

THE BALTIC REGIMENT IN THE ESTONIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1918–1920. A QUESTION OF LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Baltic Regiment, a military unit of Baltic Germans that served under the Estonian army in the Estonian War of Independence, fighting against the Bolshevik Red Army. It focuses on issues of loyalty and the complex relationships between the Baltic Regiment, the Estonian military leadership and Estonian society. Before Estonia declared independence in 1918, the Baltic Germans were the ruling class in Estonian society, and centuries of tension between them and the Estonian population created challenges for cooperation during the war. These strained relations led the Estonian military leadership to assign the Baltic Regiment to the Russian White Army, keeping the unit at a distance from Estonia. Despite this, the Baltic Regiment fought courageously as part of the Estonian forces and earned recognition, both locally and internationally, as an elite and highly effective combat unit. After the war, the Estonian commander-in-chief General Laidoner highlighted the Baltic Regiment as an example of successful cooperation between Estonia's diverse ethnic groups.

KEYWORDS: Estonian War of Independence, Russian Civil War, ethnic minorities, ethnically based military formations.

ANOTACIJA

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Baltų pulkas – Baltijos vokiečių karinis dalinys, Estijos nepriklausomybės karo metu priklausęs Estijos kariuomenei ir kovojęs su bolševikų Raudonąja armija. Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama lojalumo klausimams ir sudėtingiems Baltų pulko, Estijos karinės vadovybės ir Estijos visuomenės santykiams. Prieš Estijai paskelbiant nepriklausomybę 1918 m., Baltijos vokiečiai (baltai) buvo Estijos visuomenės valdančioji klasė. Šimtmečiais tarp jų ir Estijos gyventojų tvyrojusi įtampa kėlė iššūkių bendradarbiaujant karo metu. Dėl šių įtemptų santykių Estijos karinė vadovybė Baltų pulką priskyrė Rusijos baltajai armijai, laikydama šį dalinį atokiau nuo Estijos. Nepaisant to, Baltų pulkas drąsiai kovėsi Estijos pajėgose ir pelnė vietos bei tarptautinį pripažinimą kaip elitinis ir labai efektyvus kovinis dalinys. Po karo Estijos vyriausiasis kariuomenės vadas generolas Laidoneris pabrėžė, kad Baltų pulkas yra sėkmingo įvairių Estijos etninių grupių bendradarbiavimo pavyzdys.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Estijos nepriklausomybės karas, Rusijos pilietinis karas, etninės mažumos, etninės karinės formuotės.

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Introduction

The Estonian national army was created in the autumn of 1918 when the Russian Bolshevik Red Army was already invading Estonian territory. The situation seemed very critical to the Estonian Provisional Government, so it considered the possibility of hiring volunteer units from the German army, which was still present in the Baltic,¹ and counted on British military assistance.² There was even talk of appealing to Britain to occupy Estonia.³ Anyway the British presence in the Baltic Sea relieved the Estonian army of the need to think about the naval domain, and allowed them to concentrate solely on ground operations. The Finnish volunteer units which arrived in Estonia at the end of December 1918 provided great support. Almost immediately after their arrival, they began fighting against the Bolsheviks near Tallinn in early January 1919.⁴ But it was not enough to win the war.

In this critical situation, the Estonian Provisional Government was ready to accept any military aid. A prime example is the treaty signed between the Estonian Provisional Government and the Russian Whites of the Northern Corps (later the Northwestern Army), under which the Russian Whites were given a legal basis to stay on Estonian territory, began to receive arms and equipment from the Estonian side, and, subordinate to the Estonian Supreme Commander, undertook to fight against the invading Russian Bolsheviks.⁵ Sometimes the Estonian Provisional Government even received proposals for military cooperation from private individuals, such as the US entrepreneur of Estonian origin Henry C. Reissar, who expressed his willingness to form a new elite unit following the US traditions, a Scouts battalion, with his own private money. True, it soon became clear that this was an international adventurer who left the volunteers without any money, and the Estonian state took over the maintenance of the unit.⁶ The antagonism of Estonians towards the Baltic Germans had been so great that, according to the memoirs of Heinrich von Dehn, a volunteer officer in the Baltic Regiment, at the beginning the Estonian state had to

¹ KRÖÖNSTRÖM, Mati. *Eesti sõjaväe juhtivkoosseis Vabadussõja 1918–1920*. Doktoritöö. Tartu, 2009, lk. 31–33.

² OLL, Arto. Suurbritannia seisukohad Eesti suhtes ja Briti eskaadri tegevus Soome lahel 1918–1919. In *Vabadussõja mitu palet. Sõda ja ühiskond aastatel 1918–1920* (Rahvusarhiivi toimetised = Acta et Commentationes Archivi Nationalis Estoniae, 3 (34)). Toim. Tõnu TANNBERG. Tartu, 2019, lk. 185–233.

³ KRÖÖNSTRÖM, M. Op. cit., lk. 30.

⁴ KOPÕTIN, Igor. Foreign and Ethnic units in the Estonian military during the War of Independence 1918–1920. In *The Latvian War of Independence and the 100th Anniversary of the Latvian Army*. Ed. by Juris CIGANOVŠ. Rīga, 2019, pp. 103–104.

⁵ KAASIK, Peeter; VAHTRE, Lauri; SALO, Urmas, et al. *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu*. I osa. Toim. Lauri VAHTRE. Tallinn, 2020, lk. 410–413.

⁶ KAASIK, Peeter. Henry C. Reissar – aatemees või aferist? *Rahvusarhiivi Toimetised = Acta et Commentationes Archivi Nationalis Estoniae*, 2019, Nr. 3 (34), lk. 265–306.

rule out recruiting Baltic Germans.⁷ This is corroborated by modern academic studies, which show that mobilisation into the Estonian army in the autumn of 1918 had been emphatically ethnic-based and initially excluded Baltic Germans for security reasons.⁸ It was only the lack of sufficient volunteers of its own and the bitter situation with the invading Reds that forced the Estonian government to be more conciliatory. It was precisely at this time that the Estonian Provisional Government adopted the suggestion of the local Baltic German organisations not to integrate into the Estonian army the Baltic German armed units that were forming in Estonia.

Thus, the main question of the study is the following: under what circumstances were the so-called Baltic Regiment formed, and how can we characterise the motivation of the Baltic Germans to fight in the Estonian army during the Estonian War of Independence? Considering the historically developed ethnic tensions between Estonians and the local upper class, the Baltic Germans, this question can be placed under the phenomenon of loyalty.

The second-largest Estonian minority after the Russians, the Baltic Germans have received quite a lot of attention in Estonian historiography. This is mostly related to the decline of Baltic German culture in Estonia: the migration of the Baltic Germans to Germany, to which several published memoirs are devoted.⁹ The transformation of Baltic Germans from a dominant stratum of society in the Baltic provinces to a rather small ethnic minority in the Republic of Estonia was investigated in his monograph by Professor Aadu Must of the University of Tartu.¹⁰ The situation of the Baltic Germans in the governorates of Estonia and Livonia under the conditions of the First World War, which began in 1914, has been discussed to some extent.¹¹ Mart Kuldkepp, who has worked on issues of national identity, has published a study on the political repression of Baltic Germans during the Estonian War of Independence.¹² Kaido Laurits, an Estonian archivist, has published a comparatively extensive

⁷ [DEHN, Heinrich von.] Heinrich von Dehni mälestused. In *Baltisakslaste mälestusi Eesti Vabadussõjast*. Tõlkinud Agur BENNO. Tallinn, 2023, lk. 21.

⁸ KULDKEPP, Mart. Eestlased ja „eestlase vaenlased“. Survemeetmed baltisakslaste ja nende poolehoidjate vastu Eesti Vabadussõja ajal. In *Vabadussõja mitu palet. Sõda ja ühiskond aastatel 1918–1920* (Rahvusarhiivi toimetised = Acta et Commentationes Archivi Nationalis Estoniae, 3 (34)). Toim. Tõnu TANNBERG. Tartu, 2019, lk. 372.

⁹ LIIVIK, Olev; TARK, Triin. Aus der Sowjetunion in das Deutsche Reich: Über die Nachumsiedlung aus Estland im Jahre 1941. *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 2016, Jhg. 65, Hf. 3, S. 407–427; LOEBER, Dietrich A. Baltisakslaste ümberasumine Eestis ja Lätis. Tagasivaade 50 aasta distantstilt. *Looming*, 1989, Nr. 9, lk. 1234–1241; *Umsiedlung 60. Baltisakslaste organiseeritud lahkumine Eestist*. Koost. Sirje KIVIMÄE. Tallinn, 2000.

¹⁰ MUST, Aadu. *Von Privilegierten zu Geächteten. Die Repressalien gegenüber deutschbaltischen Honoratioren während des Ersten Weltkrieges*. Tartu, 2014.

¹¹ KOPÖTIN, Igor. Esimese Maailmasõja algus Eestis. võim ja ühiskond. In *1 maailmasõda Ida-Euroopas – teistsugune kogemus, teistsugused mälestused* (Eesti sõjaajaloo aastaraamat, 5 (11)). Peatoim. Toomas HIIO. Viimsi, Tallinn, 2015, lk. 11–43.

¹² KULDKEPP, M. Op. cit.

study on the German cultural administration in Estonia between the wars.¹³ A few years after the restoration of Estonia's independence, a collection of articles was published in Hamburg, the authors of which dealt with a number of problems related to the Baltic German community in the Republic of Estonia.¹⁴ Researchers into Baltic Germanism have been able to draw on numerous memoirs concerning the problems of the Baltic Germans.¹⁵ However, these studies hardly mention the Baltic Regiment, a military unit of the Estonian army formed from Baltic Germans. One of the first authors to study the contribution of the Baltic Germans to Estonian national defence was the Estonian historian Rein Helme, who wrote a few articles on the subject.¹⁶ Helme's articles on the Baltic Germans contain factual errors and inaccuracies, for example about the nationality of the officers or the officers who were resettled. Therefore, these accounts should be used with critical caution.

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It should be admitted that most of the existing memoirs and later authors' treatment of the Baltic Germans in Estonia concern the Baltic German ethnic unit that took part in the War of Independence, the Baltic Regiment. Information on the formation and activities of the Baltic Regiment can be found in an article by Siim Õismaa, a researcher at the Estonian War Museum, published in the Estonian Yearbook of Military History.¹⁷ In addition, Armand Trei, a history enthusiast, published a compilation of writings and memoirs by other authors.¹⁸ The researchers' analyses of the Baltic Regiment are also complemented by a large number of memoirs published in interwar Estonia.¹⁹ Memoirs of Baltic Germans who fought in the Estonian War of Independence have recently been published, which include, among other things, previously unpublished manuscripts.²⁰ The memoirs of the Baltic Germans do not usually mention political issues, but give a description of the tactical activities of the unit. Some exceptions are the memoirs of Baron Wilhelm Wrangel, head of the cultural autonomy of the Baltic Germans, who served in the regiment as a simple volunteer,

¹³ LAURITS, Kaido. *Saksa Kultuuroromavalitsus Eesti Vabariigis 1925–1940*. Tallinn, 2008.

¹⁴ *Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Estland während der Zwischenkriegszeit und aktuelle Fragen des deutsch-estnischen Verhältnisses*. Hrsg. von Boris MEISSNER, Dietrich A. LOEBER, Cornelius HASSELBLATT. 2. Aufl. Hamburg, 1997.

¹⁵ KNORRING, Gustav von. *Erinnerungen an das kaiserliche Russland und Estland*. Hamburg, 1996; WRANGELL, Parun Wilhelm. Eesti sakslaste ümberasumise eellugu. *Akadeemia*, 2003, Nr. 11, lk. 2291–2323; DELLINGS-HAUSEN, Eduard von. *Kodumaa teenistuses: Eestimaa Rüütelkonna peamehe mälestused*. Tallinn, 1994; STACKELBERG, Eduard von. *Ühe baltlase võitlustee: püüdlused, võidud ja kaotused*. Tallinn, 2010.

¹⁶ HELME, Rein. Baltisakslastest ohvitserid Eesti kaitseväes. In *Umsiedlung 60. Baltisakslaste organiseeritud lahkumine Eestist*. Koost. Sirje KIVIMÄE. Tallinn, 2000, lk. 51–76; HELME, Rein. Die Beteiligung der baltischen Deutschen am Freiheitskrieg. In *Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Estland...*, S. 37–46.

¹⁷ ÕISMAA, Siim. Balti pataljoni formeerimisest ja koosseisust. In *Väeteenistusest Eestis ja eestlastest väeteenistuses* (Eesti sõjaajaloo aastaraamat, 1 (7)). Peatoim. Toomas HIIO. Tallinn, Viimsi, 2011, lk. 42–68.

¹⁸ TREI, Armand. *Unustatud rügement. Balti pataljoni (rügement) Eesti Vabadussõjas*. Toim. Lauri SUURMAA. Tallinn, 2010.

¹⁹ Cf. WRANGELL, Wilhelm. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments. Das Deutschtum Estlands im Kampfe gegen den Bolschewismus 1918–1920*. Reval, 1928; HARTGE, Oswald. *Wir zogen in das Feld... Als MG-Mann neun Monate im Baltenregiment*. Reval, 1928; KRUSENSTJERN, Georg von. *M.G.-Mann im Baltenregiment. Tagebuchblätter*. Tallinn, 1938 (Nachdruck: Hannover-Döhren, 1968).

²⁰ *Baltisakslaste mälestusi Eesti Vabadussõjast*. Tõlkinud Agur BENNO. Tallinn, 2023.

and the memoirs of Heinrich von Dehn, the commander of a cavalry squadron in the Baltic Regiment. They give some cautious assessments of the political events of the War of Independence, from which it is possible to form a picture of the relationship between the Baltic volunteers and the Estonian military authorities if we compare the memoirs with archival documents.

One of the most important sources on the history of the Baltic Regiment, which has not been used by foreign researchers before, is archive fond ERA.581 of the Estonian National Archives. The archive fond contains collections of regimental documents, orders, service and operational correspondence, reports, and lists of servicemen. Some of the official correspondence between the Estonian military command and the Baltic Regiment is contained in fonds ERA.495 and ERA.497 of the Estonian General Staff and Headquarters. Documents concerning the expropriation of landlords' lands from Baltic Germans are kept in fond ERA.62 (Department of Cadastre and Land Management, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development).

Even though the history of the Baltic Regiment, which consisted of Baltic Germans and was part of the Estonian military, has been fairly well researched, the question of its loyalty remains somewhat unclear. More specifically, it would be fair to ask for what goals Estonian Baltic Germans fought in the Estonian War of Independence, and what were their relations with the Estonian state? For this purpose, we will examine aspects that are quite well described in historiography, such as the formation of the regiment, its composition and sentiments, and its relations with the Estonian High Command at different times.

In this study, loyalty refers to the attitude of ethnic minorities, in this case Baltic Germans, towards the Estonian state. On one hand, it is related to the expectations and demands of the state, and on the other hand to the way this ethnic group accepts it or not.²¹ In the case of the Baltic Germans, we can speak of a conflict of identity, according to which the Baltic Germans had a much stronger sense of cultural and national cohesion than the young Republic of Estonia. New nation states emerged out of the wreckage of the three empires that collapsed after the First World War, with ethnic tensions and conflicts.²² Estonia was no exception, with ethnic groups switching roles and generating mutual mistrust. The relationship of different ethnic groups with a state is made more specific by their actions in a military environment or in the event of war, which severely tests the loyalty of ethnic groups to the state.²³

²¹ LUCHTERHANDT, Otto. *Nationale Minderheiten und Loyalität* (Forschungsergebnisse der Studiengruppe für Politik und Völkerrecht, Bd. 26). Köln, 1997, S. 25–26.

²² HASLINGER, Peter; PUTTKAMER, Joachim von. Staatsmacht, Minderheit, Loyalität – konzeptionelle Grundlagen am Beispiel Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas in der Zwischenkriegszeit. In *Staat, Loyalität und Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1918–1941* (Buchreihe der Kommission für Geschichte und Kultur der Deutschen in Südosteuropa, Bd. 39). Hrsg. von Peter HASLINGER, Joachim von PUTTKAMER. München 2007, S. 1–4.

²³ Further reading: KOPÖTIN, Igor. School of Nation. The Concept and Praxis of the Soldier's Education in the Estonian National Army in the Interwar Period (1920–1940). In *Creating Modern Nation-States in the*

The creation of the Baltic Regiment: forced collaboration

The military organisation of the Baltic Germans in Estonia was established by their activity themselves, supported by the leadership of the German occupying forces' 8th Army, which planned to form a defence force for the Baltic Duchy, *Die Baltische Landeswehr*.²⁴ The November Revolution in Germany and the spread of revolutionary sentiment to the German forces stationed in the Baltic accelerated the disintegration of the 8th Army, forcing them to leave before the *Landeswehr* could be formed in Estonia. Furthermore, German revolutionary soldiers did not favour 'Baltic barons', as they saw them not as fellow countrymen but as social enemies.²⁵ As the German forces withdrew from Estonia relatively quickly, but stayed a little longer in Courland, this facilitated the formation of *Landeswehr* units in Latvia instead. However, in Estonia, Baltic-German defence units were formed with the support of the leadership of the German 8th Army, albeit only during the army's retreat in November 1918.²⁶ In doing so, unlike the *Landeswehr* that formed in Latvia, the leadership of the German 8th Army did not allow German officers and soldiers to join Baltic-German units formed in Estonia.²⁷

Due to the withdrawal of German forces from Estonia, local Baltic Germans were forced to seek new support for self-defence and organisation. In this new situation, they approached the Estonians, who needed military forces to repel the advance of the Red Army and defend the Republic of Estonia. It is likely that it was for this reason that a treaty was concluded on 26 November 1918 between the Provisional Government of Estonia and representatives of local Baltic German associations and the Estonian knighthood that had previously cooperated with the German occupy-

Eastern Baltic (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, Vol. 38). Ed. by Vyngantas VAREIKIS, Silva POČYTĖ. Klaipėda, 2019, pp. 117–128.

²⁴ *Eesti Vabadussõda 1918–1920*. 2. köide. Koost. August TRAKSMAA. Tallinn, 1997, lk. 124. The formation of the *Landeswehr* was to be initiated by the local Baltic Germans on a county-by-county basis. The Germans were to play a leading role in this. See more: TREI, A. Op. cit., lk. 13–14, 19; HINNOM, Arnold. *Suurheitlus. Mälestusi rahvusväeosade ajast ja Vabadussõjast*. Lund, 1955, lk. 54.

²⁵ *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps*. Bd. 1: *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres*. Berlin, 1936, S. 130; DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., S. 24.

²⁶ *Darstellungen...*, Bd. 1, S. 136. In fact, the transfer of officers and non-commissioned officers of the German army to the Baltic German Tartu company (Baltic German battalion Dorpat) as instructors and the transfer of arms and equipment took place only according to the agreement with the Ministry of War of the Republic of Estonia, as confirmed by official correspondence of the German army – Landsturm Btl Goldap, undated document, probably autumn of 1918. *Eesti Rahvusarhiiv* (Estonian National Archives, hereafter *RA ERA*), 581.1.75, l. 1. The participation of German NCO instructors in the training of the Baltic German unit in Tartu is also described by Oswald Hartge – HARTGE, O. *Wir zogen...*, S. 6–7. On the other hand, the Baltic German unit in Rakvere did not have such good training or equipment – KRUSENS-TJERN, G. v. Op. cit., S. 55; DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 55–56.

²⁷ GRIMM, Claus. *Vor den Toren Europas 1918–1920: Geschichte der Baltischen Landeswehr*. Hamburg, 1963, S. 40.

ing authorities. According to this treaty, a Baltic German ethnic military unit had to be established within the structure of the still-forming Estonian army.²⁸

The main reason why Baltic Germans chose a military organisation was the fear of the Bolsheviks, a desire to protect their ancestral lands from 'Eastern barbarism', as was confirmed by several Baltic German figures and fighters in the Baltic Regiment.²⁹ The Baltic German historian Georg von Krusenstjern, who served in the Baltic Regiment as a simple private soldier, summed up the fear of the Reds and the disintegration of the German army after the November Revolution with the cry 'Who will defend our homeland now?' Allegedly, it was precisely concern for the homeland that compelled Krusenstjern to go to war.³⁰ The prominent Estonian Baltic German figure Wilhelm von Wrangell quoted the retreat of German forces and the Bolshevik offensive in 1918 as major reasons that endangered the existence of the Baltic States. According to Wrangell, many Baltic Germans fled to Germany in search of protection. However, most stayed behind to defend a land on which they had 'bestowed European culture, shed blood for centuries and worked for its benefit'. This obliged Baltic Germans to defend the land, which is why some even returned from Germany to fight.³¹ Moreover, Wrangell pointed out the contradictions between Estonians and Baltic Germans during the German occupation, in that Estonians wanted a nation-state, while the Baltic Germans wanted a duchy. However, they were united on one issue: in Wrangell's view, the German occupying authorities stopped the Bolsheviks from resorting to violence.³² Krusenstjern, too, wrote that the sense of togetherness of the Baltic Germans in Estonia was important in the creation of the Baltic Regiment.³³ For example, a committee was set up in Tallinn from the 'German strata of the population' to recruit and collect clothing, weapons and money for the unit.³⁴

Wrangell addressed the participation of the Baltic Regiment in military operations from 1918 to 1920 as the contribution of the Baltic Germans living in Estonia to the fight against Bolshevism. This peculiar form strengthened the internal organisation of the Baltic Germans and helped them to further consolidate.³⁵ The motivation of the volunteers in the Baltic Regiment is reflected well in a booklet published in November 1919 in support of the troops, which published short accounts of the war by volunteers. The first article, for example, discusses the concepts of *Heimat* and

²⁸ Protocol of negotiations between Konstantin Päts and Georg Baron Stackelberg-Kurküll, Max Bock, Harry Koch, 26.11.1918. *RA ERA*, 581.1.73, l. 82–83; WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 6–7; ÕISMÄA, Siim. *Balti pataljoni Vabadussõjas*. Bakalaureusetöö. Tallinna Ülikool. Tallinn, 2008, lk. 12–13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, lk. 43; DELLINGSHAUSEN, E. *Op. cit.*, lk. 210–212.

³⁰ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. *Op. cit.*, S. 3–5.

³¹ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, S. 2.

³³ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. *Op. cit.*, S. 56.

³⁴ DEHN, H. v. *Op. cit.*, lk. 22.

³⁵ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. *Op. cit.*, S. VIII–XI.

Vaterland and their meaning for the Baltic Germans. From the article, it can be concluded that the fighters in the Baltic Regiment associated the Fatherland specifically with their place of birth, which they called *Baltenland*, but not with the Republic of Estonia as a national entity, of which the article did not mention a single word.³⁶

Already in the first battles of the Estonian War of Independence, the units of the Baltic Regiment showed themselves in a good light because its fighters were motivated to fight for their homeland. The regiment's interaction with Estonian soldiers, Defence League members and the local population were good.³⁷ At the same time, in the difficult situation prevailing at the beginning of the War of Independence, the then commander-in-chief of the Estonian armed forces, Colonel Johan Laidoner, had to reinforce his order to subordinate a Baltic German unit to another Estonian unit by threatening to court-martial the commander of the Baltic German unit, Rittmaster Victor Moritz Karl von zur Mühlen, if he disobeyed the order.³⁸ This demonstrates the deep mistrust of the Baltic German ethnic unit that arose in the Estonian military command when a unit was created.

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The social origins of personnel of the Baltic Regiment: nobles, officers and students

The origin and socio-economic status of the personnel of the Baltic Regiment can be considered an important fact. Von Krusenstjern recalls how the volunteers in the Baltic Regiment had to stay overnight in a manor house, where the house was ransacked not by the Bolsheviks but by marauding Estonian soldiers. They allegedly smashed all the furniture and porcelain, and threw the securities and family valuables on the floor. The sight left the members of the Baltic Regiment in a gloomy mood.³⁹ This apparently gave rise to the idea that while the Baltic Germans were

³⁶ K., F. An die Heimat. In *Stimmen aus dem Baltenregiment. Eine Sammlung von Frontberichten*. Reval, 1919, S. 2–5.

³⁷ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. Op. cit., 8–9. Krusenstjern wrote in his memoirs how starving Baltic German soldiers came to the Estonians' farm and talked to them. The hospitable hostess offered the soldiers a generous meal, including potatoes with bacon, eggs and beer. When the soldiers wanted to pay for the meal, the Estonian woman refused to take money and shouted: '*Ach gehen Sie mit Ihrem Gelde – ich bin doch nur froh, wenn ich in irgendeiner Weise der guten Sache dienen kann. Sie kämpfen doch für uns alle!*' (Oh, keep your money. I'm just happy if I can help the good cause in some way. You're fighting for all of us!) – Ibid., S. 50. The mention of this incident in the memoir eight years after the end of the War of Independence was meant to show not only good relations with the local population, but that the Baltic Germans wanted to show that they fought for all the people of Estonia, regardless of their nationality.

³⁸ Järvamaa Defence Battalion Commander 1st Lieutenant Kanep to von zur Mühlen, 26.12.1918. *RA ERA*, 581.1.75, I. 39–40. Laidoner then ordered Tõnisson to form a battalion of Baltic Germans under the command of Colonel von Weiss and deploy it in the Battle of Rägavere positions near Rakvere – Laidoner to Tõnisson, 27.12.1918. *RA ERA*, 581.1.75, I. 41.

³⁹ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. Op. cit., S. 51–52.

defending Estonia against the Bolsheviks, Estonian soldiers in the rear were looting Baltic German property and destroying their culture.⁴⁰ In other words, with far from all of the Baltic regiment's volunteers being landowners, and not even always ethnic Germans, the Estonians' attacks on Baltic German property seemed to them unjust and boorish. In this respect, the actions of the Estonians and the Bolsheviks against the Baltic Germans were somewhat similar.

After the signing of the Treaty of Tartu, the Ministry of Agriculture began reorganising the use of manor lands, during which it was necessary to clarify the nobles who had served in the Estonian army and their services to the Estonian state.⁴¹ In an investigation conducted by the commander of reserve forces, at least 71 nobles serving in various positions in the Baltic Regiment were identified.⁴² Considering that at the peak of the War of Independence in June 1919 there were 900 men serving in the Baltic Regiment, nobles accounted for only 7.8%.⁴³ However, their representation within the regimental leadership was high, a nobleman also held the position of regimental commander, which could have influenced morale in the entire unit. Krusenstjern wrote that the Estonian government's plan to confiscate estates made his mood as a Baltic Regiment fighter on the front line bitter, and the idea of continuing to fight was fading away.⁴⁴ More importantly, the Russian historian Igor Barinow estimates that as many as 64% of the Baltic Regiment's former Tsarist army officers were the sons of landlords.⁴⁵ As a result, the nationalisation of the estates aroused very painful feelings in the Baltic Regiment.

The bitter feeling about the nationalisation of the estates is also mentioned by von Dehn, who called it the arbitrariness of Estonian government officials and new local rulers. Among other things, he noted the following: 'Many a manor owner belonged to the Baltic Battalion and fought for Estonia, but in his absence his manor was taken away, so that he did not even have a chance to siesta for his own rights. In most cases, the seizure took place completely unexpectedly, without prior notification. A committee of government officials suddenly travelled to the manor, and a national

⁴⁰ Even by the end of the War of Independence, the Baltic Regiment remained alien to the Estonian soldiers, and the volunteers of the Baltic Regiment were called barons regardless of their actual status – Correspondence from the 1st Division Intendant Corps, [no date, probably late 1919]. *RA ERA*, 581.1.57, l. 180. It is interesting to read von Dehn's description of Albu Manor, which was sacked by the Reds. – DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 67. On this evidence, it can be better understood that the struggle of the Baltic Regiment was in fact existential for the Baltic Germans in Estonia.

⁴¹ Ministry of Agriculture to the commissioner of state lands, 20.02.1920. *RA ERA*, 62.49.10, l. 70.

⁴² Report of the commander of the Reserve Forces, Colonel Paul-Adolf Lill, to the minister of war with a list of the Baltic Regiment's landlords, 07.02.1920. *RA ERA*, 62.49.10, l. 48–60.

⁴³ ÖISMAA, S. Balti pataljoni formeerimisest..., lk. 49–50. According to Rein Helme, at the end of the War of Independence, 1,350 servicemen were serving in the Baltic Regiment, including 920 Baltic Germans, 160 Estonians, and 270 Russians. Cf. HELME, R. Die Beteiligung..., S. 35.

⁴⁴ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. Op. cit., S. 41.

⁴⁵ BARINOW, Igor. Ehemalige kaiserlich-russische Offiziere deutschbaltischer Herkunft im Baltenregiment: Versuch eines kollektiven Portraits. *Mitteilungen aus baltischem Leben*, 2018, Jhg. 64, Hf. 2, S. 11.

administrator was appointed, very often a personal enemy of the owner and the cause of this accelerated method. The legal owner had nothing more to say and the matter was settled.⁴⁶

At the same time, people from different professions served in the Baltic Regiment, including army officers, school students, university students, office workers, estate administrators and servants, merchants and engineers.⁴⁷ Von Dehn recalled that there were so many professional Russian cavalry officers in his squadron that they were even given non-commissioned officer status. Off duty, however, there was complete equality in the regiment. Soldiers and officers slept and ate together, and each looked after his own horse. Later, though, use was made of volunteers among captured Russians who were willing to do the work of the batman.⁴⁸ Based on sources at the Herder Institute, Barinov estimates that the Baltic Regiment may have had 120 former Russian Tsarist officers, which would represent between 10% and 13% of the total. The overwhelming majority of these, 70%, were specifically ensigns, to which were added 24% of second and first lieutenants. The average age of all officers was only 28.⁴⁹

A very big part was played by members of student fraternities. Already in the autumn of 1918, the most active members of the Baltic Regiment were the Corporation Estonia Dorpat and the Corporation Livonia Dorpat: 80 and 63 members respectively. A few Baltic German students from other student organisations in Tartu and even Riga, who accepted the national independence of Estonia and Latvia, also joined the regiment.⁵⁰ Around 150 to 200 academically organised Baltic German students made up 16% to 22% of the Baltic Regiment, and accounted for as much as half the number of students of Estonian nationality who took part in the War of Independence.⁵¹ On this basis, it can be speculated that students who were loyal to the Estonian state may also have influenced the Baltic Regiment's mentality. Another interesting fact is that the regimental commander, Colonel Constantin Alexander Clemens von Weiss, was accepted as an honorary member of the Baltic German Corporation Estonia Dorpat in 1938.⁵²

⁴⁶ DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 119.

⁴⁷ ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljoni Vabadussõjas...*, l. 11.

⁴⁸ DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 121.

⁴⁹ BARINOW, I. Op. cit., S. 10.

⁵⁰ KOPÕTIN, Igor. *Rahvuse kool. Eesti rahvusarmee ja vähemusrahvused aastatel 1918–1940*. Tartu, 2020, lk. 167. One of the academically organised students was a volunteer, Oswald Hartge, who recalled afterwards how the Corp! Livonia Dorpat members took a vow to go to the front in corpore to defend Germanism in the Baltic States – HARTGE, O. *Wir zogen...*, S. 69.

⁵¹ BURGET, Meelis. Üliõpilaskond Eesti vabadusvõitluses. In *Vivat Academia: üliõpilasseltsid ja -korporatsioonid Eestis*. Toim. Helmut PIIRIMÄE. 2., parand. ja täiend. tr. Tartu, 2012, lk. 498.

⁵² KOPÕTIN, I. *Rahvuse kool...*, lk. 167.

The commander of the Baltic Regiment, Colonel Weiss, led the unit throughout the war, and was recognised by the Estonian military leadership. He had been a former officer in the Russian Imperial Guard. He received his military education in the Page Corps. Throughout his service in the Tsarist army he served in the 4th Rifle Regiment of the Leib Guard. He served in this unit during his entire service in the Tsarist army, becoming a full colonel and commander of the same regiment in the First World War, which was considered a great honour in the tradition of the Russian Tsarist army. In the Estonian War of Independence, he was awarded both the Estonian Cross of Freedom and the Varudi (Wardes) Manor. In September 1920, he was appointed assistant to the commander of the Estonian 1st Division, which showed the extraordinary trust placed in him by the Estonian military leadership. He lost his wife Anna von Weiss, née Baroness Maydell, in the Estonian War of Independence, who served as a mercy sister and died of typhus in March 1920 while performing her duties. He demobilised at the end of 1920 and retired from public life.⁵³

Von Weiss' chief of staff, Rittmaster Victor von zur Mühlen, seems to have been in many ways the opposite of von Weiss. He had been a reserve officer in the cavalry of the Tsarist army, held conservative political views, and, unlike von Weiss, did not gain the trust of the Estonian military leadership. Undoubtedly, he was a brave officer and an authoritative leader of his own soldiers. After the end of the Estonian War of Independence, he was active in politics, becoming head of the Estonian branch of the NSDAP and editor-in-chief of the Nazi newspaper *Der Aufstieg*. A horse-breeder and landowner, he did, however, donate large quantities of art objects and books to the Estonian state during the *Umsiedlung*. He divorced his wife Hermynia, a communist writer, precisely because of the incompatibility of their world-views.⁵⁴ It should be pointed out that von zur Mühlen was the military leader and representative of the Baltic Germans in northern Livonia, since von Weiss had fled from the former Estonian governorate. Accordingly, von zur Mühlen was also responsible for the formation of Baltic German units in south Estonia. As the Baltic Regiment was composed of Baltic Germans living in two different governorates and under the administration of three different knightships, their integration may have been tagged to regional representatives in the regiment's leadership.

⁵³ Veis Konstantin Aleksandrovich fon. In *Russkaia Estoniia*. Database of Russian Emigration by the Museum of Narva [poslednee izmenenie 20.03.2021 g.]. URL: <http://russianestonia.eu/index.php?title=Вейс_Константин_Александрович_фон> (last access 10.09.2024).

⁵⁴ Tsur-Miulen Viktor L'vovich fon. In *Russkaia Estoniia*. Database of Russian Emigration by the Museum of Narva [poslednee izmenenie 26.07.2019 g.]. URL: <http://russianestonia.eu/index.php?title=Цур-Мюлен_Виктор_Львович_фон> (last access 10.09.2024).

Tensions between the Baltic Regiment and the Estonian supreme military command

There was dissatisfaction in military circles in Estonia with the presence of the Baltic Regiment in the composition of the Estonian forces.⁵⁵ According to Wrangell's regimental history, negotiations for the formation of a German defence force between the Estonian knighthood and the Estonian Major General Aleksander Tõnisson took place as early as 18 November 1918, but its creation stalled due to unnamed resistance from Estonian leaders.⁵⁶ Later investigations also confirm that Tõnisson himself had a negative attitude towards the entire Baltic German ethnic unit. On one hand, he acknowledged the high combat capability of the Baltic Regiment, but on the other hand he considered it necessary to disband such a unit for political reasons.⁵⁷ Presumably, Laidoner's position saved the unit from being liquidated during a meeting of the Maanõukogu (Provisional Council) on 27 December 1918, when the commander-in-chief confirmed that there was good discipline within the Baltic Regiment and he had nothing bad to say about it.⁵⁸

After the successful counter-offensive by Estonian forces in January 1919, the Baltic Regiment participated in military operations on the River Narva, and in May 1919 it was put under the Northern Corps. The subordination of the regiment to Russian Whites was intended to alleviate tensions and keep them away from Estonia, just in case; this was particularly important during the later *Landeswehr* conflict.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Laidoner admitted to Major-General Aleksandr Rodzyanko, the commander of the Northern Corps, that he had given them a unit consisting of the most unreliable elements to Estonia in the form of the Baltic Regiment.⁶⁰ According to Wrangell, the participation of Baltic Germans in military operations on Russian territory meant that they took a clear position against the Bolsheviks on the political chessboard, and by contributing to combat, secured their future in independent Estonia. He described the situation of the Baltic Germans in the Baltic as so difficult and hopeless that the armed struggle far away in Russia seemed like their only ray of hope for future generations of descendants of the crusaders.⁶¹ In fact, Wrangell's assessment

⁵⁵ ROSENTHAL, Reigo. *Laidoner – väejuht: Johan Laidoner kõrgema operatiivjuhi ja strateegia kujundajana Eesti Vabadussõjas*. Tallinn, 2008, lk. 147.

⁵⁶ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 4.

⁵⁷ ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljoni formeerimisest...*, lk. 53.

⁵⁸ *Maanõukogu protokollid 1917–1919: 1. koosolekust 1. juulil 1917 78. koosolekuni 6. veebruaril 1919*. Tallinn, 1935, lk. 344; ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljoni formeerimisest...*, lk. 53.

⁵⁹ BRÜGGEMANN, Karsten. *Die Gründung der Republik Estland und das Ende des „Einen und mitteilbaren Rußland“: Die Petrograder Front des Russischen Bürgerkriegs 1918–1920*. Wiesbaden, 2002, S. 197. Reigo Rosenthal even claims that in a conversation with Tõnisson, Laidoner very much approved of the plan to subordinate the Baltic Regiment to the Russian Whites and deploy it behind Lake Peipsi – ROSENTHAL, R. *Laidoner...*, lk. 216.

⁶⁰ Laidoner to Rodzyanko, 27.06.1919. *RA ERA*, 495.10.71, l. 98.

⁶¹ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 85, 106.

can probably be interpreted as indicating that the Baltic Germans' submission to the decision of the command of the Estonian army showed their loyalty and secured their future in independent Estonia. According to the historian Karsten Brüggemann, the subordination of the Baltic Regiment to the Russian Whites as late as May 1919 was intended to defuse tensions and keep the Baltic Regiment away from Estonia, just in case, especially during the *Landeswehr* conflict.⁶² The historian Reigo Rosenthal even claims that, in a conversation with Tõnisson, Laidoner thought it was a very good plan to subordinate the Baltic Regiment to the Russian Whites and deploy it behind Lake Peipsi.⁶³ Moreover, Laidoner confessed to Major-General Rodzyanko that Estonia had given them an army composed of the most unreliable elements for Estonia, in the form of the Baltic Regiment.⁶⁴

It seems that the Baltic Regiment's cooperation with the Russian Whites was not bad at all, and much better than with the Estonians. While the Baltic Germans were not very happy with Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz's units, seeing them as semi-criminal irregulars, von Dehn praised Anatol von Lieven's volunteers who arrived in Narva from Liepaja in June 1919. Lieven's volunteers, according to his recollections, were well-equipped in German field uniforms and gave the impression of a disciplined unit.⁶⁵ Lieutenant-General Alexander Rodzyanko gave the Baltic Regiment a very good account of itself. In his memoirs, he mentioned that when he visited the Narva front with Commander John Allyn Gade, the US military representative in the Baltic States, they were both very impressed with the Baltic Regiment from the very first meeting. According to Rodzyanko, the regiment had been built up from noblemen-landowners, dressed in German uniforms, with German as the language of command. The disciplined unit made an excellent impression.⁶⁶ The Baltic Regiment was also quite equal to other regiments of the Northwestern Army in terms of personnel, and especially in terms of combat capability: 400 bayonets, 100 sabres and two field canons.⁶⁷

As the Baltic Regiment was for most of the time subordinate to the 1st Division commanded by General Tõnisson, its relations with the division commander can be considered important. The Baltic Regiment's chronicler Wilhem Wrangell refers to a disagreement with Tõnisson, when the general is said to have made unjustified

⁶² BRÜGGEMANN, K. *Die Gründung...*, S. 197.

⁶³ ROSENTHAL, R. *Laidoner...*, lk. 216.

⁶⁴ Laidoner – Rodzyanko, 27.06.1919. *RA ERA*, 495.10.71, l. 98.

⁶⁵ DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 125–126.

⁶⁶ RODZIANKO, Aleksandr. *Vospominaniia o Severo-Zapadnoi armii [1920]*. In *Belaia bor'ba na Severo-Zapade Rossii*. Sost. Sergei VOLKOV. Moskva, 2003, s. 218.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, s. 280–281. In the Imperial Russian army, the notion 'bayonets and sabres' was used to measure an infantry unit's fighting ability. Only those who could actually take part in the battle were counted among them, literally infantry and cavalrymen. Officers, artillerymen, engineers, etc. were not included in this calculation.

reproaches for the regiment's early withdrawal on 30 December 1918 during the defence operation of the Estonian army.⁶⁸

General Tõnisson's distrust of the Baltic Regiment deepened especially during the *Landeswehr* conflict. As late as 6 June 1919, as the commander of the 1st Division, he proposed to the commander-in-chief that in the event of a possible conflict with the *Landeswehr*, the Baltic Regiment should be recalled from the Russian Whites and concentrated in Rakvere, where it would be interned under the guard of the 1st Division's reserve battalion. Tõnisson claimed that the officers of the Baltic Regiment were engaged in agitation against Estonia inside the Russian Whites. However, Laidoner wanted to delay the internment until the regiment's activities became detrimental to Estonia.⁶⁹ A few days later, Tõnisson again informed Laidoner that it was time to fish out the Baltic regiment that had 'hidden under the wing' of the Russian Whites. However, Laidoner remained calm and did not recall the Baltic Regiment.⁷⁰ Obviously, he did not want the Estonian army to come into direct conflict with the Baltic Regiment, which was already far from the control of the Estonian army, and Laidoner's power over the unit was limited by agreements with the Russian Whites.⁷¹

Although the Baltic Regiment had the opportunity to switch sides to the *Landeswehr*, the regimental leadership refused.⁷² In any case, the anger of Estonian soldiers towards Baltic Germans grew due to the *Landeswehr* conflict, resulting in an aggressive crowd surrounding the barracks of the Baltic Regiment reserve, and only being resolved through intervention by units of the Tallinn garrison. The Estonian Supreme Command disbanded the Defence League's Baltic German unit in Tallinn due to anti-German sentiment. For the same reason, reinforcements were sent by sea from Tallinn to Narva for the Baltic Regiment during summer 1919, in order to avoid clashes between personnel of the 1st Estonian Division and Baltic German volunteers.⁷³

⁶⁸ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 36. In spite of this, Wrangell praised the Estonian national army and the leadership of the Republic as '*ruhige und taktvolle Männer*' (calm and tactful men) wishing to remain politically polite. – *Ibid.*, S. 49.

⁶⁹ ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljon Vabadussõjas...*, lk. 12.

⁷⁰ Tõnisson to Laidoner, a secret telegram, 06.06.1919. *RA ERA*, 495.10.87, l. 208. Laidoner to Tõnisson, a secret telegram, 06.06.1919. *RA ERA*, 495.10.87, l. 210; ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljon Vabadussõjas...*, lk. 12–13; TREI, A. *Op. cit.*, lk. 167. The Estonian foreign delegation to the Paris Peace Conference at the time also advised the Estonian Supreme Command to stop supporting the Baltic Regiment – ROSENTHAL, R. *Laidoner...*, lk. 309.

⁷¹ Interestingly, under an agreement between the Baltic Regiment and the Northern Corps of the Russian Whites, the Northern Corps undertook not to fragment the Baltic German national unit. The Baltic Regiment, on its part, undertook not to interfere in politics in the territory controlled by the Russian Whites – MÜHLEN, Viktor von zur. *Zur Geschichte des Baltenregiments. Revaler Bote*, 8.06.1929, Nr. 128, S. 3–4.

⁷² ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljon Vabadussõjas...*, lk. 13.

⁷³ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 110–112; HARTGE, Oswald. *Auf des Lebens großer Waage. Erinnerungen 1895–1939*. Hannover-Döhren, 1968, S. 338; ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljoni formeerimiseest...*, lk. 55.

The historian Mart Kuldkepp has shed a light on the anti-German measures adopted by the Estonian state and army in June 1919. Drawing on archival sources, he shows that the 3rd Battalion of the Defence League, which consisted of Baltic Germans, was disarmed in a day in Tallinn in June 1919, in accordance with Laidoner's order. *Reichs-deutsche* and Baltic Germans began to be forcibly arrested all over Estonia, and dozens of Germans were arrested in several Estonian towns, sometimes on unfounded suspicions of betraying the Estonian state and collaborating with the *Landeswehr*.⁷⁴

Wrangell mentions briefly that the spread of anti-German sentiment in Estonia had a depressing effect on the personnel of the Baltic Regiment.⁷⁵ It is evident from Krusenstjern's memoirs that the regiment's participation in battles against the Reds in late June 1919 was so intense that the soldiers had little time to think about politics.⁷⁶ This once again proves that Estonia's decision to send the Baltic Regiment beyond Lake Peipus was justified from Estonia's perspective.⁷⁷ In addition, some fatigue, bitterness, and even a lack of understanding of the objectives of military operations taking place on Russian territory were observed among certain fighters in the Baltic Regiment.⁷⁸ Elsewhere, Krusenstjern mentioned the *Landeswehr* conflict as a kind of conflict whose causes remained unclear to Baltic Regiment fighters at that time. He linked the *Landeswehr* conflict with both civil wars erupting in Russia and Germany, which threatened German interests, summarising it as '*ein Unglück kommt nie allein*' (misfortunes never come alone).⁷⁹ In a difficult and confusing situation, he considered it important to stick together in their unit and maintain loyalty, order and discipline amidst hostile and unfamiliar surroundings everywhere.⁸⁰ It is impossible to say now whether or not all Baltic Regiment fighters sympathised with their compatriots in the *Landeswehr*. Moreover, members of the *Landeswehr* also regarded clashes with the Estonians during the Battle of Cēsis rather as a tragic misunderstanding resulting from a confused situation and British intervention.⁸¹ On the other hand, the *Landeswehr* conflict was important for the Estonian military leadership. The war against the Bolsheviks on Russian territory did not interest Estonian soldiers, which caused problems with motivation. That is why the Estonian military leadership escalated the armed conflict with the *Landeswehr* in Latvia, in order to invent a real

⁷⁴ KULDKEPP, M. Op. cit., lk. 381.

⁷⁵ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 112.

⁷⁶ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. Op. cit., S. 4–6.

⁷⁷ BRÜGGEMANN, K. *Die Gründung...*, S. 259.

⁷⁸ ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljoni Vabadussõjas...*, lk. 49. Wrangell justified the Baltic Regiment's participation in the Northwestern Army's autumn offensive on Petrograd only by the desire to continue 'the sacrificial fight against Bolshevism' – WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 132.

⁷⁹ KRUSENSTJERN, G. v. Op. cit., S. 3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, S. 4.

⁸¹ However, some Baltic Regiment servicemen may have had some sympathy for the *Landeswehr* – BRÜGGEMANN, K. *Die Gründung...*, S. 258.

enemy for the Estonians in the form of the 'Baltic Barons', and thus motivate the Estonians to continue the war of independence.⁸²

Von Dehn wrote in his memoirs that the armed clash between the Estonian army and the *Landeswehr* inflamed the Estonians' hatred of the Baltic Germans, taking their 'national hatred of everything German to an extreme'. The hatred of the Estonians prevented the volunteers in the Baltic regiment from returning home on leave because they were attacked in Estonia. All this despite the fact that the Baltic Regiment was part of the Estonian army and fought very bravely against the Reds.⁸³ The ethnic hatred of Estonians towards the Baltic Germans erupted in a situation where the majority of Estonian troops had been behind the Russian White Northwestern Army and the Baltic Regiment, which had fought against the Reds. In general, von Dehn acknowledged that the Estonians' attitude towards the Baltic Regiment had been unfriendly. Along with the nationalisation of the estates, von Dehn characterised the situation in the following words: 'It was not surprising, therefore, that under such circumstances our spirits were rather broken.'⁸⁴ Afterwards, von Dehn wrote that the relatives of the Baltic regiment's fighters had often been under the guard of the Estonian police in their homeland, and had had to endure the raw arbitrariness of the locals, and that Germans who had fled from the Reds were not allowed to return to their homes.⁸⁵

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Obstacles to the Baltic Regiment: issues of the use of the national language and national symbols

In general, it should be acknowledged that the Estonian high command, in the person of Laidoner, and the 1st Division command, in the person of Tõnisson, created many obstacles and reproaches against the Baltic Regiment during the War of Independence. For example, the Estonian command wanted to ban the use of the German language in the Baltic Regiment. Specifically, the commander-in-chief, General Laidoner, issued a separate order on 16 March 1919 in which he wanted to regulate the use of the command language in the Baltic Regiment. In particular, the commander-in-chief stressed that the Baltic Regiment was composed of Estonian citizens, and that the official language of the republic was Estonian. Nevertheless, both German and Russian were used in the regiment as command languages. Laidoner insisted that all correspondence in the Baltic Regiment, including certificates, reports and travel permits, should be written in the official language, translated into

⁸² BRÜGGEMANN, Karsten. Legenden aus dem Landeswehrkrieg: Vom „Wunder an der Düna“ oder Als die Esten Riga befreiten. *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 2002, Jhg. 52, Hf. 4, S. 576–591.

⁸³ DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 118.

⁸⁴ Ibid., lk. 119.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

German or Russian if necessary.⁸⁶ The commander-in-chief's order hardly changed the orders of the Baltic Regiment. German and Russian were used for the Baltic Regiment's administration inside the unit, and Estonian outside the unit, which was spoken by the regimental clerk.⁸⁷

On 20 April 1919, the commander-in-chief issued a new order regulating the wearing of uniforms in the Baltic Regiment. Thus, the commander-in-chief stressed that the regiment was to wear the Estonian uniform as a mandatory requirement, and that the only distinguishing mark of the regiment was to be the letter 'B' on its shoulder straps. Volunteers who joined the regiment had to wear the blue-black-white stripe.⁸⁸ This was apparently intended to stop the black and white colours that had become the symbol of the regiment from being worn on shoulder straps. But more importantly, the Baltic Regiment's orders and uniforms were issued personally by the commander-in-chief of the Estonian armed forces, proving once again that the Baltic German ethnic unit was not very welcome in the Estonian army. The reproaches against the Baltic Regiment regarding uniforms did not even end with the end of the War of Independence, and continued after the Tartu Peace Treaty. Thus, the Baltic Regiment's 'self-declared uniforms' angered the administrative branch of the Staff of the Estonian Supreme Command, which began to detain officers of the Baltic Regiment in Tallinn and issue them with fines.⁸⁹ The issue of the use of national colours had been an important feature for Baltic German volunteers, uniting and motivating them, and therefore deserved a special mention in von Dehn's memoirs as well.⁹⁰

The issue of language and uniforms was compounded by the temptation of Laidoner and Tõnisson not to allow the Baltic Regiment to use the regimental flag in the Baltic Germans' national colours (blue and white), which the Baltic German Women's Society wanted to donate to the regiment in the summer of 1919. In his letter to the commander of the Baltic Regiment, Laidoner specified only blue-black-white as the colours of the Estonian national flag for use in the regiment.⁹¹

The Estonian military command also considered the recruitment of Russians into the Baltic Regiment as a problem. As early as July 1919, General Tõnisson wrote that even though the Baltic Regiment was part of the Estonian army, which was manned only by Estonian citizens of German nationality, people of other nationalities, including Estonians and Ingrians subject to Russia, were accepted to join the regiment. In

⁸⁶ Daily order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces No 101, 16.03.1919. *RA ERA*, 497.2.567, I. 326.

⁸⁷ Correspondence of the Rear Department of the Baltic Regiment January 1919 to September 1920. *RA ERA*, 581.1.57, I. 1–10. Correspondence of the Rear Department of the Baltic Regiment 1919. *RA ERA*, 581.1.58, I. 1–2, 12, 22, 25.

⁸⁸ Daily order of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces No 143, 20.04.1919. *RA ERA*, 497.2.567, I. 328.

⁸⁹ Secret correspondence of the administrative branch, 22.03.1920. *RA ERA*, 497.2.567, I. 203.

⁹⁰ DEHN, H. v. Op. cit., lk. 145.

⁹¹ Tõnisson to Weiss, 06.07.1919. *RA ERA*, 581.1.78, I. 177.

this connection, Tõnisson wrote that all non-Germans should be exempted from the Baltic Regiment and sent to the Estonian 4th Infantry Regiment, Estonians from Russia to the Northwestern Army of the Russian Whites, and Ingrians to Narva-Jõesuu to form the Ingrian Battalion of the Estonian army.⁹²

As can be seen, the Baltic Regiment did not comply with Tõnisson's order. In 1920, the administrative branch of the Staff of the Estonian Supreme Command, which dealt with personnel reserves during the War of Independence, wrote that from 31 May 1919 until the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty, the Baltic Regiment had arbitrarily taken 1,000 Russians into its service 'who were not needed by the Estonian state'.⁹³ Russians were initially recruited to supplement the Baltic Regiment during the May 1919 hostilities in Russia, where the 3rd Company was formed.⁹⁴ However, General Tõnisson did not recognise these Russians as Estonian soldiers for political reasons. That is why, unlike the other Baltic Regiment fighters, they did not receive equipment and pay from the Estonian 1st Division.⁹⁵ In the winter of 1919 to 1920, the 4th Company was formed from soldiers of the disbanded Northwestern Army of the Russian Whites, for which permission was obtained from the Estonian Supreme Command.⁹⁶

The Baltic Regiment probably wanted to recruit Russians to bring the unit up to the level of an Estonian regiment, to confirm the unit's status as a regiment. General Laidoner agreed to reorganise the unit into a regiment in December 1919, but this was not done because of another confrontation with General Tõnisson. This time, Tõnisson accused the leadership of the Baltic Germans' military unit, and more specifically Colonel Theodor von Stackelberg, who had been promoted to the position of regimental commander, of pro-Russian sentiments.⁹⁷ In any case, it can be assumed that the Baltic Regiment was not allowed to expand into an Estonian regiment only because of the anti-German attitude of the Estonian national army leadership. Thus, the Baltic Regiment remained in the official documents of the Estonian army only as a battalion, which was supposed to humble the feelings of the Baltic Germans. Although the Baltic Regiment never had a battalion level in its structure, it carried the name of a regiment in the Russian White Northwestern Army. In Baltic German memoirs and in contemporary international historical literature,⁹⁸ this ethnic unit is also referred to as a regiment, whereas Estonian national historiography continues to refer to it only as a battalion.

⁹² Tõnisson to Weiss, 06.07.1919. RA ERA, 581.1.78, l. 176.

⁹³ Secret correspondence of the administrative branch, 22.03.1920. RA ERA, 497.2.567, l. 203.

⁹⁴ KOPÕTIN, Igor. *Eesti Rahvaväe vene sõdurid Vabadussõjas 1918–1920*. Tallinn, 2014, lk. 111.

⁹⁵ WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 127.

⁹⁶ ROSENTHAL, Reigo. *Loodearmee*. Tallinn, 2006, lk. 558. When the Northwestern Army was disbanded, Baltic Germans who had served in it also wished to join the Baltic Regiment, which the Estonian authorities opposed – Correspondence of the Baltic Regiment, February 1920. RA ERA, 581.1.31, l. 117–118.

⁹⁷ ÕISMAA, S. *Balti pataljoni Vabadussõjas...*, lk. 13–14; WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 155.

⁹⁸ For example: BARINOW, I. Op. cit., S. 9–11.

The Estonian Cross of Liberty for Baltic Germans

In any case, both Laidoner and Tõnisson were satisfied with Colonel Constantin von Weiss, the regimental commander, who had proven loyal to the Estonian state and military but was in weak health.⁹⁹ Their trust in him is vividly demonstrated by the characterisation and recommendation given by Major-General Tõnisson, the commander of the 1st Division, that he receive the Cross of Liberty. He wrote that the Baltic Regiment was formed from the best Baltic Germans, and recognised their loyalty to the Estonian military and state. In this, he saw merits specifically in Colonel Weiss, who had shown himself as a 'better citizen of the Republic'. According to Tõnisson, Weiss led the Baltic Regiment brilliantly, and turned it into an exemplary military unit whose merits in the War of Independence, especially in its final battles on the Viru front, were significant.¹⁰⁰ This may hardly have broken Tõnisson's mistrust towards the Baltic Germans, but highlighting Weiss could have meant leniency towards all Baltic Germans who participated in the War of Independence.

It is worth mentioning here that apart from Weiss, only four other officers from the Baltic Regiment were awarded Estonia's highest military decoration, the Cross of Liberty, for purely personal bravery on the battlefield.¹⁰¹ This was much less than in other Estonian units, and even less than in the Kachanova battalion of the Estonian army, an ethnic unit made up of Russians.¹⁰² Likewise, if one compares the activities of the Baltic Regiment with those of the Baltic *Landeswehr*, which had been part of the Latvian National Army since August 1919, the latter had three times as many Baltic Germans decorated with the Latvian Order of the Lācplēšis, despite their constant hesitation about Latvian statehood.¹⁰³

Another problem referred to by the administrative branch of the Staff of the Estonian Supreme Command in March 1920 was the reserve of the Baltic Regiment in Tallinn, where men who had shunned the general mobilisation and did not want to leave Tallinn or go to the front were thought to be hiding.¹⁰⁴ On 21 May 1919, the administrative branch also referred to an order from the minister of war Major-General Andres Larka, prohibiting the enlistment of 'volunteers' in reserve units to avoid sending

⁹⁹ Baltic Regiment correspondence, 15.12.1919. *RA ERA*, 581.1.30, unpaginated.

¹⁰⁰ Major-General Tõnisson's description of the military merits of Colonel Weiss, commander of the Baltic Regiment, 14.07.1920. *RA ERA*, 497.1.65, l. 41.

¹⁰¹ Descriptions of the heroic deeds of the Baltic Regiment's Knights of the Cross of Liberty. *RA ERA*, 497.1.65, l. 41–42.

¹⁰² List of soldiers awarded the Cross of Liberty from the Tallinn Schoolchildren's Volunteer Battalion, the Kachanova Battalion, and the Baltic Regiment, [no date]. *RA ERA*, 497.1.65, unpaginated.

¹⁰³ Cf. search results for '13. Tukuma kājnieku pulks' in the list of decoration recipients *Lācplēša kara ordeņa kavalieri*. URL: <http://www.lkok.com/query_sql_unit.asp?> (last access 07.02.2023).

¹⁰⁴ Secret correspondence of the administrative branch, 22.03.1920. *RA ERA*, 497.2.567, l. 203.

them to the front.¹⁰⁵ Apparently, the minister of war also considered, among others, the volunteers who had joined the Baltic Regiment Reserve. It is worth mentioning here that the Baltic Regiment had a high percentage of officers, 253 (28.1% of the total), which meant that officers were placed in non-commissioned officer and even in private soldier positions.¹⁰⁶ In spite of the fact that there were not enough officers in other Estonian units, and the Baltic Regiment was not allowed to be enlarged into a real regiment, this situation was accepted by the Estonian army command and the administrative branch, who apparently did not want to see the Baltic Germans anywhere other than in their ethnic military unit.

In August 1920, the Baltic Regiment came in for criticism and resentment from the administrative branch once again because of the alleged improper filling in of the officers' service cards when they were assigned to the reserve, i.e. that the ranks on the service cards had been raised with the approval of the regimental leadership. While only 25 such cases (1%) were found in the Estonian officer corps as a whole, 6% of the 200 or so officers in the Baltic Regiment were found to have incorrectly filled out their service records. In particular, 13 officers who had raised their rank unauthorised were singled out. Among them were captains Julius Pape, Theodor Veymann and Ewert von Renteln,¹⁰⁷ who were all promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander von Benkendorff was presented as a colonel, while Private Igor Anikeyev was immediately promoted to 2nd lieutenant. According to the administrative branch, the officers of the Baltic Regiment then made a fuss and threatened the Estonian military officials. It is believed that their rank was raised during their service in the Russian White Northwestern Army. However, the Estonian army did not recognise the ranks awarded to Whites, which led to a conflict. Nonetheless, in February 1920 there were 27 officers of the Baltic Regiment who wished to continue serving in the unit after the end of the War of Independence. It can be speculated that if the Baltic German ethnic unit had not been disbanded after the end of the War of Independence, there would have been more Baltic Germans moti-

¹⁰⁵ Order of the minister of war to the armed forces of the Republic of Estonia No 18, 21.05.1919. *RA ERA*, 497.2.567, l. 325.

¹⁰⁶ ÕISMÄÄ, S. *Balti pataljoni formeerimisest...*, lk. 49. According to John Allyn Gade, head of the US military mission, the Baltic Regiment was a corps d'élite because of the large number of nobles and professional officers – TREI, A. *Op. cit.*, lk. 119. At the same time, Gade acknowledged that the Baltic Regiment was a mistrusted unit for the Estonian army – WRANGELL, W. *Geschichte des Baltenregiments...*, S. 69.

¹⁰⁷ Ewert Woldemar von Renteln (1893–1947) was a guards officer in the Imperial Russian army. He participated in the First World War. In 1918 he joined the Baltic Regiment, then served in the Northwestern Army of the Russian Whites. In 1920 he rejoined the Baltic Regiment. In the Second World War he served as a brigade commander in the XV Cossacks Cavalry Corps of the Waffen-SS. The Allies handed him over to the Soviet Union, where he was executed – See: Rentel'n Evert Vol'demarovich fon. In *Russkaia Estoniia*. Database of Russian Emigration by the Museum of Narva [poslednee izmenenie 04.02.2021 g.]. URL: <http://russianestonia.eu/index.php?title=Рентельн_Эверт_Вольдемарович_фон> (last access 07.02.2024).

vated to serve in the Estonian army.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, by September 1920 the Baltic Regiment was disbanded, like all the other ethnic units of the Estonian army.

Karsten Brüggemann doubts that the Baltic Germans fought for Estonian independence in the War of Independence. After the war, in 1928, a memorial was erected to the Baltic Regiment for political reasons, as it was necessary to confirm the thesis that all the peoples of Estonia had fought for Estonian independence. However, the goal of fighting for both the Baltic Regiment and the *Landeswehr* differed from the ideas of national states of both the Estonians and Latvians. The crisis of loyalty of the Estonian Baltic Germans was particularly evident after the clash between Estonian troops and the *Landeswehr*. It was only after the War of Independence that the Estonian state wished to set a precedent for the loyalty of Estonian minorities in war, using a 'positive' example of the Baltic Regiment.¹⁰⁹ According to Brüggemann's observation, Laidoner wanted to create the myth of the War of Independence as the struggle of all the peoples of Estonia for the Estonian state. That is why it was not useful for him to recall the loyalty crisis of the Baltic Regiment during the interwar period.¹¹⁰ However, by 1933, Laidoner stated publicly that 'the tasks assigned to the Baltic Regiment during the War of Independence were not particularly responsible.' This statement was made out fear that National Socialist ideology would influence Estonian Baltic Germans, which is why he even recommended suspending activities by German cultural organisations in Estonia.¹¹¹

Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be stated that the Baltic Germans in Estonia needed a military organisation for their own protection and the protection of their property. Since the formation of the *Landeswehr*, initially intended as defence for the Baltic duchy, failed due to Germany's November Revolution, the Baltic Germans began creating defence units with minimal support from the German army. The main threat to the Baltic Germans was seen in the Bolshevik invasion, which forced them to establish a military organisation. When the retreating German forces were depleted, the Baltic Germans found an ally in the Republic of Estonia, which also needed any form of military assistance. Therefore, the agreement concluded between Estonia and Baltic

¹⁰⁸ Correspondence of the administrative branch, August 1920. *RA ERA*, 497.2.567, I. 372–373.

¹⁰⁹ BRÜGGEMANN, K. *Legenden aus dem Landeswehrkrieg...*, S. 588.

¹¹⁰ BRÜGGEMANN, K. *Die Gründung...*, S. 197.

¹¹¹ It is worth noting that Laidoner's statement in the Päävaleht interview about developments in the German-Baltic party began with the words 'Estonian Germans have gone too far' – *Päävaleht*, 02.12.1933, lk. 3; LAURITS, K. *Op. cit.*, lk. 438–439.

German organisations on 27 November 1918, was more necessary and inevitable than a voluntary act.

The Baltic Regiment was highly motivated, an elite military unit in terms of its personnel, consisting mostly of intellectuals, professional officers, nobles and students. Even though the regiment demonstrated itself to be a capable and exemplary unit from the very first battles on, it did not gain the trust of the Estonian command. It seems that not only Tõnisson, the commander of the 1st Division, to whom the regiment reported, but the entire Estonian army was hostile to the Baltic German national unit. It can be said that Laidoner's decision to send the Baltic Regiment to far-off Russia as early as May 1919 proved to be very far-sighted. In doing so, he saved the Baltic Germans, who wished to remain loyal to the Estonian state, from the popular fury that the *Landeswehr* conflict had unleashed in the Estonian army and society. On the other hand, the Baltic Regiment maintained their loyalty to the Estonian state during the *Landeswehr* conflict, probably for one reason only: they all wanted to come back to Estonia. Here it is a good example to cite of Baltic *Landeswehr* during the Bermondts period, when all the Baltic Germans who had joined Pavel Bermondts-Avalov's troops could never return home.¹¹² Thus, it can be said that the Baltic Regiment's behaviour in June 1919 was also far-sighted. Although there is no precise data on the spread of *pro-Landeswehr* sentiment in the Baltic Regiment, it can be speculated that the more radical Baltic Germans were kept in check by Weiss, the regimental commander. This was probably the real reason why he was awarded the Cross of Liberty: he managed to maintain the Baltic Regiment's loyalty to the Estonian state.

Fighting as a unit of the Estonian forces against the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Baltic Germans participated in the Estonian War of Independence, and earned themselves the right to be part of Estonian society, securing their future. Since privileges could no longer be maintained, they at least claimed equality. In any case, the Baltic Regiment had to operate in a hostile environment and endure the reproaches and humiliation of the Estonian command, but nevertheless maintained its loyalty for the sake of the future. As early as 1928, Laidoner wanted to use the Baltic Regiment as an example to support the myth that all the ethnic groups of Estonia fought for Estonia in the War of Independence. In the name of the myth of the nation-state, all discord and temptation were forgotten. But the resentment remained.

¹¹² This can be called the Hahn-Osten-Sacken-Ruhtenberg case: the three barons approached the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1921 with a request to return to Latvia, and were refused entry. The case was also later invoked in the appeals of the Baltic Germans. – eekschleetu [iekšlietu] ministri b. A. Birsneek Armijas Virspavehleekam, 12.04.1921. *Latvijas Nacionālā arhīva Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* (The State Historical Archive of Latvia of the National Archives of Latvia), 5192.1.425, 10. lp.

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BALTŲ PULKAS ESTIJOS KARE DĖL NEPRIKLAUSOMYBĖS 1918–1920 METAIS. LOJALUMO KLAUSIMAS

Igor Kopõtin

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariamas vienas iš Estijos kariuomenės karinių dalinių – Baltų pulkas. Jį (iš pradžių kaip batalioną) 1918 m. lapkritį sukūrė Baltijos vokiečiai, kurie gyveno tais pačiais metais paskelbtos Estijos Respublikos ribose. Daugumą Baltijos vokiečių, kurie būsimoje Estijoje ir Latvijoje šimtmečiais buvo valdantysis sluoksniu, sudarė žemvaldžiai. Be to, jie visuomet vaidino pagrindinį vaidmenį vietos administraciniame-politiniame aparate. Baltijos vokiečiai išlaikė valdžią net ir po to, kai XVIII a. Baltijos gubernijas užkariavo Rusija. Šiose gubernijose galiojo ypatinga tvarka, pagal kurią Baltijos vokiečių privilegijos buvo išlaikytos. Estų ir Baltijos vokiečių sambūvis šimtmečiais buvo problemiškas, o kulminaciją jis pasiekė 1917–1918 m., kai žlugo Rusijos imperija, prasidėjo Vokietijos okupacija ir plėtojosi stiprus politinis vietos gyventojų judėjimas už Estijos nacionalinę nepriklausomybę.

Kai Sovietų Rusijos Raudonoji armija vienašališkai denonsavo Brest Litovsko sutartį ir 1918 m. lapkričio mėn. įsiveržė į Baltijos šalis, sekdamą iš paskos besitraukiančios ir daugiausia demoralizuotos Vokietijos kariuomenės, jaunai Estijos Respublikai labai reikėjo visokeriopos karinės pagalbos. Tokią pagalbą suteikė suomiai ir britai, bendradarbiavimo sutartis buvo sudaryta su Rusijos baltaisiais. Taip pat Estijos vyriausybė buvo pasirengusi priimti įvairių etninių grupių ar net privačių asmenų, buvusių Estijoje, pagalbą.

Baltijos vokiečiai Estijoje savą karinę organizaciją kūrė savo pačių ir savo turto apsaugai. Paskelbus apie Vokietijos palaikomos Baltijos valstybės sukūrimą, Vokietijos kariuomenės VIII armijos gynybai iš pradžių pradėta kurti Landesvero dalinius. Tačiau šios pastangos davė rezultatų tik Latvijoje; Estijoje jos nutrūko dėl po Lapkričio revoliucijos Vokietijoje prasidėjusio Vokietijos kariuomenės atitraukimo. Baltijos vokiečiai Estijoje irgi ėmė kurti savigynos dalinius, bet atitraukiamos VIII armijos vadovybė jiems suteikė tik minimalią paramą ir draudė, skirtingai nei Latvijoje, prie jų jungtis Vokietijos kariuomenės karininkams ir kariams. Didžiausią grėsmę Baltijos vokiečiams kėlė bolševikų invazija. Ji ir privertė juos formuoti savą karinę organizaciją. Susidūrę su atsitraukiančių Vokietijos pajėgų išsekimu ir pakrikimu, Baltijos vokiečiai kreipėsi dėl sąjungos sudarymo į estus, kuriems jų paskelbtai Estijos Respublikai apginti tuo metu taip pat reikėjo bet kokios karinės pagalbos. 1918 m. lapkričio 26 d. tarp Estijos vyriausybės ir Baltijos vokiečių organizacijų sudarytas susitarimas šiame kontekste buvo labiau priverstinis ir neišvengiamas nei savanoriškas aktas.

Baltų pulkas buvo labai motyvuotas, sudarytas daugiausia iš visuomenės elito atstovų (intelektualų, profesionalių karininkų, kilmingųjų ar jų studijuojančių atžalų). Nuo pat pirmųjų mūšių pulkas pasirodė kaip pajėgus ir pavyzdingas dalinys. Tačiau Estijos vadovy-

bēs pasitikėjimo jis neįgijo. Tikriausiai priešiška Baltijos vokiečių tautinio dalinio atžvilgiu buvo nusiteikęs ne tik 1-osios divizijos vadas gen. mjr. Aleksanderis Tõnissonas, kuriam šis pulkas buvo pavaldus, bet ir visa Estijos kariuomenė. Galima sakyti, kad vyriausiojo kariuomenės vado plk. Johano Laidonerio sprendimas dar 1919 m. gegužę išsiųsti Baltų pulką kartu su baltaisiais kautis į Rusiją pasirodė esąs labai toliaregiškas. Tai išgelbėjo Baltijos vokiečius, kurie norėjo likti lojalūs Estijos valstybei, nuo visuotinio įniršio, kurį Estijos visuomenėje ir kariuomenėje sukėlė konfliktas, kilęs dėl Landesvero – Baltijos vokiečių karinio dalinio, kovojusio prieš bolševikus pirmiausia Latvijoje, o paskui stojusio į kovą bermontininkų pusėje prieš Latvijos valstybę (su juo Cėsių mūšyje teko susiremti ir Estijos kariuomenei). Kita vertus, Baltų pulkas konflikto dėl Landesvero metu liko ištikimas Estijos valstybei. Tą tikriausiai lėmė viena vienintelė priežastis – noras pokariu grįžti į Estiją. Čia galima pateikti gerą pavyzdį apie Baltijos Landesverą jo kovos bermontininkų pusėje laikotarpiu, kai visi Baltijos vokiečiai, įstoję į Pavelo Bermondto-Avalovo kariuomenę, grįžti namo negalėjo. Taigi galima teigti, kad Baltų pulko elgesys 1919 m. birželį taip pat buvo įžvalgas. Nors tikslų duomenų apie Landesverą palaikiusių nuotaikų plitimą Baltų pulke nėra, galima spėti, kad radikaliau nusiteikusius Baltijos vokiečius jame suvaldė pulko vadas plk. Constantinas Alexanderis Clemensas von Weissas. Tikriausiai tai ir buvo tikroji priežastis, kodėl jis buvo apdovanotas Laisvės Kryžiumi: sudėtingomis sąlygomis jam pavyko išlaikyti Baltų pulko lojalumą Estijos valstybei.

Baltijos vokiečiai dalyvavo Estijos nepriklausomybės kare ir, kovodami kaip Estijos kariuomenės dalinys prieš bolševikus Rusijoje, išsikovojo teisę būti Estijos visuomenės dalimi. Kadangi privilegijų naujojoje Estijoje išlaikyti nebegalėjo, jie bent jau reikalavo lygybės. Nors Baltų pulkui teko veikti priešiškoje aplinkoje, kęsti Estijos vadovybės priekaištus ir pažeminimus, jis išlaikė ištikimybę Estijai vardan ateities, taip užtikrindamas savo kovotojams ateitį. Dar 1928 m. buvęs Estijos kariuomenės vadas Nepriklausomybės karo metu gen. Johanas Laidoneris norėjo Baltų pulką panaudoti kaip pavyzdį, paremiantį mitą, esą visos Estijos etninės grupės Nepriklausomybės kare kovojo už Estiją.