entrusted to the Ministry of the Interior, led by Miķelis Valters (1874–1968). The Ministry of Defence was established on 22 November, but for almost two weeks it operated without a minister. The duties of the minister were performed by two former Latvian riflemen officers, Lieutenant Colonel Roberts Dambītis (1881–1957) and Captain Gustavs Grīnbergs (1884–1981). Only on 4 December was a suitable candidate for minister found, the lawyer Jānis Zālītis (1874–1919). He lacked a military education and experience, but he was one of the founders of the famous Latvian rifle battalions in 1915.

At the end of 1918, the political situation was not favourable for the formation of the Latvian Republic's armed forces. The Social Democrats believed that a regular army was unnecessary, and even dangerous. Many politicians also believed that Latvia on its own could not resist a Russian or German invasion. Therefore, high hopes in the fight against the Red Army, which had begun its invasion of Latvia, were initially placed on the German army and Great Britain.

On 22 November 1918, the Pskov Rifle Division of the Russian Red Army crossed the modern-day border of Latvia near Zilupe. On 25 November the Russian anti-Bolshevik Northern Corps and German units abandoned Pskov, opening the way for an invasion into southern Estonia and northern Latvia. By early December, units of

gadā. Rīga, 2018; *Liepāja Latvijas Neatkarības karā 1918–1920*. Sast. Inna ĢĪLE. Rīga, 2019; *Latvijas Neatkarības karš 1918.–1919. gadā...*

⁹ *Latvijas Tautas Padome*. I. puse. Rīgā, 1920, 7. lpp.

¹⁰ Izvilkums no politisko partiju 1918. gada 17. novembra sēdes protokola, 17.11.1918. *Latvijas Nacionālā arhīva Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* (The State Historical Archive of Latvia of the National Archives of Latvia, hereafter *LNA LVVA*), 1307-1-4, 8. lp.; 327, 27. lp.

the Red Army had occupied all of Latgale except for Daugavpils, where a substantial German army garrison was located. Despite the obligation imposed by the Armistice at Compiègne to defend the eastern territories against Bolshevik invasion, the German army sought to evacuate from the Baltic region as quickly as possible. This was mostly done peacefully, even without clashes with the Red Army. Typically, German soldier councils agreed to hand over territories to the attacking Bolsheviks.

At the same time, the Germans were very reluctant and even hostile to the formation of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian national units in their rear. Even German-Baltic military units found it difficult to obtain the necessary weapons and equipment from the German army. For example, there were around 2,600 registered Baltic-German volunteers in Riga in a few days from 11 to 16 November 1918.¹¹ Only a small portion of them could be armed.

Great Britain, another geopolitical power in which the Latvian Provisional Government placed its hopes, was distant, and its ability to assist the new governments of the Baltic States was very limited. British warships arrived at the port of Liepāja on 1 December 1918, but initially the Latvian government failed to establish contact with the British. Only on 18 December, after the arrival of British warships in Riga, did ministers of the Latvian Provisional Government meet with British military representatives.¹²

The main obstacle to cooperation with Britain was the vague instructions received from his government by Admiral Edwyn Alexander-Sinclair (1865–1945), the commander of the 6th Light Cruiser Squadron. The War Office and the Foreign Office supported active British action in the Baltic Sea, but Prime Minister David Lloyd George (1863–1945) categorically objected to intervention and participation in battles against the Red Army. In early January, British warships were withdrawn from Estonia and Latvia. At the end of 1918, British officers participated in the training of Latvian military units, patrolled the streets of Riga, issued several hundred rifles to Latvian units in Liepāja, and supported the disarmament of two Latvian companies that mutinied in Riga at the end of December with artillery fire.¹³ However, unlike the situation in Estonia, the British fleet did not participate in battles against the Red Army.

Initially, Latvian military units had to be formed by their own efforts. This was a very difficult task, in circumstances where the government catastrophically lacked funds, weapons, equipment, food and clothing. Preparatory work for the creation of the armed forces had already been done before 18 November 1918. The patriotic organisation of former Latvian riflemen and officers, the Latvian Soldiers' National

¹¹ GRIMM, C. *Jahre deutscher Entscheidung...*, S. 204.

¹² *Latvijas Neatkarības karš 1918.–1919. gadā...*, 84. lpp.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 12. lpp.

Union (LSNU), secretly conducted the registration of Latvian soldiers. The Union's officers actively participated in the formation of the PCL and the drafting of its political platform. They also actively participated in establishing the Ministry of Defence and the first military units. By 18 November 1918, the LSNU had registered 400 to 500 Latvian soldiers.¹⁴ By the end of November, the 1st and 2nd Riga Defence Companies were formed from LSNU members and Latvian prisoners-of-war returning from German camps.

Military units were also formed elsewhere in Latvia: in Liepāja, Tukums, Jelgava and Cēsis. However, there was a shortage of weapons everywhere. As a result, it was impossible to arm the absolute majority of volunteers, and the registration of individuals was limited, in the hope that they would return after finding weapons. For example, approximately 300 volunteers were registered in Cēsis, but only 50 of them could be armed.¹⁵

Ethnic divisions

In early December 1918, radical changes took place in the attitude of the Provisional Government towards the armed forces and national defence. At that time, the military situation had become critical: the Red Army had occupied almost all of Latgale without resistance, and it became clear that Germany's 8th Army, which was stationed in Latvia and Estonia, was either unable or unwilling to stop the Soviet invasion.

Another significant aspect was the recognition of the Republic of Latvia as a *de facto* independent state by Germany on 26 November 1918. August Winnig (1878–1956), Germany's representative in the Baltic States, actively sought to cooperate with local governments to bring them closer to Germany. The importance of this development was twofold. First, it opened up opportunities to obtain military assistance from Germany. Second, it eliminated the significance of the conservative Baltic German project of the Baltic State (Baltenland in German), which the new revolutionary Germany did not recognise. The Baltic State had obtained permission to form their armed forces, the Baltische Landeswehr, but this was now endangered.

A unique situation had arisen where the Latvian Provisional Government, Germany's representative Winnig, and the political leaders of the Baltic German community, were interested in reaching mutual agreements to jointly organise the defence of Latvian territory.

¹⁴ Mūsu armijas 20 gadi. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 11.11.1939, Nr. 257, 3. lpp.

¹⁵ DAMBĪTIS, Kārlis. Latvijas Pagaidu valdības bruņoto vienību formēšana 1919. gada pirmajā pusē. In *Liepāja Latvijas Neatkarības karā 1918–1920*. Sast. Inna GĪLE. Rīga, 2019, 75. lpp.

On 7 December 1918, an agreement was concluded between the Latvian Provisional Government and Germany on the establishment of the Latvian Defence forces (Apsardzības spēki in Latvian, Landeswehr in German). The agreement envisaged the formation of 18 Latvian, seven Baltic German and one Russian infantry company, as well as three Latvian and two Baltic German artillery batteries. The units were to be formed on a voluntary basis. Their maintenance was undertaken by the German side, supplying weapons, clothing and equipment to Latvia on credit.¹⁶

The most significant feature provided for in the concluded agreement was the reinforcement of ethnic divisions in the Defence Forces. This was also true for the formation of the command structure: both at the Higher Staff (Virsstābs in Latvian, Oberstab in German) and at local district headquarters, Latvians and Baltic Germans were to be represented proportionally. On one hand, this approach simply legally affirmed the existing situation, as Latvians and Baltic Germans had already begun forming units on an ethnic basis. On the other hand, this principle was reinforced, and it continued to exist, even after the establishment of the unified Latvian army in July 1919, when it included the former Baltic Landeswehr, renamed the Latvian German Home Guard (Latvijas Vācu zemessargi in Latvian).

Undoubtedly, the structuring of the armed forces along ethnic lines had far-reaching political consequences. It laid the groundwork for several military power centres which it was possible to manipulate politically. Baltic German units were oriented towards Germany, and Latvians towards the Entente, but the Russians adopted an ambiguous position.

The first attempt to use the dependency of the Provisional Government on Germany's security assistance to achieve political goals occurred already at the end of December when, with the help of blackmail, Winnig managed to impose an agreement on the Provisional Government granting Latvian citizenship to German volunteers fighting against the Bolsheviks on Latvian soil.

This so-called 29 December agreement, also sometimes referred to as the 'sinister alliance',¹⁷ was later used by German propaganda as a pretext to carry out aggressive actions against Latvia, accusing the Latvian side of not keeping to the agreement. However, the agreement was not ratified by either the PCL or the German parliament. The Latvian side did not consider it valid, but Winnig was dissatisfied with the agreement because he hoped to gain even greater advantages for German soldiers in Latvia, and demanded corrections in the text of the agreement. Ulmanis

¹⁶ Latvijas Pagaidu valdības un Vācijas ģenerālpilnvarotā Baltijā Augusta Vinniga līgums par Latvijas zemessardzes (Landesvēra) izveidošanu, 07.12.1918. *LNA LVVA*, 1468-1-130, 10.-14. lp.; 1515-1-1682, 152.-156. lp.

¹⁷ FELDMANIS, Inesis. Kad dzima Latvijas valsts? In *Varas Latvijā: no Kurzemes hercogistes līdz neatkarīgai valstij*. Esejas. Zinātn. red. Juris GOLDMANIS. Rīga, 2019, 542. lpp.

repeatedly ignored Winnig's attempts to blackmail the Latvian government by threatening to withdraw the German troops from Latvia and leave it to the Bolsheviks.¹⁸

Returning to the 7 December agreement, it should be emphasised that it did not solve the problem of defending Latvia, and it was broken soon after its signing. The main shortcoming of the agreement was that the envisaged size of the armed forces (6,000 soldiers) was far too small to stop the Red Army's invasion, which at that time could operate with approximately 20,000 soldiers.¹⁹ The plan to form Baltic German units in northern and eastern Vidzeme failed because the areas of formation were either already under occupation by the Red Army (Vecgulgbene) or fell into its hands after a few days (Alūksne). By the end of 1918, the Baltic Germans began to form three instead of the two artillery batteries provided for in the agreement, while the Latvians were not given artillery at all. The agreement also did not provide for the formation of cavalry units, although both the Baltic Germans and the Latvians formed them (see Table 1).

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It should be noted that the Russian units included the Northern Corps detachment formed in Latgale by Mikhail Afanasyev (1884–1941), which also included a large number of Latvians, and which, after retreating to Riga in early December 1918, concluded an agreement with the Latvian Provisional Government and became part of its Defence Forces.²⁰

By the end of 1918, the armed forces of the Latvian Provisional Government consisted of approximately 4,000 soldiers (about 2,000 Latvians, 1,800 Baltic Germans, and 200 Russians) in 22 infantry companies (14 Latvian, seven Baltic German, and one Russian), four cavalry units (three Baltic German and one Latvian), three artillery batteries (all Baltic German), and two separate detachments (both Russian). Of all these units, only six infantry companies (three Baltic German, two Latvian, and one Russian) and one artillery battery with a total of about 1,000 soldiers were fully formed and relatively combat-ready.

These forces were completely inadequate to stop the Red Army's advance and defend Riga. On 31 December 1918 and 1 January 1919, a battle took place at Inčukalna near Riga, when Baltic German and Russian companies were defeated, followed by the evacuation of Riga, and the retreat to Jelgava, and further to Liepāja. This was a catastrophic period for the armed forces, as during the retreat it was plagued by mass desertions: out of 1,400 Latvian soldiers in Riga loyal to the Provisional

¹⁸ WINNIG, August. *Am Ausgang der deutschen Ostpolitik: persönliche Erlebnisse und Erinnerungen*. Berlin, 1921, S. 94–96.

¹⁹ TOMANIS, Bruno. *Revolūcijas dēļi. Latviešu strēlnieki un sarkangvardi pirmajā padomju varas gadā*. Rīga, 1970, 115. lpp.

²⁰ Slepens līgums starp pulkvedi Mihailu Afanasjevu un Latvijas Pagaidu valdību, 09.12.1918. *LNA LVVA*, 1468-1-134, 4.–4. lpp. op.

Government, only 400 remained, the rest scattered or joined the side of the Red Army. The Baltic German units also lost hundreds of deserters, most of whom fled to Germany.

After retreating to the vicinity of Liepāja at the end of January 1919, the crisis in the armed forces deepened. Most of the ministers, officials and senior officers left Latvia to seek foreign assistance, or simply to save their lives. From the remnants of the Latvian units, the 1st Latvian Separate Battalion was formed, commanded by Os-kars Kalpaks (1882–1919). But the Provisional Government did not even fully control Liepāja, the last remaining Latvian city, where the oppositional local government, the German soldier council, and the German governor competed for the power.²¹

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Germany rushed to fill this power vacuum. On 17 January 1919, the command of the Iron Brigade (later the Iron Division), which was formed from volunteers from the German army, was taken over by the energetic Major Joseph Bischoff (1872–1948). On 1 February in Liepāja, General Rüdiger von der Goltz (1865–1946) of the German army arrived from Finland. Alfred Fletcher (1875–1959), a major in the German army, became the commander of what remained of the Landeswehr. It should be noted that one of the articles of the 7 December agreement stipulated that a representative of a neutral state should be appointed as the commander of the defence forces. It was initially considered that a potential candidate could be found in Sweden; later the possibility of choosing a British army officer was considered.²² However, throughout the period under consideration, the commanders of the Landeswehr were officers of the German army.

On 4 February, the transfer of the 1st Guards Reserve Division (partly by ship through Liepāja) from the Berlin area to northern Lithuania began. The restructuring of Baltic German companies began in Liepāja and its surroundings, forming three combat bat-talions and replacing most of the former Russian army officers with German person- nel. In Baltic German units, an increasing number of volunteers recruited in Germany were included, and later even entire German formations (*Freikorps* in German).

During this time, the armed forces of the Latvian Provisional Government essentially split into two parts based on ethnic divisions. The Baltic German volunteer forma- tions, supported and largely controlled by Germany, played a decisive role and again referred to themselves as the Baltic Landeswehr. In parallel, Latvian units contin- ued to develop. Local mobilisations and shipments of weapons from Great Britain²³ helped to increase the number of soldiers. Of course, Germany was not interested in the increasing role of the Latvian military forces and the British influence; therefore,

²¹ ŠILINŠ, Jānis. Politiskā situācija Liepājā 1919. gada janvārī. In *Liepāja Latvijas Neatkarības karā 1918–1920*. Sast. Inna ĢĪLE. Rīga, 2019, 9.–12. lpp.

²² *Latvijas Neatkarības karš 1918.–1919. gadā...*, 84.–85. lpp.

²³ In February 1919, Latvia received 5,320 rifles and 52 Madsen machine guns: DUNN, S. R., Op. cit., p. 77.

all possible obstacles were put in place to hinder the mobilisation measures implemented by the Provisional Government, the formation of new Latvian units, and their armament. Despite all the obstacles, by mid-April 1919, the 1st Latvian Separate Battalion had grown into a brigade of three battalions (more than 1,800 soldiers, with about 1,500 in combat units), with an additional 1,600 in various reserve formations and rear garrisons.²⁴ Thus, the numerical composition of the Latvian formations was larger than that of the Baltic German units (around 3,000), and approached the composition of the Iron Division (4,000) and the 1st Guards Reserve Division (5,000).²⁵ The Provisional Government awaited a large food shipment from the USA, and in the event of receiving new supplies of weapons, the number and capabilities of Latvian military units could increase even more rapidly. As a result, on 16 April 1919, with the help of Baltic German units, an armed coup was carried out in Liepāja, the Provisional Government was overthrown, and the formation of new Latvian units was halted.

The ethnic divisions in the Latvian armed forces began to diminish only at the end of the summer of 1919 when the Baltic German units, after being defeated at the Battle of Cēsis, were incorporated into the Latvian army. They fought successfully on the Latgale front, and expressed loyalty to the Provisional Government, refusing to participate in another German-inspired adventure: Pavel Bermond-Avalov's Western Russian Volunteer Army campaign against Latvia in October and November 1919.

Geographical divisions

In January 1919, when the territory controlled by the Provisional Government had shrunk to the area around Liepāja, the question of a strategy for further resistance became relevant. There were hopes of forming a volunteer expeditionary corps in Sweden, but already in February it became clear that such a project was unpromising and potentially dangerous, as it could strengthen conservative local Baltic German circles. A much more productive path was an attempt to expand the struggle in the territory controlled by Estonia. This was especially so because at the end of January and the beginning of February 1919, the Estonian army liberated several settlements and parishes in northern Latvia, culminating in the liberation of Valka on 1 February.

²⁴ Ziņas par I Latviešu atsevišķ. brigādes sastāvu un apbruņošanu uz 12. aprīli 1919. g., 12.04.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1515-1-189, 35. lp.

²⁵ *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen...*, S. 31–32, 34. Wochenbedarf an Verpflegung für die unter deutschem Oberbefehl stehenden in Lettland befindlichen Formationen, 05.03.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1468-1-139, 54. lp.; Bericht, Febr. 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1468-1-131, 118. lp. In March, the Landeswehr had 4,500 soldiers in total, including around 1,000 Latvians and 200 Russians. Of the remaining 3,300, several hundred were volunteer German citizens fighting alongside Baltic Germans.

On 7 January 1919, Captain Jorgis Zemitāns, who had previously commanded one of the Latvian companies in Riga, left Liepāja for Tallinn. On 20 January, the Estonian government allowed the Latvians to form six Latvian companies, consisting of 657 mobilised people.²⁶ Further negotiations with Estonia followed, resulting in an agreement between the two countries on 18 February to establish Latvian military units under the command of the Estonians (while operating in Estonia and in northern Latvia) and assist Latvia in liberating itself from the Bolsheviks. At the end of February, a mobilisation was announced in the liberated territory of northern Latvia, which yielded 1,521 people. Another 104 people volunteered.²⁷

50 | In March 1919, the 1st Valmiera Infantry Regiment, a reserve battalion and an artillery battery, were formed from the mobilised Latvians in the city of Tartu in Estonia. At the end of March, the 1st Valmiera Infantry Regiment participated in battles near Alūksne, and on 31 March the Northern Latvian Brigade was formed. Thus, at the beginning of April there were approximately 5,500 Latvian soldiers in the armed formations of the Provisional Government in western and northern Latvia (3,500 in Kurzeme and Zemgale, 2,000 in northern Vidzeme and Estonia). The combat formations (totalling about 3,000 soldiers) were structured into two brigades, the 1st Latvian Separate Brigade (commanded by Colonel Jānis Balodis), and the Northern Latvian Brigade (commanded by Colonel Jorgis Zemitāns).

The first formally came under the chief of the Latvian Defence Force, Alfred Fletcher. Arms, ammunition and all kinds of supplies were received mainly from Germany. The soldiers dressed in German uniforms. Since the Germans had still not allowed the formation of Latvian artillery batteries, German batteries were attached to provide support for the brigade. This almost total dependence on the German army placed Balodis' brigade in a very difficult situation after the coup on 16 April. Colonel Balodis refused to participate in the coup, rejected the offer to become one of the members of the military directorate planned by the mutineers, and later refused to recognise the puppet government of Andrievs Niedra (1871–1942) established by the Germans. On the other hand, the brigade did not get involved in the attempt to eliminate the mutineers, which was initially planned by Zālītis, the minister of defence, and Colonel Jānis Apinis (1867–1925), the commander of the 4th Separate Battalion.²⁸ Similarly, Balodis' brigade continued to follow Fletcher's orders, participating in military operations without any objections or political claims until the Battle of Cēsis in June 1919.

The situation of the Northern Latvian Brigade was completely different. It spent most of the spring of 1919 in battles on Estonian territory. Zemitāns' brigade operationally

²⁶ *Latvijas atbrīvošanas kara vēsture...*, 152. lpp.

²⁷ 5. Cēsu kājnieku pulka vēsture, [no date]. *LNA LVVA*, 6033-1-202, 2.–3. lp.

²⁸ Pulkveža Jāņa Apiņa raksts Latvijas apsardzības ministram Jānim Zālītim, 18.04.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1496-1-115, 20.–21. lp. op.

came under the command of the Estonian army. All kinds of supplies were also received from Estonia. The soldiers were mostly dressed in Russian or British uniforms, and armed with Russian, French and British weapons. Taking into account the rather difficult situation in Estonia in terms of arms and supplies, the Northern Latvian Brigade also experienced shortages in many areas. However, unlike the Southern Latvian Brigade, the Estonians helped the Latvians to form their own artillery units. The first Latvian artillery platoon was formed as early as 11 March 1919, from which the 1st Valmiera Artillery Battery emerged. The formation of the 2nd Cēsis Artillery Battery began on 23 March.

The organisational structure of the two brigades also differed significantly. The Northern Latvian Brigade was formed like other units of the Estonian army, based on a regimental structure. In contrast, the 1st Latvian Separate Brigade was formed from separate battalions, excluding the regimental level. After the merger of the two brigades in July 1919, this contradiction had to be resolved. The structure of separate battalions seemed more flexible, but it was decided to follow the example of Estonia and form not brigades but infantry divisions, with a structure of three infantry and one artillery regiment.

Dependence on the Estonian army and the significant geographical distance that separated Liepāja and northern Latvia also influenced the actions of Zemitāns and the forces under him after the coup of 16 April. The Northern Latvian Brigade expressed full loyalty to the Provisional Government, condemned the coup plotters and the Niedra government, and showed its readiness to fight with weapons against the Germans and their supporters. On 21 April the North Latvian Civil Administration announced the sequestration of German manor property.²⁹ This decision was made independently of the Provisional Government, because it had no direct communication with Liepāja. On 25 May the civil administration declared Niedra and his minister of education Jūlijs Kupčs (1882–1962) to be conspirators, confiscating their property.³⁰ These steps contributed to a confrontation that soon culminated in the Battle of Cēsis, where the Estonian army and the Northern Latvian Brigade fought against the German Iron Division and the Baltic Landeswehr loyal to the Niedra government.

After the 16 April coup, the Provisional Government could no longer effectively control its armed forces. Initially, ministers hid in the premises of the British mission in Liepāja, but later moved to the steamer the *Saratov* in the port of Liepāja. The *Saratov* was under the protection of British warships. The government, which had very limited communication with the mainland, could not carry out its functions. Officials of the Ministry of Defence were mainly engaged in gathering and analysing information, and planning. There were no Latvian military units left in Liepāja because

²⁹ Rīkojums. *Tautas Balss*, 22.04.1919, Nr. 1, 3. lpp.

³⁰ Rīkojums. *Tautas Balss*, 27.05.1919, Nr. 25, 3.–4. lpp.

General Goltz had prohibited them from staying in the city. The Balodis Brigade was stationed on the front not far from Riga, 150 kilometres away.

The situation changed after 22 May when the Bolsheviks were driven out of Riga. The 1st Latvian Brigade gained control of a significant part of the city, which allowed for the partial restoration of Latvian political and social life, as well as the resumption of the formation of extensive Latvian military units. Thousands of former Red Army soldiers who had deserted from the Soviet Latvian army were accepted into the Balodis Brigade. The numerical composition of the brigade increased very rapidly during this time, from 2,146 people on 18 May 1919, to 7,508 at the end of June.³¹ In addition to the existing four combat battalions, four new battalions were formed.

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Similar processes also occurred in the Northern Latvian Brigade, which, together with the Estonian army, liberated Vidzeme from the Bolsheviks at the end of May and the beginning of June 1919. The brigade accepted a large number of volunteers and implemented mobilisation, attracting many former Red Army soldiers. On 18 May the 2nd Cēsis Infantry Regiment was formed from the Reserve Battalion, on 31 May the Northern Latvian Partisan Regiment was formed, and in the second half of June the 3rd Jelgava Regiment and the 3rd Rūjiena Artillery Battery were formed. On 28 June 1919 there were 9,803 people in the units of the Northern Latvian Brigade, but there were over 10,000 including the rear garrisons.³²

The first direct contacts between the two brigades were established at the beginning of the Battle of Cēsis in June 1919. On May 28, the cavalry squadron of the 1st Latvian Separate Brigade, commanded by Eduards Plan-Dubrovskis (1891–1942), arrived in Limbaži, where it came into contact with the Estonian army. The squadron switched sides and joined the Northern Latvian Brigade and participated in the Battle of Cēsis on its side. Fletcher, the Landeswehr commander, suspected Balodis of deliberate sabotage. Also, Plan-Dubrovskis managed to inform the Balodis headquarters in Riga about the overall situation in northern Latvia.

Immediately after the start of the Battle of Cēsis on 6 June, Balodis announced the neutrality of his forces in the conflict. On the same day, he received a document compiled by Colonel Zemitāns in which Zemitāns ordered Balodis to join the fight against the Germans. To clarify the situation, a secret personal meeting took place in Carnikava on the night of 8–9 June between Balodis and Voldemārs Ozols (1884–1949), the chief of staff of the Northern Latvian Brigade. Balodis managed to convince Ozols of the validity of his position: he was worried that in the event of open confrontation, the Germans would disarm the Latvian brigade. Contacts between

³¹ I. Latviešu brigādes cilvēku, zirgu un ieroču sastāvs, 18.05.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1515-1-189, 135. lp.; Ziņas par I. Latv. atsev. Brigādes sastāvu, 28.06.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1515-1-191, 150. lp.

³² PENIŅIS, M. *Latvijas armijas sākums un cīņas...*, 181. lpp.

the two brigades were maintained thereafter, and Balodis' neutrality became increasingly hostile to the Germans every week.³³

At the decisive moment of the Battle of Cēsis, on 21 June, Balodis ordered his combat units to advance to the eastern front to take over several sectors from the 'northerners', which would allow them to release a significant part of their forces for the fight against the Germans.³⁴ In fact, this was a violation of the neutrality declared by Balodis. On 23 June, Līgo Day, the national holiday of Latvia, was celebrated in Riga. In honour of this, a concert was held where the band of the 1st Latvian Separate Brigade played the Estonian national anthem. The audience reacted with loud applause.³⁵

On the same evening in Riga, several clashes occurred between German and Latvian soldiers. The situation escalated in the following days, with some minor skirmishes between Latvian and German garrisons resulting in casualties. On the night of 26 June, Balodis' soldiers arrested ministers of the Niedra government near Riga who were trying to go to Liepāja. After the arrival of German troops and lengthy negotiations, the prisoners were released on 28 June. Also on 28 June, one of the detachments of the 4th separate battalion of the Balodis Brigade was handed over to the 'northerners' to participate in the liberation of Riga. On 2 July, the 6th separate battalion of the Balodis Brigade openly joined the Estonians.³⁶

On 3 July, the Strazdumuiža Armistice was concluded, ending hostilities between the Estonian and German armies. The German army and the Baltic Landeswehr had to leave Riga, where the maintenance of order was entrusted to the Balodis Brigade. On 6 July, the Northern Latvian Brigade marched into Riga. The leadership of both brigades met in the city centre, and this moment is immortalised in one of the most famous photographs of the Latvian War of Independence.

Conclusion

The armed forces of the Republic of Latvia were formed in very difficult circumstances between November 1918 and June 1919. The Latvian Provisional Government lacked weapons, money and resources. At the same time, the Red Army invaded Latvia from the east. Obtaining the necessary military support from abroad

³³ BALODIS, Jānis. *Atmiņu burtnīcas, 1918.–1939. gads. Publicēšanai sagatav.* Andris CAUNE. Rīga, 2015, 86.–87. lpp.; Ziemeļlatvijas brigādes štāba priekšnieka vietas izpildītāja Voldemāra Ozola vēstule 1. latviešu atsevišķās brigādes komandierim Jānim Balodim, 10.06.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 6033-1-159, 148. lp.

³⁴ 1. latviešu atsevišķās brigādes komandiera Jāņa Baloža pavēle brigādes apsardzības rajona priekšniekam Jānim Puriņam, 21.06.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1515-1-693, 166; 1492-2-5, 49. lp.

³⁵ *Baltijas Vēstnesis*, 26.06.1919, Nr. 24, 4. lpp.; *Tautas Balss*, 01.07.1919, Nr. 53, 4. lpp.

³⁶ 6. atsevišķā bataljona komandiera Uldriķa Tilles ziņojums Ziemeļlatvijas armijas virspavēlniekam Jorgim Zemitānam, 02.07.1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1496-1-15, 76. lp.

was complicated: British policy was unclear and hesitant, while Germany was ready to provide assistance only in exchange for political subjugation. In addition to these difficulties, the Latvian armed forces had to overcome problems of ethnic fragmentation and geographical separation.

Initially, the armed forces were formed based on an ethnic principle: Latvian, Baltic-German and Russian companies (later battalions) were established. This approach allowed for the rapid acquisition of cohesive and relatively combat-ready units, but it created serious political complications, as the Germans sought to use Baltic-German formations in their own interest. As a result, Baltic-German combat units carried out a coup in the interest of Germany and laid the groundwork for the subsequent Battle of Cēsis. The ethnic factor in the Latvian army existed until the end of the War of Independence, but its significance diminished after the summer of 1919 due to the cleansing of Baltic-German units of German citizens, their use in battles on the Eastern Front against the Red Army, and the appointment of a British army officer, Colonel Harold Alexander (1891–1969), as commander.

Another challenge, which was relevant from January 1919, was the simultaneous formation of armed forces in two geographically distant regions of Latvia, Kurzeme (western Latvia), and northern Vidzeme. There were no stable communications between the two regions. The military in each of them was formed according to different principles, and armed, clothed and equipped very differently. The units formed in Estonia and northern Vidzeme were part of the Estonian army.

In fact, there were two autonomous parts of the Latvian armed forces, which lost their coordinating centre after the coup of 16 April, as the government could no longer function properly. In these circumstances, the successful operation of the parts loyal to the Provisional Government was hindered. Paradoxically, it was only during the Battle of Cēsis, where the Northern Latvian Brigade actively fought against the Germans while the Southern Latvian Brigade observed neutrality, that the opportunity arose to establish direct contacts between the two parts. The Southern Latvian Brigade secretly supported the 'northerners' in the Battle of Cēsis, and took an increasingly militant stance against the Germans. After the Strazdumuiža Armistice, the necessary political conditions were created for the two parts of the armed forces to merge and create a unified Latvian army.

Table 1. The composition of the Latvian defence forces on 31 December 1918

	Latvian formations	Baltic German formations	Russian formations
1	1st Riga Defence Company	1st Riga Company	Russian Company (Didorov)
2	2nd Riga Defence Company	2nd Riga Company	Afanasyev Detachment
3	3rd Riga Defence Company	3rd Riga Company	Liepāja Volunteer Detachment
4	Officer and Instructor Reserve Company	Officer Machine Gun Company	
5	Student (Separate) Company	Assault Squadron (Stosstrupp)	
6	Schoolboy Company	Jelgava Company (Rahden)	
7	Latgale Officer Company	Liepāja Company (Kleist)	
8	Latgale Instructor Company	Cavalry Detachment Hahn	
9	Cēsis Company	Cavalry Detachment Drachenfels	
10	1st Jelgava Company	Cavalry Detachment Engelhardt	
11	2nd Jelgava Company	Haubitz Battery (Zinnius)	
12	1st Liepāja Company	Artillery Battery (Pfeil)	
13	2nd Liepāja Company	Artillery Battery Siewert	
14	Tukums Company (later Cavalry Detachment)		

Sources: DAMBĪTIS, K. Op. cit., 73.–76. lpp.; *Latvijas atbrīvošanas kara vēsture...*, 65.–68. lpp.; BAUMANIS. Liktenīgās dienas. *Latvijas Ērgli*, 1925, Nr. 8, 12. lpp.; M. B. Trūkums Latvijas atbrīvošanas cīņu vēsturē. *Kurzemes Vārds*, 23.06.1939, 7. lpp.; BĒRZIŅŠ, Andrejs. Vēsturiski notikumi valsts proklamēšanas priekšvakarā Liepājā. *Kurzemes Vārds*, 18.11.1938, 4. lpp.; *Die Baltische Landeswehr...*, S. 210–213; GRIMM, C. *Jahre deutscher Entscheidung...*, S. 206–209.

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SUSISKALDŽIUSI KARIUOMENĒ: PIRMIEJI ŠEŠI LATVIJOS GINKLUOTŪJŪ PAJĒGŪ KŪRIMO MĒNESIAI (1918 M. LAPKRITIS – 1919 M. BALANDIS)

Jānis Šiliņš

Santrauka

1919 m. liepos 10 d. Šiaurės Latvijos brigada, kuriai vadovavo pulkininkas Jorgis Zemitāns, ir 1-oji Latvijos atskiroji brigada (dar vadinta Pietų Latvijos brigada), kuriai vadovavo pulkininkas Janis Balodis, buvo sujungtos į bendrą darinį, taip sukuriant Latvijos kariuomenę. Pietų Latvijos brigada tapo naujai suformuotos kariuomenės 1-ąja divizija (1-oji Kuržemės pėstininkų divizija), o Šiaurės Latvijos brigada pervadinta 2-ąja divizija (2-oji Vidžemės pėstininkų divizija). Ankstesniais mėnesiais abi šios brigados atsirado skirtingomis politinėmis aplinkybėmis, toli viena nuo kitos. Jos turėjo skirtingas uniformas, ginkluotę, ekipuotę ir organizacinę struktūrą. Straipsnio tikslas – išnagrinėti Latvijos ginkluotųjų pajėgų formavimąsi nuo 1918 m. lapkričio mėn. iki 1919 m. liepos, t. y. šių brigadų kūrimosi laikotarpiu, prieš tai, kai jų pagrindu atsirado viena Latvijos kariuomenė.

Straipsnyje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama dviem pagrindiniams veiksniams – etniniam ir geografiniam, mat tiriamuoju laikotarpiu Latvijos kariuomenė buvo susiskaldžiusi tiek etniniu, tiek geografiniu požiūriais.

Etninis susiskaldymas turėjo reikmės todėl, kad ginkluotosios pajėgos iš pradžių formuotos pagal etninį principą – kūrėsi atskiros latvių, Baltijos vokiečių ir rusų kuopos (vėliau batalionai). Toks principas leido greitai suformuoti darnius ir gana pajėgius kovinius dalinius, tačiau sukėlė rimtų politinių komplikacijų, nes Vokietija siekė panaudoti Baltijos vokiečių formuotes savo interesams. Dėl to Baltijos vokiečių koviniai daliniai įvykdė perversmą veikdami Vokietijos naudai ir užprogramavo seką, atvedusią į Cėsių mūšį 1919 m. birželio pabaigoje. Etninis veiksnys Latvijos kariuomenėje egzistavo iki pat Nepriklausomybės karo pabaigos, tačiau po 1919 m. vasaros jo reikšmė ėmė mažėti dėl Baltijos vokiečių dalinių valymo nuo Vokietijos piliečių, jų panaudojimo mūšiuose Rytų fronte prieš Raudonąją armiją ir britų kariuomenės karininko pulkininko Haroldo Alexanderio paskyrimo vadu.

Kitas iššūkis, aktualus nuo 1919 m. sausio, buvo tai, kad ginkluotosios pajėgos vienu metu formuotos dviejuose vienas nuo kito geografiškai nutolusiuose regionuose – Kuržemėje (Vakarų Latvijoje) ir Šiaurės Vidžemėje. Stabilus ryšio tuo metu tarp šių dviejų regionų nebūta. Kariuomenė kiekviename jų formuota pagal skirtingus principus. Be to, Estijoje ir Šiaurės Vidžemėje suformuoti daliniai buvo pavaldūs Estijos kariuomenei.

Iš esmės tai buvo dvi autonominės Latvijos ginkluotųjų pajėgų dalys, kurios po Kārlio Ulmanio laikinąją vyriausybę nuvertusio balandžio 16 d. perversmo neteko koordinacinio centro, nes vyriausybė nebegalėjo tinkamai veikti. Tokiomis aplinkybėmis sėkmingas Laikinajai vyriausybei lojalių karinių dalių veikimas komplikavosi. Paradoksalu, bet tik

per Cēsiņ mūšj, kuriame Šiaurės Latvijos brigada aktyviai kovėsi su vokiečių daliniais, o Pietų Latvijos brigada laikėsi neutralumo, atsirado galimybė užmegzti tiesioginius ryšius tarp šių dviejų būsimosios Latvijos kariuomenės dalių. Pietų Latvijos brigada slapta rėmė „šiauriečius“ Cēsiņ mūšyje ir ėmė užimti vis karingesnę poziciją prieš vokiečius. Bet tik po Strazdumuižas paliaubų (1919 m. liepos 3 d.) susidarė reikiamos politinės sąlygos abiem ginkluotųjų pajėgų dalims susijungti ir sukurti bendrą Latvijos kariuomenę.