

# Om læring og indsigt fra krig

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#### Article:

The Communist coup attempt in Estonia on 1 December 1924: the last but one attempt at world revolution?

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## The Communist coup attempt in Estonia on 1 December 1924: the last but one attempt at world revolution?

The Communist coup attempt on 1 December 1924 has been discussed in the historiography of Estonia and not only Estonia for more than 90 years already. According to the prevailing opinion of Estonian historiography the coup and its successful suppression finally defined the Communists as the archenemy of Estonian statehood. Their underground organisations were destroyed and the participants of the coup were sentenced to death, long prison sentences or forced labour at the military circuit court or by court martial. However, it is worth mentioning that normal diplomatic relations between the Republic of Estonia and the Soviet Union were maintained uninterrupted in spite of the events. Although the Estonian state agencies were informed of the Soviet support to Estonian Communists and also of the activities of Estonian Communist organisations in the Soviet Union, the coup was treated in the public as separate from the inter-state relations between Estonia and the Soviet Union.

The unsuccessful coup attempt became one of the main issues of an internal fight between two factions of the Estonian Communists in the Soviet Union. One faction included the men and women who had been illegally in Estonia and had fought against the Estonian Republic. The other faction was the so-called Fontaniks (the office of the Central Committee of the Estonian sections of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party was located in Fontanka Street in Leningrad). Their main focus had been on building up the Estonian Communist organisation in the Soviet Union.

One has to remember here that various activities of national minorities were supported by the leadership of the Communist party until Stalin's purges in the second half of the 1930s. That included support to the Party and Communist Youth organisations, newspapers, primary schools and even local municipalities. During that time up to 100,000 ethnic Estonians lived in the Soviet Union. The majority lived in villages concentrated in the area between Leningrad, Novgorod, Pskov and Estonian border, but other groups lived in Siberia, Northern Caucasus and the Crimea. Most had migrated to Russia from the last quarter of the 19th century to the beginning of the Great War. The number of ethnic Estonians in Estonia itself was about one million.

After the 1940 occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union and particularly after World War II, the December 1924 coup attempt became one of the cornerstones of the Communist historiography of the Estonian working class and the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. The official Soviet names of the event became “*the uprising...*” or “*the armed uprising of 1 December 1924*”. It belonged to the primary and secondary school history curricula and the participants of the coup were honoured as the martyrs or heroes of the Estonian working class fight against the Estonian bourgeoisie. The narrative became more important after Stalin’s death and the condemnation of his personality cult at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. This was because many organisers and leaders of the coup, including Jaan Anvelt as the most famous among them, had been executed during Stalin purges in 1936–1938 and their names had been erased from the Communist historiography for two decades. A culmination of remembering of the coup took place in 1974 at the 50th anniversary. It included the revelation of a magnificent monument in front of Tallinn central station as well as numerous commemoration meetings. It was followed in 1977 by a fictional movie on the Communist movement in Estonia after the coup.<sup>1</sup>

After the fall of the Soviet Union and restoration of Estonian independence the monument was soon moved to the backyard of the Estonian History Museum, and thereafter an effort was made to place the coup in a real historical context. In 1996 a collection of research articles by Estonian historians together with reprints of a large number of archival documents was published.<sup>2</sup>

At the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in 2008 a fiction movie named *December Heat*<sup>3</sup> was produced about the coup and its suppression. With the movie a new collection of articles was published with some research texts.<sup>4</sup> It tried to present some parallels between the coup of 1924 and the riots in Tallinn in April 2007, when the monument of the Soviet soldiers was removed from city center in front of the National Library to the military cemetery.

Thereafter the Estonian historians have continued working on the coup and the Communist subversive activities in Estonia during the early 1920s. Since 2014 the coup tactics employed and its background have been analysed and compared with similar events in other countries at same time, for example in Tatarbunary in Bessarabia.<sup>5</sup>

The aim of this article is to show the background and preparations of the coup in both Estonia and in the Soviet Union, as well as to give an overview of events and to analyse the tactics of both sides. In addition, particular attention will be paid to the propaganda use of the coup by the Government of Estonia and by Soviet authorities. Finally the events will be discussed with an inclusion of the contemporary context.

The article will end with a discussion of the historiography and sources.

## Background

During 1917–1924 the leftist parties had quite a strong popular support in Estonia. In Tsarist Russia the absolute majority of Estonians belonged to a peasantry living on the large estates of the Baltic German landowning nobility.

The Estonian national ideology – the first texts were published in 1860s – was fiercely anti-German, emphasizing the conquest of the Teutonic crusaders in the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> Century and “slavery” (meaning serfdom, abolished in Estonian and Livonian provinces in 1816 and 1819 respectively) of Estonian peasants under Baltic-German barons during 700 years thereafter. During the Russian revolution of 1905 a violent uprising initiated by the leftist agitators from the towns broke out in the Estonian countryside, culminating in winter 1905–1906. Altogether 160 manor houses were pillaged or burnt down (one nobleman was killed).

A *State of War* was declared by the government in the Baltic provinces. Ad hoc punishment squads under the command of General Vladimir Bezobrazov, a guard cavalry brigade commander, were formed from soldiers, sailors and gendarmes. They were deployed to the Estonian countryside to suppress the uprising. More than 100 rebels were killed in the skirmishes or sentenced to death by court-martial and executed. Thousands were punished with caning (that was abolished in Russian Empire in 1904, but still permitted as a military punishment) and deported to Siberia; the houses of more active participants were burnt down as a revenge. The event finally poisoned the relationship between Estonians and Baltic Germans that had slowly improved during the forced Russification of the Baltic provinces since the 1890s.

The first Estonian political parties were founded after the Tsar’s Manifesto of 17 (30) October 1905 had introduced basic civil liberties to Russia and announced the election to the first State Duma. The Estonian nationalist-liberal *Progressive Party* of Jaan Tõnisson and the Estonian *Social-Democratic Workers’ Party* were created, but there were also Estonian *Radicals* (a left-liberal bourgeois party), *Socialist Revolutionaries* and others. Estonian Bolsheviks were an integral part of the Russian Bolsheviks.

Between the 1905 revolutionary disorder and the start of the First World War the development of industry in Estonian towns accelerated, particularly due to the defeat of the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Russian-Japanese war. Part of the new fleet was built in Tallinn, where new shipyards, machine plants and other enterprises were established as the infrastructure for the new fleet.<sup>6</sup> A large number of Estonian peasants moved to the towns, mainly to Tallinn and Narva, but many other new workers came from Russia. In 1912 the construction of the works of Peter the Great Sea Fortress<sup>7</sup> began on the Estonian coast and additional workers were hired from both Estonia and Russia. The increasing number of industrial urban workers meant an ever stronger base for leftist-revolutionary groups.

After the Russian revolution in March 1917 the Estonian politicians achie-



Viktor Kingissepp in 1918.  
Photo is taken in Moscow  
(RA, ERAF.2.1.444.1)

ved the incorporation of the counties with Estonian population of the Estland and Livland provinces into one autonomous Estonian province. The permission was also given to form national Estonian units of the Russian Army. During that spring the Russian Army was demoralised and lot of units were taken over by the soldiers' committees; so tens of thousands of Estonians, mobilised to the Russian army, could return to their homeland due to that permission. In January 1918 there were four infantry regiments with cavalry and artillery and the headquarters of the 1st Estonian Division.

In summer 1917 the Provincial Assembly (also called the Diet) with 62 seats was elected by the deputies of local municipalities, where all political movements were represented from the Bolsheviks on the left to the *Rural Party* of Konstantin Päts, the most conservative Estonian party, on the right. After the Bolsheviks took power in St. Petersburg on 25 October (7 November) the Military Revolutionary Committee of the *Bolsheviks* and *Socialist Revolutionaries* – the Estonian Bolshevik Viktor Kingissepp was one of its three leaders – took power in Tallinn.

As the Provincial Assembly was not dissolved, a system of dual power was now reality. On 15 (28) November the Assembly declared itself the sole highest power

in Estonia, but the Bolsheviks reacted by desolving it. However, the Assembly continued its activities underground and a Council of Elders of the Provincial Assembly was elected. On 19 February 1918 the Council of Elders founded the three-member Salvation Committee (Konstantin Päts from the Rural Party, Konstantin Konik from the Democratic Party and Jüri Vilms from the Labour Party). It proclaimed the Estonian Independence on 24 February with the leaflet "*Manifesto to all Peoples of Estonia*", using the few hours available between the departure of the Bolsheviks under Jaan Anvelt and the arrival of the German troops that approached Tallinn. The German troops had landed on the islands Saaremaa and Hiiumaa in October 1917 and hereafter controlled the islands. On land the German front had at that time advanced from Riga towards the north on the eastern side of Riga Gulf (see below).

In Estonia the political struggle of the Bolsheviks against the supporters of Estonian independence had continued. In January 1918 the Second Congress of the Estonian Military was held in Tallinn. The First Congress had taken place in July 1917 and had elected the Main Committee of Estonian Military, with a 24-member political leadership representing all Estonian national units of the Russian army. A lot of politicians belonged to the committee as wartime mobilised reserve officers. The chairman was Ensign Konstantin Päts. Despite of majority of the left delegates at this Second Congress, its resolution supported Estonian independence. However, as the Estonian Division headquarters were taken over by the Bolsheviks, the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Johan Laidoner, was forced to leave for Russia.

Meanwhile the peace negotiations between Soviet Russia and Central Powers were interrupted and Central Powers began the offensive on Eastern Front. On 18 February 1918 the German troops crossed from Saaremaa via Muhu over the ice to mainland Estonia and continued towards Tallinn and Tartu. Thereafter Northern Latvia and Estonia were quickly brought under control. German troops entered Tallinn on 25 February, few hours after the proclamation of Estonian independence. The Germans did not recognise the new state and a formal regime of military occupation was introduced as a part of the military government area called Ober Ost. Estonian national units had declared themselves neutral in the war between the Soviet Russia and Germany, but they were dissolved by the Germans in April. Most of the Estonian Bolsheviks had escaped to Kronstadt and Petrograd on board of Baltic Fleet vessels.

After the Revolution in Germany in November 1918 the German troops left Estonia. The high commissioner of Germany in the Baltics, August Winnig, handed over power in Estonia to the representatives of Estonian Provisional Government with Konstantin Päts as the prime minister. However, at the same time the Red Army began the offensive against the retreating Germans and entered the territory of the emerging new states. The Estonian government decided to resist the offensive of the Red Army and called for army volunteers, soon followed by a general mobilisation.

The Estonian resistance was supported by the British Royal Navy warships in the Gulf of Finland and also volunteers, especially from Finland, but also Sweden and Denmark. The Estonian Army cooperated when necessary and to please the Entente with the White Guard North-western Army of General Nikolaj Judenič and with the troops of Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz in the Pskov Region.

The fighting continued to the end of 1919, and on 2 February 1920 the Tartu Peace Treaty was signed between Soviet Russia and Estonia. Estonia was the first country in Europe that recognised Soviet Russia, defying the suggestions of the Entente, of whom some still hoped to defeat of Bolsheviks. However, the possibilities of maintaining Estonian independence in case of the restoration of Russian strength and self-confidence seemed limited without the support from other great powers it had received during the War of Independence, especially from Britain.

As the fighting started on 29 November 1918, the Soviets had proclaimed a puppet state, the Commune of the Working People of Estonia in Narva. The purpose was to present Soviet Russia's invasion of Estonia as a war of Estonian workers and peasantry against the "*exploiting classes*". At this time the Soviet Russian leadership still hoped to trigger a world revolution. The workers' riots in Germany and in the cities of the collapsing Austro-Hungarian Empire were seen by the Soviets as the signs of the spreading revolution. One also has to remember that during this period thousands of former prisoners-of-war returned from Bolshevik infected Russia to their homeland in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>8</sup>



The council of the Narva Commune, with Jaan Anvelt seated in the sofa as the second from the left followed by Otto Rästas in sweater. (RA, ERAF.2.1.553.1)

The chairman of the Estonian Commune was the Estonian Bolshevik Jaan Anvelt, who left Tallinn before the arrival of the Germans in February after the short period of Bolshevik rule. Formally the Commune had even its own army, the Estonian Red Rifle Regiments, however, the full command remained in the hands of the Russian Red Army commanders.<sup>9</sup> Normally it was the Russian and Red Latvian units as well as a few so-called internationalists including even some Chinese troops that fought against the Estonian army in 1919. In territories in northeastern and southeastern Estonia that were controlled by the Red Army in winter 1918–19, Soviet rule with Red Terror had been applied. In Tartu as well as in Rakvere and in other localities many were murdered before the retreat of the Reds in January 1919. By the end of April 1919 the Estonian army with the support of allies had liberated Estonian territory, and on 5 June 1919 the Soviets officially dissolved the Commune.

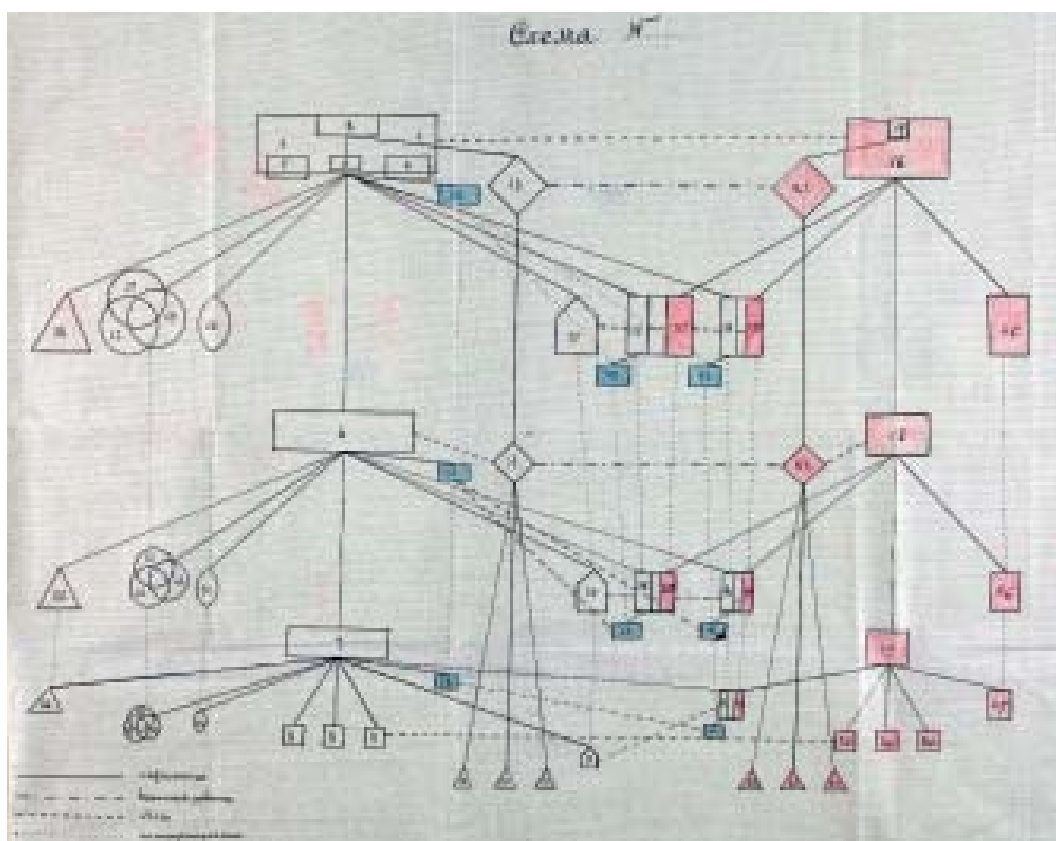
When elections were held to a 120-seat Constitutional Assembly in April 1919 in the middle of the war, the parties on the Left were still successful. The *Social Democrats* won 41, the *Labour Party* 30, the *People's Party* (nationalists) 25, the *Rural Party* eight, *Socialist-Revolutionaries* seven and *Christian People's Party* five seats. National minorities (Germans and Russians) won four seats. August Rei, a social democrat, was elected Chairman of the Assembly. In October 1919 the Assembly passed the Land Act that abolished the big landownership. Some land of the former manorial estates was given to the soldiers and officers who participated in the War of Independence. Peasants, who had not yet bought their land, became the tenants of the state that took over the land of the former estates.

In June 1920 the new Constitution came into force and Estonia became a republic with a very clear dominating role for the parliament, as it did not include the formal position of the Head of State. The Prime Minister (Elder of State) had to fulfil the representative duties of a Head of State. The Parliament (*Riigikogu*) was elected for three years.

The political instability of Estonia that followed was partly a result of the Constitution. Underground Communists had boycotted the elections to the Constituent Assembly, but they did participate under the cover of the electoral lists of workers and trade unions and their influence was considerable. The leadership was also inside the borders. From autumn 1918 Viktor Kingissepp, de facto leader of Estonian Communists, had lived secretly in Estonia.

At the end of August 1919, still in the middle of the war, the First Congress of Estonian Trade Unions was held. 412 delegates entitled to vote were present. The Communists succeeded in taking control of the congress, and in the resolutions the activities of social democrats, bourgeois parties and the government were criticised. The resolutions of the congress demanded an immediate end to the “*intervention war*” against Soviet Russia followed by peace.<sup>10</sup> On the second day of the congress, the Minister of the Interior, the Social Democrat Aleksander Hellat ordered the gathering to be dissolved. 102 activists were arrested to be sent





Organisation Chart of the Estonian Communist Party and Communist Youth (marked with red) in March 1924. (ERA, ERAF.24.5.12). Triangles on the left are marking the communist factions in the Parliament, county councils and rural municipalities respectively. Blue rectangles are the military departments of respective level, red rhombuses the same of the Communist Youth.

across the front to Soviet Russia, but 25 of them were deliberately executed near the front by the armoured train troops.<sup>11</sup>

After the end of the Independence War, the Communist agitation began to increase in Estonia. The large industries had lost their former markets and the unemployment rate was high. The agitation also had success among the rural workers' unions, where most of the members were farmhands, workers at former manorial estates and other landless rural population.

In 1920 the formally independent *Estonian Communist Party* was founded as a section of the Comintern. The party was illegal in Estonia. At the end of November 1920 elections were held to the 1st *Riigikogu* (parliament). Leftist parties were successful again: of the total of 100 seats the *Labour Party* won 22, the *Social Democrats* 18 and the *Independent Socialist Workers' Party* (former socialist revolutionaries) 11. The underground Communists participated in the electoral list of Tallinn Trade Unions Central Council and won five seats. They only got 5.3 % of all votes, but in Tallinn fully 30.2 %.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time the Estonian Security Police tried to suppress the Commu-



Jaan Anvelt, the coup leader, in 1925. (RA, ERAF.2.1.953.1)

nist organisations. Hundreds of Communists were sentenced at the Military Circuit Court from 1920 to 1925. Most were young men and women in their 20s and 30s.<sup>13</sup> The largest of the trials against the Communists, the “*Trial of 149*” in November 1924, will be analysed below.

As already noted, Viktor Kingissepp had been illegally in Estonia since autumn 1918. Jaan Anvelt, the former leader of the short-lived Bolshevik Government of winter 1917–18 and later leader of the coup, lived secretly in Estonia from from 1921 to 1925. His deputy Otto Rästas was in Estonia during the years 1920 to 1924, the military commander Valter Klein was in the country from 1923, etc.

These cadres lived in workers’ slums of Tallinn in secret rooms of unpretentious apartments of their most eager supporters. The spartan lifestyle mirrored the image of underground Communists. However, it had costs. Researchers analysing the survived correspondence of Kingissepp have noted an increase of his psychological problems caused by the constant danger of arrest.<sup>14</sup>



The safe house (of the caretaker of Tallinn Jewish cemetery) where Jaan Anvelt, Viktor Kingissepp and Otto Rästas lived. Photo is taken in 1956 (RA, ERAF.2.1.125.1)

A secret printing shop was established in farms near Tallinn. Here the leaflets and underground papers were printed. The Second and Third Congresses of the *Estonian Communist Party* (ECP) were held in 1921 and 1922 in these farms. The underground work was not only kept going by revolutionary spirit of young people and meagre donations of the local supporters. Plentiful financial support came from Soviet Russia via Comintern. Viktor Kingissepp testified in 1922 to the Security Police (*Kaitsepolitsei*) that the underground movement in Estonia was financed monthly with 300,000 – 400,000 Estonian Marks through the Estonian Section of the Comintern. To compare: the monthly salary of the Commander in Chief of Estonian Armed Forces Lieutenant General Laidoner in December 1924 was 48,000 Marks. The farm where the secret printing shop of Communists was located was bought in 1920 for 300,000 Estonian Marks. In 1922 the Security Police found a warehouse with five tons of paper for Communist publications.<sup>15</sup>

Most arrested Communists were sentenced for shorter or longer time to forced labour or imprisonment; however, some were sentenced to death and executed. It became a general practice to exchange sentenced Communists with Estonian citizens arrested in Soviet Russia, but many of those exchanged to Russia were soon back in the Estonian Communist underground movement.

An important success of the Estonian Security Police was the arrest of Viktor Kingissepp in early May 1922. After the interrogation Kingissepp was sentenced to death by a court-martial and executed. Another member of the Politburo of the ECP, Jaan Kreuks, was killed in a skirmish with Security Police operative in



Kingissepp after his arrest (RA, ERAF.9595.1.18.18, 19)

Tallinn in March 1923. They and a number of others were honoured as martyrs after World War II and their names were given to the streets and enterprises. Jamburg in Leningrad oblast was renamed Kingissepp in 1922. Kuressaare, the capital of island Saaremaa and the Saaremaa county, was named Kingissepp from 1952 to 1990.

In the summer of 1921 the Third and during autumn 1922 the Fourth Congress of the Comintern were held in Moscow. Some changes in revolutionary approach were approved. In 1921 Profintern, the Red International of Labour Unions, was founded with the aim of taking over trade unions controlled by social democrats and other leftist parties. Another method decided was the call to create “*united fronts of the working people*”. These fronts should be led and controlled by the Communists, but workers’ organisations linked to other parties and also trade unions without a clear political orientation should be invited.<sup>16</sup>

The *united front of the working people*-tactics had some success in Estonia. At the beginning of 1922 the Tallinn Trade Unions Central Council (which according to the Estonian Security Police, was in a fact the legal facade of the ECP) joined the front. The Congress of Delegates of *Rural Workers’ Unions* followed in March. In November 1922 the All-Estonian Congress of Trade Unions decided to join the Red International of Labour Unions. The 12 points of the front program included demands to dissolve the army and to arm the people, to release all political prisoners, to abolish the *State of War* as a legal option, etc.<sup>17</sup>

In April 1922 the Communists arranged the split in the *Independent Socialist Workers’ Party*. Many members of the ECP joined the *ISWP*, and with the votes of these new members a new central committee was elected. The old leadership was forced to leave and created a new party under the old name, the *ISWP*. In June the

original party now under Communist control was renamed the *Estonian Working People's Party*<sup>18</sup> and became one of the legal organisations of the ECP.

In the elections to the Second Riigikogu (Parliament) in May 1923 the *Rural Party* won 23, the *Social Democrats* 15, the *Labour Party* 12, the *People's Party* and the *Christian People's Party* each got eight seats. The new ISWP formed by the old leadership got five seats. 19 seats were divided between tiny parties and movements. But the Communists had a clear success: the list of the *United Front of the Working People* won 9.5% of the votes and 10 mandates in parliament. Seven of these formed the faction of the *Estonian Working People's Party* and the last three formed the faction of *Communist Workers*, but in the reality all 10 were controlled by the Communists. The united front was also successful at the local elections at the end of the year.<sup>19</sup> In the elections of city councils they won 33.2 % in Tallinn, in Narva 30.1 %, in Pärnu 27.4 % and in Tartu 23.5 % of the votes.<sup>20</sup>

Estonia had seven governments during the years 1920–1924, one of them lasted only two days. Minority governments of the *People's Party* (Jaan Tõnisson) and the *Labour Party* (Ants Piip) were in office from July 1920 to January 1921. Thereafter four right-center coalition governments were formed, two of them led by Konstantin Päts. They were different combinations of *Rural Party*, *Labour Party* and *People's Party*. In three of them the *Christian People's Party* also participated and in one the above mentioned Social Democrat Aleksander Hellat was the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In 1923 a referendum was held on the question of removal of the religious education from the schools as proposed by the parliament. The Parliament's proposal was rejected by the voters and the parliament was dissolved. It was a decisive victory for the small *Christian People's Party* and in March 1924 it formed a minority coalition government with the *Labour Party* and the *People's Party* led by Friedrich Akel. This government was still in office during the December coup.

In 1923 the economic situation of Estonia began to deteriorate. One of the main reasons was the effects of the so-called Russian gold. According to the Tartu Peace Treaty with Soviet Russia Estonia got 15 million golden roubles (11.6 metric tons) from the former Russian gold reserve. This enabled the Bank of Estonia to give generous credits to Estonian enterprises to energise the economy. In addition, many millions of Soviet golden roubles flowed via Estonia to the West. This Soviet gold went to the West through the Bank of Estonia and private banks and the large profits earned were used for further credit. Estonia was one of very few windows to the international markets for Soviet Russia.

Estonian businessmen, as many of their colleagues in the West, hoped that the situation in Russia would normalise soon in one way or another and invested accordingly. This hope was boosted by the introduction of new economic policy (NEP) in Russia in 1922 that offered certain freedom for entrepreneurs. Therefore a large part of the lavish credit opportunities were used for creating companies for trading with Soviet Russia. Huge amounts of convenience goods were bought

from Western countries for the Russian market, factories waited for big orders, for example of the repair of hundreds of Russian locomotives, and so on.

Another issue was the attempts to relaunch and prop-up the large factories – mostly in Tallinn – that had been built at the turn of the century to cover the needs of the Russian Army and Navy. There was a hope that the production of these companies would find markets in both Russia and in the West. Most of the projects focused on the Soviet Russia market failed.

We also have to understand that the members of Estonian tiny “high society” were tightly connected. The political and military leadership, including Konstantin Päts and Johan Laidoner, the ministers of finance and trade and industry of this period and many other politicians were themselves partners or stakeholders of the companies, enterprises and private banks that had received the loans. At the same time some of them were Bank of Estonia council members. Their business interests naturally influenced their political choices and they favoured inflation.

By early 1924 the Russian gold had mostly gone and there was no money for new credits to refinance the old ones. The experiences of hyperinflation policies used in Germany, Austria and Hungary were not encouraging, and unlike these large and established economies small Estonia had little realistic hope of foreign loans. Many enterprises went bankrupt, unemployment rose rapidly and some businessmen committed suicide including a former minister of industry and trade. By early 1924 the hope of the Communists in the economic crisis as an inseparable element in creating a *revolutionary situation* was not at all groundless in the Estonian case.

In May 1924 the portfolio of the Minister of Finance was taken over by a leader of the *Labour Party*, Otto Strandman. He began a resolute cut of government expenses, even a part of the annual conscript class had their training ended and was sent home. New loans were not given – there was no money anyway – and priority was given to the stabilisation of the Estonian currency. As a result the unemployment continued to increase which angered trade unions and leftist politicians.

However, with the start of the summer seasonal work, the agriculture began to increase employment and the economic situation began slowly to improve. In June 1924 a new gold-based currency unit, the Estonian golden kroon, was introduced. The value of this unit was made equal with the value of the Swedish krona. All loans given by the Bank of Estonia and private banks were changed to the value of golden kroon. The kroon became the currency of Estonia from the 1st of January 1928.<sup>21</sup>

Between 21 January and 30 March 1924 a total of 191 activists of the *United Front*, including the Communists and members of the Communist factions of the parliament, were arrested. In the same time the legal organisations under de facto Communist control were made illegal and dissolved by the government, including the *Estonian Working People's Party* with its 106 local organisations.<sup>22</sup>



They were so young: Communist activists of Tartu in 1923 before the arrests. Olga Künnapuu in the photo's centre (RA, EFA.275.0-47053)

The arrests were followed by the *Trial of 149* of the Military Circuit Court, which took place from 10 to 27 November 1924. In fact the number of defendants ending-up in the courtroom was only 137, included 16 women. Eight had escaped to the Soviet Union, one had died and three did not appear in court (50 of the arrested had been released during the preliminary investigation). This time the sentences were more severe and Estonian authorities decided that they would not exchange the convicted Communists with the Soviet Union after the end of proceedings. Jaan Tomp, chairman of the *Central Council of the Workers' Unions of Estonia*, was sentenced to death and executed. In the courtroom he had called directly for the overthrow of the government. 39 men and women were sentenced to life-long forced labour, 74 defendants got sentences of forced labour from six to 15 years. 15 men and women got normal prison sentences of three to four years, and the rest were acquitted.<sup>23</sup>

The Communists sentenced to life or 15 years of forced labour were mostly young people. They were released fourteen years later at the amnesty of 1938.<sup>24</sup> They were thus saved from both the repressions after the December coup and from the the Stalin purges that took place when they still served their sentence in Estonia still outside his reach. After 1940 they got important positions in the Soviet-occupied Estonia. However, when new Stalin purges took place in Estonia in 1950 Estonian Communists who had lived in Estonia before 1940 were now replaced with those who had survived the purges in Soviet Russia and World War II. Many former "prison Communists" were accused of bourgeois nationalism or

betrayal of the homeland and fired from their high positions. Some of them were sentenced to 25 years forced labour in Gulag, and Augustin Hansen, the ESSR Minister of Trade from 1943 to 1950, was executed in 1952.

Johannes Lauristin (1899–1941) and Olga Künnapuu (1903–2005) were both sentenced to lifelong forced labour at the November 1924 trial. Both were released in 1938 and soon married. Johannes Lauristin became head of Government as the *Chairman of Council of People's Commissars of the ESSR* in 1940–1941. He died during the evacuation of Tallinn in August 1941, when German troops were again approaching the Estonian capital. Their impressive daughter Marju Lauristin (1940), a Professor of the University of Tartu, became a member of the new *Estonian Social Democratic Party* after 1991, and Minister of Social Affairs in 1992–1994. She has been a Member of the European Parliament from 2014 to 2017.

## Preparations for the coup

Marxism and its derivative Marxism-Leninism were and are sometimes still claimed to be “scientific” social theories. Their cornerstone was a concept of the development of mankind from one social stage to another until the near utopian communism would be achieved. The change from older social stage to a more modern one happened usually in a revolutionary way.

The Marxist theorists defined and found in history different forms of the revolutions during the transition from the feudal organisation to capitalism and from capitalism to socialism. Examples of the bourgeois revolutions were the English in 1640, the American in 1776 and the French in 1789. Bourgeois-democratic revolutions took place in Continental Europe at the end of the 1840s and some elements of the coming socialist revolutions were experienced during the 1871 Paris Commune. The theory was developed by Marx and Engels who based their views and expectations on their analysis of the history of the industrial growth and transformation in Western Europe during the second half of 19th century. For Marx and Engels the precondition for the socialist revolution was the emerging of an industrial proletariat with a full self-consciousness of its key progressive mission in the development of world history. The transition from capitalism to socialism should happen simultaneously all over the world or at least in the developed part of it in the form of a world revolution.

The theory was partly invalid in the case of Russia, where the industrial proletariat had only begun to emerge by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Russian revolutions of 1905 and in March 1917 were declared by Lenin and other Russian theorists to be simultaneous bourgeois and bourgeois-democratic revolutions. The October Revolution of 1917 was seen as a socialist revolution that had to be exported to the other countries by the revolutionary soldiers of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German armies as well as the proletariat in the more developed European countries.



However, by the beginning of 1920s the hope of a simultaneous world revolution began to wane, and after Lenin's death in 1924 Stalin began to promote a more pragmatic approach: the building up of socialism in one country.

According to the dogmatic Marxist-Leninist theory a revolution needed a "revolutionary situation" as a precondition before being launched and to succeed. According to the view of the Bolsheviks that situation had come in Estonia in 1923–1924 due to the acute economic crisis. The growing support for the underground Communists, described above, was also taken into account.

Marxist-Leninist theorists presented this as something natural, coming from the development of economic and societal conditions; the role of subversive activities of Communists was deliberately ignored and the role of financing from Soviet Russia was hushed up, but the results themselves, for example the takeover of the *ISWP*, were not denied. According to the official history of the ECP, the combat squads of the coup were formed by the ECP.

According to the established Leninist concept of armed uprising the squads had to take under control the most important institutions and objects. Thereafter the revolutionary government would be created and the dictatorship of the proletariat be proclaimed. The Soviet Union then only had to be asked for immediate military support to avoid the intervention of imperialist countries.<sup>25</sup>

The Communist December coup in Estonia was not the only one in Europe that followed 1918. Usually the list of Communist coups includes Hungary and Bavaria of 1919, the takeover of Georgia by the Soviets in 1920, the coup attempts in Germany in 1921 and the armed coup attempts in Hamburg and Bulgaria in 1923. Less known is the attack of commandoes from the Soviet Union, supported by indoctrinated locals from among Russian and Ukrainian peasants at Tatarbunary in Bessarabia (a part of Romania then) in September 1924.<sup>26</sup>

There were only indirect references in the Soviet historiography to the preparations inside the Soviet Union of the Tallinn coup. There are various reasons for that.

*Firstly*, the revolution in a form of armed uprising had in principle to be started on the initiative of the local proletariat.

*Secondly*, the coup itself and everything connected to the Comintern was in turn connected to Grigori Zinovjev, who was executed during the Stalin purges and as opposed to his many other fellow travellers was not *salonfähig* in the Soviet historiography until the end of the Soviet Union.

World revolution, although mentioned at every congress of the CPSU even after WW II, became an increasingly controversial issue, particularly after the invasion to Afghanistan, the Sandinist takeover in Nicaragua and the sending of the Cuban troops to Angola.

However, the fact that the coup in Tallinn in 1924 was organised by the Soviet Union has never been a secret.<sup>27</sup> The archives of the ECP, opened at the beginning of the 1990s, only gave the final evidence that had always been known to party historians like August Sunila, the author of the Soviet-Era monograph on the coup.

The coup command chain could be described as follows:

- 1) The Politburo of the Central Committee of Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party.
- 2) The Communist International (Comintern) and its Estonian Department.
- 3) The Red Army General Staff Intelligence Directorate and Supply Department.
- 4) The Foreign Intelligence Department of the United Political Main Directorate (OGPU).
- 5) The Underground Estonian Communist Party and its Central Committee Bureau in Russia.
- 6) The tactical staff – the *War-Revolutionary Committee* – formed in Estonia on 29 November 1924 with nine members.

A coordinating body between the Party leadership, Comintern, the General Staff of the Red Army, OGPU and Estonian Communists, the *Provisional Estonian Commission*, was established in September 1924.

On August 12, 1924 the *Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party* addressed the *Central Committee of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party* and asked for weapons as well as support for transportation of weapons and “responsible comrades” to Estonia. It also asked permission to employ the Communist-Estonians, who served in “responsible party, Soviet and military positions”, for the preparation of the coup and a permission to recruit volunteers. They noted that the revolutionary movement in Estonia was increasing and the right moment that would otherwise not recur during many years, would arrive in two-three months.<sup>28</sup>

Soon thereafter a *Military Department of the Estonian Section of the Comintern* was established, led by a troika of a member of the ECP Central Committee and two trustworthy military specialists. The Military Department was tasked with the registration of *military forces of the Estonian proletariat*, i.e. Estonian Communists, on the territory of the USSR, their training for a civil war, the dispatch of trustworthy and trained instructors to Estonia and the formation of small (7–9 members) well-armed groups in the zone along the Estonian border from trustworthy Communists who were able to go immediately to Estonia at the moment when the uprising began. The Department should equip and supply the combat units in both Estonia and in the USSR, analyse intelligence, train command cadres and instructors for civil war and armed uprising.<sup>29</sup> The *Military Department* would also act as the operational staff of the uprising.

On 20 October the weapons for the coup were sent to the Kingissepp and Pskov rayons. They included 10 light and 10 heavy machine guns, 300 German rifles with 300 rounds for each rifle and 1,500 for each machine gun, as well as 500 hand grenades.<sup>30</sup> The Department asked for more weapons and equipment, including 500 rifles, 50 submachine guns, 34 light and 30 heavy machine guns, 250,000 rounds for rifles and machine guns, one third of them anti-armour, 80 revolvers and 1,700 rounds for them, 1,000 hand grenades and 4,000 Russian

3-inch artillery shells, half of them shrapnel.<sup>31</sup> The correspondence about the weapons is confusing and it seems that the delivery did not live up to the hopes of the Estonian Communists. It was suggested to buy the weapons from arm dealers that could hide the Soviet participation in the preparation of the coup.

Let us outline the full potential of the “*military forces of the Estonian proletariat*” in the USSR: According to a summary from autumn 1924 there were 171 commanders and 131 members of administrative and economic staff of Estonian origin in various positions in the Red Army and Navy, including 23 officers of higher and senior level (there were no traditional rank structure in the Red Army at this time). In addition, there were 66 cadets in the Estonian company of the Leningrad International Military School.<sup>32</sup> The Military Department could also draw on the tens of thousands of Estonians living in the USSR including veterans of the Red Estonian rifle regiments with combat experience from the Great War and the Russian Civil War. The Estonian students and staff of the Communist University of the National Minorities of the West were mobilised.<sup>33</sup>

The men and women recruited in the Soviet Union had to sign a certificate with three conditions before leaving for Estonia. They committed themselves to obey the orders of the Central Committee of the ECP, not to take any documents with them and in the case of arrest to identify themselves according to the false documents that were given them. They signed the certificates during the second half of November.<sup>34</sup>

The personnel of the agencies of the Soviet Transport and Foreign Trade organisations in Tallinn like Dobroflot, the Tsentrosojuz, the Oil Syndicate, the Grain Inspection and Trade Representation were used as a “*fifth column*”. According to the information of the Estonian Security Police, the Soviets only employed men and women loyal to them to these organisations. In 1924 these agencies had 83 employees, mostly the citizens of Estonia. Many of them participated in the coup.<sup>35</sup>

Particular importance was given by the organisers of the coup to the Communists and their supporters in the Estonian army. According to the 1932 article of the Estonian Lieutenant Colonel Karl Laurits, untrained men from the reserve forces had been called up to receive basic training in 1924. Some of these had Communist sympathies, but they were released before 1 December and did not get a role in the coup.<sup>36</sup> However, as became evident during the events, the Communists still had their agents in the units of Estonian army. There were Communist agents in the Air Force squadron and the armoured car and tank battalion that tried to take over these important elements.

As already mentioned, an *Estonian Commission* responsible for coordinating the efforts of all central Party and military agencies in support of the coup was established. This provisional institution, created on 3 September, was to supervise the Estonian Communists in the planned coup. The members of the commission were only represented in the minutes with initials: at the first meeting, for example “*comrades U., Č., M., T., R., V. and Ž.*”<sup>37</sup> Jüri Ant has deciphered most of the

initials. According to him the following persons were among the members: Dmitri Manuilski (Member of the Comintern Executive Committee), Jēkabs Bērziņš (Chief of the Red Army intelligence directorate), Jakov Pjatnicki (Member of the Comintern Executive Committee), Otto Ville Kuusinen (Secretary of the Comintern Executive Committee), Lev Kamenev (Member of the RC(B)P CC Politburo), Vjačeslav Molotov (Secretary of the RC(B)P CC), Jakov Unschlicht (Chief of Supply of the Red Army and member of the USSR Revolutionary War Council), Mixail Frunze (Chief of Staff of the Red Army), Jānis Žīgurs (officer of the Red Army intelligence directorate), Ivan Bakaev (Head of the Political Directorate of the Leningrad Military District), Stanislaw Messing (Head of the OGPU in Leningrad), Peter Zaluckij (Secretary of the RC(B)P Leningrad Province Committee) and Mixail Kobeckij (Soviet envoy to Estonia in 1924).<sup>38</sup>

The first meeting of the *Estonian Commission* defined the tasks of the commission. It was authorized to work with top secret information. The Commission was assigned to investigate and control the economic and political situation in Estonia as well as the ECP and its allies. The information was to come from the Red Army intelligence directorate and from the OGPU. In this first meeting it was decided that in general the armed resistance of the Communists was permitted in a case of a coup against the “*fascists*” in Estonia. The ECP had to begin the mass agitation in support of joining Estonia to the Soviet Union. The possible change in the politics of the Soviet transit through Estonian ports was also discussed in this first meeting, possibly meaning the exploitation of the country after its annexation.<sup>39</sup>

Three weeks later – on 24 September – the commission asked “*comrade R*”<sup>40</sup> to compile the detailed plan of organisational and technical means in preparation of “*possible events in Estonia*” two weeks later. Near Estonian border the “*working squads*” (рабочие дружины) of Estonian comrades were to be formed, altogether 300 persons, simulating employment by lodging there. The RC(B)P CC was requested to allot finances for the purchase of 500 rifles, 70 Thompson submachine guns<sup>41</sup> and 200 Parabellum revolvers, thus adding non-Soviet firearms to the coup. Eight members were present at this meeting.<sup>42</sup>

The decisions of the meeting of the Commission 1½ months later – on 10 November 1924 – were less optimistic in spite of fact that six of the eight members present were the same as in the earlier meeting. Now the Estonian comrades were warned against beginning a coup inadequately prepared and not at a right time. The Commission would only find itself able to decide on action after receiving exhaustive information about the level of the technical preparations. The Red Army political directorate was requested to dispatch the soldiers and officers of the Red Army of Estonian origin to comrade R. (Rāstas) that he needed. Comrade St. (allegedly Stalin) was also to be included in the Estonian Commission.<sup>43</sup>

There were now plans for the future after the successful coup. At the beginning of October 1924 the ECP Central Committee sent a preliminary plan to Dmitri Manuilski with the intended political changes after the successful coup.

Two variants were proposed. The first was an Estonian People's Republic with a people's government of representatives of revolutionary workers, farmhands and smallholders. But such a government, even without Communists, was estimated as unsuitable because it would be seen internationally as a puppet government with the dictatorship of the proletariat behind it. The intervention of Finns or Latvians against such a government was seen as a real danger. A second option was a government with social democrats and the *Labour Party*. This option was favoured by the ECP Central Committee<sup>44</sup> as its puppet character was less obvious.

The creation of local revolutionary committees in towns, rural municipalities, but also in factories and enterprises was described to the smallest detail in the plan. Political prisoners and smaller criminals should be released and conscripted into the army. The "*enemies of the people*", meaning monarchists, active members of the bourgeois parties, policemen and the secret collaborators of the Security Police should be arrested and sentenced by the revolutionary tribunals. The proceedings in the tribunals should be as simple as possible, similar to those of a military court-martial. Capital punishment was foreseen for active members of the Defence League, Security Police officers, uniformed policemen who actively participated in fights against the revolution, active military officers and others.<sup>45</sup>

A letter sent by Tiibus to Moor and Käbi<sup>46</sup> and dated 24 November noted that the Politburo of the RC(B)P Central Committee had estimated the situation with preparations of the coup as critical. Allegedly the Soviet highest leadership had decided to intervene in the preparations of the coup, because their sources had evaluated that the possibility of success was not very high. As mentioned this mirrored the view of the 10 November *Estonian Commission* meeting. The Politburo suggested the postponement of the coup until the sea would be frozen to avoid the possible intervention of the British Royal Navy. Politically the Politburo suggested the proclamation of a people's republic in case of success of the coup. Initially it should only enter a political union with the Soviet Union, not be a formal member.<sup>47</sup> Many parts of the 1924 plan were realized in 1940 after the Soviet occupation. The concept of a people's republic was experimented with at the time of the Tallinn coup in Outer Mongolia and Tannu Tuva.

On 29 November 1924 the order was given to stop the coup preparations, but it was too late already.

## Communist Coup in Tallinn on 1 December 1924

The events of the coup have been described in a number of books and articles and the Soviet version does not differ a lot from the description of the events by J. Saar or the article by Karl Laurits. Usually these two authors have been the references until today. Both authors had access to the materials of Estonian government, Security Police, Estonian army and police, as well as to the interrogation minutes and the materials of the court proceedings in the Military Circuit Court, where the captured participants were sentenced. Laurits is also referencing the articles

of Jaan Anvelt and others in the Communist newspaper *Edasi* and journal *Klassivõitlus*.

According to Laurits and Neuberg, there were 400 men in the assault squads in Tallinn. These squads were divided among three “battalions”. In the first battalion there should have been 170, in the second 120 and in the third 110 men. In fact only 227 showed up in the early morning of the 1 December, respectively 56, 91 and 80.<sup>48</sup> The assault squads had 100 revolvers of the type Parabellum with 50 rounds for each, 60 carabines and rifles with fewer rounds, three Thompson sub-machine guns with about 1,000 rounds each, 20 hand grenades and 20 bombs.<sup>49</sup> They hoped to capture more weapons from the military units in Tallinn. 24 % of the members of the assault squads had served in Estonian Army, 7.4 % in the Red Army, 11.1 % in Tsarist Army and 57.5 % had no military experience.<sup>50</sup>

Communists estimated the government forces opposing them as altogether 760–830 men: 1) The Military School and cadet courses: 400; 2) The NCO School: 200–250; 3) The Tallinn Commandant troops; 110–120; and 4) The Police Cavalry Reserve: 50–60.

To this figure were added about 500 armed “*fascists*”, although the military capability of these was not estimated to be very high. Probably they had the members of the volunteer Defence League in mind.

The Communists hoped that the police force in Tallinn (except the cavalry reserve, the riot control unit), the Tallinn Garrison (1st Battalion of the 10th infantry regiment), the armoured car and tank battalion, the communications battalion, the coastal artillery, the artillery battalion and the air force squadron at Lasnamäe airfield would stay passive. They even hoped that at least a part of these units will come over to the side of the Communists.<sup>51</sup>

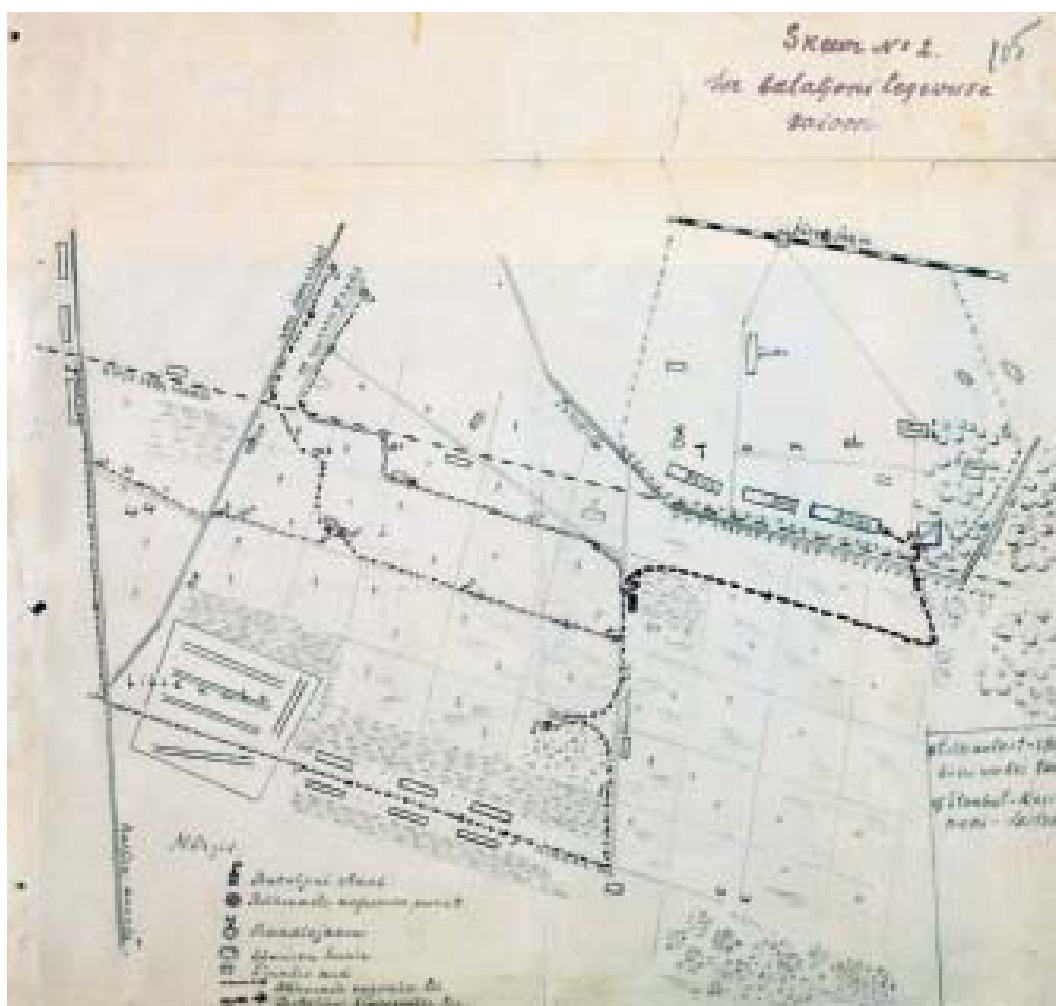
### **The operational plan**

The operational headquarters would be located in the town center at Tõnismägi 8 (about 600–700 m from the Government building and the residence of the Elder of State on Toompea Hill).

The First Battalion was to attack the military school (the Military Academy) and to take over its storage of hand guns. The second objective of the battalion was the narrow-gauge railway station Tallinn-Väike.

The Second Battalion was planned to capture the barracks of the police cavalry reserve, the armoured car and tank battalion, the communications battalion, a police station, the air force squadron base and the barracks of the 10th Infantry Regiment.

The Third Battalion should capture the Government Building, the Residence of the Elder of State, the War Ministry, the Central Post Office, the Central Station (i.e. the broad-gauge railway station), a police station and the prison of preliminary investigation. Additionally the railway bridges between Tapa and Tartu and between Tallinn and Tapa were to be blown up to hinder the transportation of the troops from North-East and South-East Estonia. The demolitions were



The plan of the First Coup Battalion (ERAF.24.1.272a, 107)

actually implemented, but the explosive charges were too small to destroy the bridges.<sup>52</sup>

The ambitious tasks could only be achieved using the element of surprise and assumed as mentioned that at least part of the government troops would change the side. The first condition was realised in a part, the second proved to be an illusion.

### The defending forces

The Estonian Army and Security Police were informed of the preparations and plans for countermeasures were developed. Later it was realised as one of the main mistakes of Estonian military intelligence that it did not register the meaning of the start of, using the modern term, three-week snap exercises of the Soviet 56th Red Army Territorial Infantry Division in November-December, a formation located in the area of Pskov-Ostrov-Novgorod-Staraja Russa. Karl Laurits wrote that Estonian officers and policemen mistakenly expected that the attempt

of the Communist coup d'état would be preceded by mass demonstrations organised by Estonian Bolsheviks and by attempts to take over the weapon storages. An adventuristic and amateur attack such as the one that actually took place on 1 December was unexpected.

The Estonian military intelligence had agents in the assault squads. One was a Sergeant Major August Schaurup of the communications battalion. Another was Artur Teer, First Sergeant in the same battalion, and a third was Private Alfred Klemmer of the armoured car and tank battalion. However they got no chance to send warning in time because the assault squads had been formed already in the evening of 30 November and no leave was given before the operation started.<sup>53</sup>

### **The coup itself**

The attacks began at 5.30 on 1 December 1924. The narrow-gauge railway station was captured and the deputy station chief and a policeman were killed. But one and half hour later the attackers left the station when a military unit approached.

The assault squad which was to capture the Preliminary Investigation Prison in the Old Town had to get its weapons from other squads after their capture of weapon storages. As this did not happen, the squad did not attack and dispersed without any action.

The attack against the barracks of the police cavalry reserve was unsuccessful. A bomb was thrown through the window of the barracks by the attackers, but it did not explode. The policemen opened fire, two attackers were killed and a third captured.

The attack against the Ministry of War was unsuccessful, too. The attackers entered the building, but the guards resisted with fire and the assault squad had to give up the attempt.

The Military School was attacked by a group of 56 men with eight officers and NCOs, some of them in Estonian uniforms. They had initial success and entered the barracks where the cadets slept, but a desperate action of one cadet gave the time to others to get their rifles and return fire. However, four cadets were killed and nine wounded. The casualties of the attackers were one killed and one wounded.

The communications battalion, the armoured car and tank battalion and the headquarters of the 10th regiment were at this time placed in the Juhkental quarter of Tallinn, approximately where the headquarters of the Estonian Armed Forces are located today. There were some tank drivers from Russia among the attackers and they had an agent in the armoured car and tank battalion. They wanted to take over at least one tank. But their agent, who succeeded in sabotaging most of the tanks, was killed while driving the tank he wanted to take over. When that happened, the battalion NCOs had succeeded in organising resistance. But the duty officer of the communications battalion was killed as were three officers in the officers' mess of the 10th Regiment.

The air force squadron at Lasnamäe was the only military unit that was succes-





Map of Tallinn from 1927 (published by the Üldise Ajakirjanduse Kontor (G. Paju), digitalized by Estonian National Library, <http://www.digar.ee/id/nlib-digar:262534>) with the author's markings for the places of the key 1 December 1924 coup events.



Reconnaissance and scout aircraft at the military airfield at Lasnamäe that came under coup control. (<http://jaakjuske.blogspot.com/ee/2014/01/lasnamae-unustatud-sojavelennuvalja.html>)

fully taken over by the assault squad. The duty officer was captured, but before that happened he succeeded in informing other units about the attack.

The counter-attack of government troops began at 9.30. The assault squad gave the soldiers of the air base their weapons back and ordered them to resist the government troops, but the soldiers killed the squad commander. The squad had captured two aircraft with pilots and they tried to escape to the Soviet Union. One succeeded, the other landed on Estonian side of the border and the border guards captured the Communist.

The attacks against the central railway station, the Government building, the Central Post Office and the Residence of the Elder of State were all successful initially. The room of the guards of the Government Building was taken as was the Residence of the Elder of State (since 1995 the Residence of the German Ambassador). The Elder of State, Friedrich Akel, succeeded to hide himself in the attic, while his aide-de-camp escaped from the house to seek help. When the Central Post Office was taken, the Tallinn Police Chief, Rudolf Saar, was captured. He had simply entered the post to see what is happening. The Central Post Office was recaptured after 6.45 in an action under the command of Major General Ernst Põdder and the Tallinn Commandant, Colonel Oskar Raudvere, with the support of an armoured car. At the time General Põdder was actually not supposed to be in Tallinn as he was the Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division that had its headquarters in Tartu, South-East Estonia.



The energetic commander of 2. Division in Tartu, Major-General Ernst Põder, who reacted quickly to the coup after a night in the Officers' Mess with other Independence War veterans. (1926 foto from the Defence League HQs (KL Peastaap))

The hardest fighting during the coup happened at the Central Railway Station, the place of the later monument. The attack of the Communists was led by Jakob Vakker. He shot the Minister of Communications Karl Kark, who happened to be at the station. 10–20 unarmed officers who were on their way to field exercises were arrested in the station. They were about to be executed when the attack of the government forces saved them. At 6.30 the police cavalry reserve unit arrived at the station, but they could not attack over the open square in front of the station. At 8.15 two platoons of the NCO training battalion arrived and captured the station after a short fight. Their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hermann Rossländer, was deadly wounded. Jaan Anvelt, the leader of the coup, was also in the Central Station. He retreated with couple of comrades in direction of the workers' slum northwest from the station and Anvelt shot Lieutenant Commander Karl Stern whom they met in the street.

Based on later investigations the Estonian Political Police estimated that altogether 285 armed fighters took part in the coup. 30–45 of them had come illegally

Villem Roobach was among the assault squad that captured the air force squadron. When government forces approached he forced a pilot to fly with him towards the Soviet border.

The pilot provoked engine problems and landed on Estonian side of the border. On the photo is Roobach after he had been captured by the Security Police, still partly disguised as an officer wearing a greatcoat (RA, ERA.1278.1.362.8).



over the border from Russia shortly before the coup, 42 belonged to the staff of Dobroflot and 23 had been in service of the Soviet Trade Representation. About 70 % of all participants of the coup were arrested later.<sup>54</sup>

The countermeasures of the government forces were rather improvised and ignored existing plans. However, one has to keep in mind that less than five years had passed since the end of the War of Independence and most of the officers and NCOs therefore had personal and recent combat experience. The attackers could not succeed in the essential parts of their plan; the capture of weapons storages and the neutralisation of the military units in Tallinn. The coup lost momentum soon and had already ended by mid-morning.

21 were killed on the government side: five officers, four cadets, two soldiers, one military official and five policemen. The Minister of Communications Karl Kark, a railway station chief and the Inspector of the German Domschule and his driver were the collateral casualties. 25 military and 16 civilians were wounded. The attackers lost 12 men in the coup fighting.<sup>55</sup>

## Comparing the situation in Estonia with that of Latvia and Finland

During the first half of 1920s the subversive activity of the Communists belonged to the most complex and difficult problems of internal security in almost all European countries from Finland to Portugal and from Italy to the United Kingdom.

The internal security services of Finland, Estonia and Latvia held meetings to discuss the problem and exchange information. After the December Coup in Tallinn, one such meeting took place in Helsinki, Finland in November 1925. The key participants were Esko Riekki, head of the Finnish Central Investigative Police (*Etsivä Keskuspoliisi*), Jānis Voldemārs Ozoliņš, leader of the Political Department of Latvian Ministry of Interior, and the head of the Estonian Political Police, August Tenson (after Estonization named Tuulse). The deliberations of the three chiefs indirectly help explaining why Estonia became the chosen target of the attempted coup.

Communist parties were illegal in all three countries, but as already noted, the legal workers' unions and trade union organisations were used as an effective front for Communist activities such as agitation and Soviet propaganda. According to Tenson, the Estonian Government had acted indifferently to the Communist movement during the first years of independence, hoping that it would soon die out of itself. However in the local elections of 1923 18 % of the voters had voted for the legal organisations under Communist control. In the parliamentary elections of the same year, about 10 % of votes went to the candidates under Communist control.

From January 1924 the policy towards the Communist underground had become more strict and hundreds of Communists and their supporters been arrested. After the arrests of 1924 the Government had overestimated its success and reduced the staff and budget of the Security Police. According to Tenson, this was one of the reasons why the coup of 1924 came as a surprise for the government. Tenson's remarks must be seen both as his excuse for the events and an expression of his resentment.

### Latvia

The situation in Latvia was rather different, because after the end of German occupation in November 1918 the Communists had been in control of most of the country for more than half a year. Red Terror had caused hundreds of victims. The Communist Party then had about 8,000 members in Latvia, but most of these left for Soviet Russia in 1919–1920 or were killed in the battles of the Latvian War of Independence. The new underground Latvian Communist Party had been created after the war with its leadership located in the Soviet Russia. It used the Soviet Legation in Riga for contact with the party members. The 2<sup>nd</sup> secretary of the legation was a representative of the Soviet foreign intelligence. Ozoliņš said

that the same position was held by the intelligence representative in Soviet legations in other countries. During the first half of 1920s Latvia had already been forced to declare two 2<sup>nd</sup> secretaries of the Soviet legation *personae non grata*. The secretary of the consular office served as cover for the representative of the Soviet political police, the GPU. The correspondence between the Comintern and Latvian underground Communists used the legation's diplomatic courier service. To gain a foothold in Latvia, the Soviets were offering to take on works for Latvian enterprises, and it also used dumping to get access to the country's market for such products as Soviet cotton and grain.

Two thirds of about 900 members of the Latvian Communist Party were the youth present in various organisations, the strongest being the sports union *Energy* with 70 members. Like in Estonia the Latvian Communists initially succeeded in gaining controlling influence in the trade union movement. In a country-wide congress of the trade unions in 1922 they succeeded in gaining the support of 13,000 workers against 3,500 who remained under the influence of the Social Democrats. However, by 1925 the support of the Communists had decreased, they had about 3,500 supporters left in the trade unions. Their strongest support remained the trade union of transport workers.

The Latvian secret policemen believed that strong actions against the Communists would not have been necessary because the Social Democrats and Communists fought each other and the Communists had been losing. It was also important that neither the Communists nor the Social Democrats had support in the countryside after the land reform had transformed most of the peasants to landowners.

The Latvian internal security service had no information about Communist fighters in Latvia, but knew that agitators, trained in Soviet Russia, were sent to Latvia. An important tool in fighting the Communist underground was the *State of Emergency* that allowed to keep persons under custody without charges and sentence until they agreed to leave the country.<sup>56</sup>

## **Finland**

Finland was a Grand Duchy with large a degree of political autonomy until the end of the Tsarist Russia.<sup>57</sup> Finns did not serve in the Russian army except as officers, mostly noblemen, who sought careers and fame via the Russian military schools and colleges like Field Marshal Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim. Therefore few Finns fought in WW I, and except for the officers in Russian service they participated as individual volunteers in search for adventure, where most joined the German army.

An exception was the Finnish Jäger Battalion No. 27, which was a full unit of the German Imperial Army that was trained in Lockstedt Camp in Holstein and fought in 1916–1917 in Courland on Latvian soil. The men were volunteers, a lot of them from among patriotic university and high school students, who went secretly via Sweden to Germany to be trained for fighting against Russia. They

returned to Finland in February 1918 and had a key role in the Finnish Civil War and later in the Finnish officer corps from the interwar period until as late as the 1960s.

The Finnish Civil War that began after a successful Communist coup in Helsinki was fought from January to May 1918 between Reds and Whites. Southern Finland was initially in the hands of Reds with their Red Guard forces that received weapons from the Bolsheviks and political support from Leon Trotsky, initially Soviet People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs and from March 1918 of Military Affairs. In Northern Finland the Whites began to disarm the Russian troops dislocated in Finland. The parliament escaped from Helsinki to Vaasa in the North and appointed General Mannerheim as Commander-in-Chief. The Whites were supported by the German Baltic Sea Division that arrived in Finland in April under command of General Count Rüdiger von der Goltz. The Finnish Parliament invited a Prince of Hesse, Frederick Charles (Friedrich Karl) to become the King of Finland in October. That idea had lost its relevance at the German Revolution and defeat in November.

The Finnish Reds were defeated and cruel reprisals took place on both sides. The Reds had executed up to 1,500, the Whites more than 7,000 persons during the war. Up to 3,500 Whites and 5,200 Reds had been killed in the Civil War fighting. However, on the top of the Reds killed in action and those executed, 11,652 Reds died in prison camps after the war of hunger and diseases such as flu. In total more than 1% of the Finnish population died of war-related causes as a result of the war.<sup>58</sup>

In 1922 the Finnish *Socialist Workers' Party* was founded and the party succeeded in getting 14,8 % of the votes in the July 1922 parliamentary elections (27 seats of 200). At the founding congress the party had joined the Comintern, and in parliamentary debates it not only demanded an investigation of the deaths in the prison camps after the civil war of 1918, the Party also called for declaring Finland a Soviet Republic, where the power would be in the hands of the majority, i.e. working class.

The Central Investigative Police then moved to close the legal organisations of the Communists. In July 1923 the Government approved the arrest of 189 persons, including members of the parliamentary faction of *Socialist Workers' Party*. Ordinary Finnish Social Democrats were hesitant. On one hand an important competitor was excluded from the game, but on the other hand the left wing in the parliament in general lost influence.<sup>59</sup>

Despite clear similarities, above all the connection of the Communists and various leftist movements in all three countries with Comintern and Soviet Russia, there were big differences between three countries. Finland had fought a bloody civil war in spring 1918 and most of the Reds were the Finnish workers and peasants that had been clearly defeated and then brutally disciplined. The Estonian Red cadres had left the country before the German occupation in February 1918 and returned only with the Red Army from November 1918. Thereafter

they were quickly squeezed out of the country in April-May 1919. The Red Army had never reached the capital. In Latvia the Communists had the capital Riga in their hands from January to May 1919. They left Latvia together with the Red Army tainted by a cloud of massive atrocities.

In Latvia the First World War had been highly destructive with the front line area just south of Riga for half the war and with fighting spreading to much of the rest during the final year. The effects and losses reinforced the national divisions and created the partly civil war character of the Latvian War of Independence. No Latvians could be in any doubt of the threat of an externally supported Communist Fifth Column at the end of that war.

In Finland the deep armed political divisions and tough actions against the Red opposition was just a natural extension of the Civil War.

In Estonia the absolute majority of the men in spite of their political affiliation fought in the Estonian Army for the national cause during the War of Independence against a host of threats; Red invaders, Germans, White Russians and combinations. The war had not deepened national divisions and stigmatised political groups to the same extent as in the two other states.

The Latvian and Finnish history of the ten years after 1914 meant that the environment for the Communists of the two countries was considerably less liberal than in Estonia, where the Civil War crisis had been ended with relatively limited bloodshed in the offensive mobile fighting in a few spring months of 1919. Thereafter most of the fighting and destruction had taken place beyond Estonia's borders to the south and east. In early 1920 and as late as early 1924 Estonia was a far softer, more naïve target than the two other states. That changed in one morning.

## Epilogue

At the government meeting in the morning of 1st of December a *State of War* was proclaimed and Lieutenant General Johan Laidoner (1884–1953) was nominated Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. General Laidoner had been the Commander-in-Chief during the Estonian War of Independence. He had left the service in spring 1920 and was currently a member of parliament.

According to the Estonian Constitution the armed forces only had a commander-in-chief in war or when a *State of War* was declared. In peacetime the armed forces were subordinated to the Ministry of War and the highest military officer was the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. Most of the Estonian legislation of this time was still inherited from Tsarist Russia. Accordingly Division Commanders had the responsibilities of Governor Generals with civilian and judicial authority during the *State of War*. There were three Divisional Headquarters in Estonia: 1<sup>st</sup> Division with headquarters in Rakvere (Northeastern direction), commanded by Major General Otto Heinze, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division with headquarters in Tartu (Southeastern direction), commanded by Major General Ernst Põdder, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Division





General Johan Laidoner was returned to duty as Commander-in-Chief as part of the political reaction to events. (Foto: entsyklopeedia.ee from the collection of Rein Helme)

with headquarters in Tallinn, commanded by Major General Aleksander Tõnisson.

With a formal *State of War* in place, military tribunals thereafter began to sentence the captured participants. Most were court-martialled and executed right after the verdict, only those underage received prison sentences. At the same time the last participants were searched for and captured or killed in Tallinn workers' slums and nearby villages. An example was Arnold Sommerling (1898–1924), who had been sentenced to 10 years forced labour in the *Trial of 115* in 1922, and who had been exchanged to Soviet Russia. He returned illegally to Estonia in November 1924 and was killed on 5 December 1924 in a farm near Tallinn together with two comrades, one of them a Communist member of Tallinn city council.<sup>60</sup>

On 29 December 1924 the military prosecutor, Major Konstantin Trakmann, reported to the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces that the number of participants of the coup had been estimated to have been 200–250. 109 of these had been sentenced by the military tribunals in Tallinn and the Military School. 98 were sentenced to death and 97 executed. In Tartu, Narva and Tapa six persons altogether had been sentenced to death. Among the executed were also four soldiers and Second Lieutenant Siegfried Fleischer (1903–1924), the duty officer of the



Estonian communists with Zinoviev at the 5th Comintern Congress in July 1924. Otto Rästas is standing on the left (ERA, ERAF.2.1.1499.1)

air force squadron. He had been court-martialled on 5 December 1924 for not resisting the attackers.

After the coup the Defence League (*Kaitseliit*) was reactivated. It was the voluntary Home Guard national defence organisation, founded in 1918.

Many participants of the coup, including Jaan Anvelt, succeeded to escape to the Soviet Union. On 19–20 April 1925 a secret conference of the participants was held to analyse the coup and the reasons for the failure. The keynote speaker was Grigori Zinoviev, the main speakers were Jaan Anvelt, Rudolf Vakmann and Otto Rästas.<sup>61</sup>

For the Estonian Communists the failing of the coup was unmitigated disaster. Most of their local underground groups were dissolved and the leaders were court-martialled in escaping to the Soviet Union. Some underground activities were only renewed in 1928–1929. A veteran of the coup of 1924, Johannes Jürna, who had succeeded to escape to the Soviet Union, was sent back to Tallinn to organise the underground movement at the beginning of 1930, but was killed soon in a skirmish with police operatives. The culmination of this short activation of the Communist underground was the assassination of Major General Johan Unt, the Commander of 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and simultaneously Tallinn Garrison in April 1930, by an assassin hired by the Communists. The six-member *Estonian Workers' Party* faction in the Parliament, the cover organisation of the Communists, dissolved itself at the beginning of 1930. The leader of the party, the writer Valter



The document with Stalin's signature and decision of the CPSU Politburo to evacuate the participants of the coup belongs to the end of the chapter Communist coup in Tallinn on 1 December 1924. It is just another piece of evidence of the direct and decisive participation of the highest Soviet leadership in the organisation of the coup. (RA, ERAF.24.1.281)

Kaaver (1904–1946) escaped to the Soviet Union, was soon arrested there and died in prison in 1946.

After the takeover by the Prime Minister Konstantin Päts in March 1934 and introduction of State of Emergency (mainly directed against right radicals), the left wing of the *Social Democrats* founded the *Marxist Union of the Working People* and began to seek new contacts with Comintern.

In 1940, after the invasion of the Red Army, the four leading figures of the Union were selected by the Soviet legation and NKVD to be members of the puppet "people's government" (June-August 1940). The First Secretary of *Estonian Communist Party* in 1940–1941, Karl Säre, returned to Estonia in 1938. He had used the amnesty law issued by President Päts in May 1938 in connection with presidential elections, but did not get permission to live in Tallinn and other larger towns. However, he had been an agent of the Soviet foreign intelligence since 1925 in different countries, including China, United Kingdom, United States and Canada, but last but not least in Copenhagen from 1934–1936.

The 1924 Communist coup attempt became a definite point of reference in

later public political discourse in Estonia. One example was the coup of the right radicals in December 1935 that was disclosed by the Political Police during final preparation. In the newspapers it was immediately compared with the Communist coup eleven years earlier.

As already described, the *Nachspiel* of the coup took place in the second half of 1940 and first half of 1941, after the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union. The NKVD, whose secret police department became the independent NKGB in February-March 1941, investigated the material on the coup thoroughly and arrested many people. Many of them were executed in direct revenge, among others the Elder of State at the time, Fridrich Akel, the Chief of the Defence League in 1924–1925, Aleksander Seiman, and others. The revenge could not touch Ernst Põdder, as he had died in 1932.<sup>62</sup> August Tenson (Tuulse), who had built up the Estonian Defence (Political) Police during 1920–1935 and served later as the Deputy of the Minister of Interior, committed suicide together with his wife on 23 June 1940 less than a week after the Soviet invasion.

## Conclusion

The coup on the 1 December 1924 is well documented and studied historically. Despite of the ideologically tainted treatment in the Soviet historical discourse – both sides used the event in their propaganda – the reconstruction of what happened is possible.

The side of the Communists overestimated the influence of their propaganda among Estonians during 1917–1924 and underestimated the effectiveness of the Estonian Security Police, and especially of the implications of the arrests at the beginning of 1924 that removed the most effective ECP cadres. One has to keep in mind the sincere conviction of many of the organisers and participants of the coup that the victory of the proletariat is unavoidable, eventually. Vice versa, the Estonian side clearly underestimated the risks of such an attack, overestimating the effect of their actions against the Communists.

The Soviet leadership was fully informed of the preparations at the highest level of Soviet Russia and Comintern. Both the Red Army and state security leadership participated actively. However, for ideological reasons the Soviet participation was not highlighted, and the operation was presented as an action of the underground Estonian Communists or at least Comintern leadership.

The organisers of the coup succeeded in infiltrating many attackers into Estonia and to keep the day and hour of the launching of the coup secret. However, the amateur leadership, a too ambitious operation plan, the relative lack of combat experience of many participants and the indifference or even resistance of Estonian workers to the coup were the reasons of the abject failure.

The coup began unexpectedly for the government and the first steps of resistance were improvised. The combat experience of the most of the officers and NCOs was important. After the short initial fluster the assault squads of the

Communists were easily and quickly defeated. Together with the arrests earlier in the same year, the Coup of 1 December 1924 was a destructive setback for the Communists in Estonia. The underground structures of the Communist Party in Estonia were only restored in 1928. The Estonian government began to turn more attention to the internal security. The Security Police was reorganised and renamed to Political Police, and the Defence League reactivated.

It is often argued that the coup had finally defeated the sympathy towards the Communists among the workers and destitute peasants, but this is hard to prove.

There are many concepts, ideas and methods in the documents of the coup that could be referenced in researching the later events. In this sense one of the euphemisms, used by the Communist literature, namely that it was the main rehearsal of the events in 1940 in the Baltic States, is not fully groundless.

An in-depth study of the events underline that what is currently named “Hybrid Warfare” during a period of formal peace is certainly not really a new idea even if history does not simply repeat itself. We can find some similarities between the era of introduction of universal suffrage in most European countries at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the era of social media at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the beginning of last century new political ideas like communism and radical nationalism won a lot of followers among the mass of new voters, peasants and workers, amplified by the collapse of the former imperial world and domestic certainties under the pressures of the Great War, birth of new national states and Soviet Russia, whose leaders prophesized the world revolution and thought it was necessary to safeguard their achievement.

Here especially the influence of the new media of that time, the radio and cinema are worth noting, accessible for the uneducated and even illiterate audience. They were skillfully used by the then modern propaganda of the populist political movements.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the social media created a new information space accessible for everybody and despite an assumed much higher level of general education, that includes a knowledge of the world unequalled with the times hundred years earlier. However, the broader audience is not always inclined to treat the information with more independent criticism now than then. The propaganda products for selected parts of fragmented societies are generated especially by the radical movements. Similarly to the beginning of the last century the old political elites were late in their reaction.

Some elements are different, though. Before the signing of the Briand-Kellogg Treaty of 1928 the war was a legal tool of international politics. Even so, the Soviet class-struggle approach at the beginning of the 1920s included the winning of hearts and minds of the population of neighbouring countries before and justifying the invasion of the Red Army to safeguard progress in the national class struggles. There was a fruitful ground in many countries for it, including the susceptibility of big parts of the population to the Communist propaganda, the internal weak-

ness of new states, deep social injustice, weak national identities and interethnic conflicts in multiethnic countries.

During the Russian civil war a foundation of puppet Soviet states as the competitors for loyalty of the population of the emerging national states was an effective method, used from the Baltics to the Far East. It proved useful in regaining control of Belarus, Ukraine, Caucasus, Central Asia and Far East.

However, after the Soviet Russian signing of peace treaties with the neighbouring countries a too open use of this tool was put temporarily aside. During the sunset of the idea of world revolution in the first half of 1920s, Comintern and sections of it, the mostly illegal Communist parties in many countries were used for the destabilisation of these countries especially attempting to split the workers' movement and takeover of the trade unions.

The destabilisation operations were planned by the leadership of the Comintern in tense cooperation with the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party, the intelligence directorate of the Red Army and the Soviet political police (OGPU), as we have seen on the example of December coup attempt in Estonia in 1924.

The use of activists, hired from among locals to receive political preparation and commando training in the Soviet Union was another tool. The active commando squads had to take over the strategic objects in the capital, to paralyse the army and police, to proclaim some sort of new government, claiming certain legality and support of the population, prepared by the Communist party, and ask the support of the Red Army.

However, the planners in the Soviet and Comintern headquarters were dependent on the quite dogmatic Leninist revolution theory that prescribed the existence of the revolutionary situation as inevitable precondition for revolutionary takeover. Emergence of such a revolutionary situation was supported by different means: political destabilisation using in Estonian case the underground ECP and its legal cover organisations, the propaganda of the leaflets and underground Communist press and last but not least economic tools to increase the unemployment and herewith the dissatisfaction of the workers.

Similar methods, different in elements, of course, were used in other conflicts, too. As examples could be seen the Mukden incident in Manchuria in 1931, the beginning of the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland, when a puppet government of Otto Ville Kuusinen was set up by the Soviets that claimed to be the only legal representative of the Finnish people, and in Budapest in October 1944, when an SS task force replaced the government of Miklós Horthy with the Hungarian Nazis of Ferenc Szálasi.

Almost 100 years later the elements that were seen in Tallinn in 1924 are sometimes emphasized again as most suitable for the softening and manipulation of a target polity without a direct application of armed force. General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, has emphasized – using the Arab Spring as an example – the rising importance of political, economic, information, humanitarian and other non-military measures in the

21<sup>st</sup> century war. Such warfare would include the support of protest movements of the population, reinforced by information warfare and accompanied by special force operations.<sup>63</sup>

Research of similar events in the more distant past, despite of the sometimes totally different environment, where they took place, gives us a possibility to establish some general trends of such actions or operations that could have been timeless.

## Sources and historiography

Historians had ample source collections in researching the Communist coup of 1924 in Estonia. Archive materials of both sides have been preserved in the Estonian National Archives and have been opened to the public.

The archives of the Estonian Communist organisations, active in the Soviet Union, were added to Leningrad and Moscow archives after the Stalin purges, when the national Communist organisations had been annihilated and most of their leaders executed. The archives of Estonian Communist organisations were transferred to Estonia during 1946–1956 and became a part of the archival collections of the Party History Institute of the Central Committee of the *Estonian Communist Party*. Most of the Soviet archives were closed to the public and only trusted party historians had access to the files. After the fall of the Soviet Union these archives became the part of the Estonian National Archives<sup>64</sup> and are open to the public.

The series of the Military Department of the Bureau of the Central Committee of ECP in Russia<sup>65</sup> are an important source that includes the lists of participants, correspondence, directives of different authorities etc. A lot of information on the coup and its participants can be found in the investigation and court files. Survived participants were sentenced by the Military Circuit Court (*Sõjaringkonnakohus*), a special court for crimes committed by military personnel as well as crimes against the state.<sup>66</sup> The interrogation minutes and court proceedings in the cases of many participants of the coup are preserved there.

A parallel is the interrogation files of people, arrested for political reasons by the Soviet state security authorities beginning with summer 1940 in the then newly occupied Estonia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union a large part of these files remained in Estonia. One of the first target groups of the Soviet political arrests were the officers of Estonian Political Police (the name of the internal security service in Estonia during 1925–1940), military officers as well as former or present members of the workers' movement or the underground Communist party. The latter were suspected of cooperation with the Estonian Political Police.<sup>67</sup> Survived participants of the coup of December 1924, but particularly the military and policemen, who participated in the suppression of it, were interrogated. Most of the latter were executed.

The investigation and sentences of the Estonian Military Circuit Court of the

participants of the coup were carried through when the State of War was applied in Estonia. Until March 1934 Estonia was a democratic parliamentary state governed by the rule of law. The court system had continued to be more or less independent after the introduction of authoritarian regime. That, however, was not the case in the Soviet Union and during the first Soviet occupation period of 1940–1941. This must be taken into account when using the files of the Soviet investigations.

Interrogation minutes and court statements are always likely to be influenced by the accused person's attempt to present actions and circumstances in a form favourable to him or her. However, in the special case of the Soviet State Security material one has to keep in mind that the investigators were more interested in the disclosure of alleged conspirative networks than in the personal guilt of a given person. For the Soviet State Security officers guilt was proven with the arrest. The very high number of arrests in 1924 and again in 1940–1941, when hundreds of accused were interrogated, some very many times, combines with other evidence collected by the investigators to produce a very clear and convincing general picture. This even if a large part of the material of the Estonian Political Police and military intelligence was destroyed by the policemen and military officers themselves after the Soviet military bases were located to Estonia from October 1939. However, some files were preserved in Estonian National Archives.<sup>68</sup>

There was a close cooperation between the Estonian secret police and its partner service in Finland (State Police, *Valtiollinen Poliisi, Valpo*) particularly in the fight against underground Communist movements and Comintern agents. They exchanged reports and other documents and part of the reports of the Estonian secret police (at the beginning of the 1920s they were written in Russian, later in German) have survived in the National Archives of Finland.<sup>69</sup>

The number of Estonian newspapers in Estonia in the 1920s was significant. Larger political parties had their own newspapers, six issues in a week, and most of them are digitalized today.<sup>70</sup> These dailies, from right to the left, were: *Kaja* (Põllumeestekogud, *The Rural Party*), *Postimees* (Rahvaerakond, *The People's Party*), *Vaba Maa* (Tööerakond, *The Labour Party*), and *Rahva Sõna* (*The Socialist Workers' Party*). *Päewaleht* was an independent, but politically rather right-wing daily. In Leningrad the newspaper of the Estonian Communists *Edasi* (Onward) was published during 1917–1937 and it too has been digitalized together with the monthly *Klassivõitlus* (Class Struggle). The Russian language newspaper *Сегодня* (Today), published in Riga, has been digitalized by the Latvian National Library.<sup>71</sup> In Estonia the Communist irregular underground newspaper *Kommunist* was printed in five issues in 1924.<sup>72</sup>

The importance of the coup and its suppression was acknowledged by the Estonian authorities at once. In December 1924 Colonel Juhan Tõrvand, the chief of General Staff of the Estonian Army, wrote to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and proposed the publication of a book in “*French, English, German and maybe also in Russian*” on the events of 1 December 1924, because “*they are pre-*



senting a good opportunity to make positive propaganda for Estonia abroad".<sup>73</sup> In 1925 a report under the pseudonym J. Saar<sup>74</sup> was published and translated into French.<sup>75</sup> The English, German and Russian versions were never written. The book was reprinted in 1982–1983 in Toronto by Estonian exile newspaper *Vaba Eestlane* and once again after the re-establishment of Estonian independence.<sup>76</sup>

The first account, analyzing the military part of the coup, was published three weeks after the coup by Lieutenant Colonel August Traksmann (later Traksmaa, Major General, 1893–1942, executed by the Soviets) in the weekly of the Ministry of War *Sõdur* (Soldier).<sup>77</sup> An illustrated booklet with speeches, obituaries of the people killed during the coup and a short overview was published in 1924, too.<sup>78</sup> Estonian Communists reported the event beginning from 3 December 1924 in their newspaper *Edasi* in Leningrad. A comprehensive analysis of events and the reasons for failure was written by Jaan Anvelt and published few months after the coup in the Estonian Communist monthly *Klassivõitlus* in Leningrad.<sup>79</sup>

In 1932 Lieutenant Colonel Karl Laurits (1892–1941, executed by the Soviets), the head of 2nd Department of the Main Headquarters of the Estonian Armed Forces then, published a study on the coup of 1 December 1924 in the weekly *Sõdur*.<sup>80</sup> The reason to publish the article was not the current political situation in many countries in Europe, including Estonia, where the paramilitaries of the right radicals and the left radicals fought each other in the streets. The study was simply a reaction to the publication of a book under the pseudonym A. Neuberg with theoretical considerations on armed insurrection that had dedicated a chapter to the December coup in Tallinn eight years earlier.<sup>81</sup>

The coup became important again in 1940 after Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union. Ideologically the coup was proclaimed to be a milestone on the path of Estonian working people towards socialism and a Communist society. Most of the participants who had received prison sentences in Estonia were still alive, as were policemen and military personnel who participated in actions against the coup. The latter were arrested soon by the NKVD and mostly executed.

The situation of participants was more ambivalent. Anvelt and other leaders of the coup, who had escaped to the Soviet Union, had been executed during Stalin purges a few years earlier. Most of the Estonian Communists who were sent to prison in 1924–1925 had been released from Estonian prisons in May 1938 at the Amnesty in connection with the election of Konstantin Päts as President of the Republic. They were mistrusted by the Soviet authorities and some of them were later accused of Trotskyism. A third category were those who had cooperated (supposedly or actually) with the Estonian political police and therefore been released earlier. They were arrested at once and were among the first of those executed by the decision of the war tribunal of the NKVD Baltic district from the end of the year 1940.

In 1960 August-Voldemar Sunila (1918–2008) defended his history master thesis (actually the Soviet candidate degrees were recognised as PhD since the beginning of 1990s in Estonia) on the 1 December Coup and it was published as

a monograph in 1961.<sup>82</sup> The work of Sunila was the main source of all following publications on the coup in Estonia until the end of the Soviet Era in Estonia. In 1974 followed the publication of a collection of relevant documents.<sup>83</sup>

Some historians abroad were also interested, and historical overviews were published in connection with anniversaries of the coup. In 1974 an article by Oskar Angelus was printed in a Baltic-German yearbook.<sup>84</sup> Angelus (1892–1979) had been a high-level official of the Estonian Ministry of Internal Affairs during the period 1921–1940. During the German occupation 1941–1944 he served as the Director for Internal Affairs of the Estonian Self-Administration. Ten years later a booklet in German was published by Woldemar Erik Thomson (1915–1990), a Baltic German author and research fellow of Ost-Akademie in Lüneburg.<sup>85</sup> In the same year a comprehensive study with an excellent overview of literature on the topic was published by Hain Rebas (born 1943).<sup>86</sup> A book by Finnish historian Osmo Jussila about the Finnish 1939–1940 puppet Government in Terijoki, lead by Otto-Ville Kuusinen, is also relevant. In the book Jussila analyses the similarities and differences of various Soviet-initiated coups, from 1918 in former parts of Tsarist Russia to 1979 in Afghanistan.<sup>87</sup>

Some newer books should also be mentioned. In 2010 Olaf Kuuli (1929–2012), former research fellow at the Party History Institute at the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party published a book on the internal clashes of Estonian Communists during 1919–1938.<sup>88</sup> Jaak Valge (born 1955), who is researching the contacts of the Estonian leftist intellectuals with the Communists and the Soviet Union during the interwar period, published the first part of his study in 2014.<sup>89</sup> The younger historians Reigo Rosenthal and Marko Tamming (both born in 1981) have published two voluminous books on the history of Estonian Security Police/Estonian Political Police.<sup>90</sup>

The numerous memoirs on the coup are drawing in information from contemporary newspapers, adding some personal emotions to the well-known historical facts. The diaries of contemporaries are of more value, for example the diary of Eduard Laaman from 1922–1940 and of Elmar Kirotar (1899–1985), who served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1919–1940.<sup>91</sup> Two men who had been arrested by the Estonian Political Police published their memoirs during the 1930s: Edgar Sein (1908–1941, executed by the Soviets), participated as a schoolboy in the coup and was sentenced to three years in prison. His memoirs came out as a feuilleton in *Rahvaleht* (People's Paper, a tabloid) in 1937.<sup>92</sup> Voldemar Teppich-Kasemets (1899–1941, executed by the Soviets), was sentenced in 1921 for Communist activities to six years of forced labour, but was exchanged to Soviet Russia. He was sent back to Estonia to the underground work in 1931, was arrested in 1932 and sentenced to 12 years forced labour. He was disappointed in the Communist movement, was pardoned in 1933 and published his memoirs in the daily *Päewaleht* the same year.<sup>93</sup>

## Noter

- 1 Surma hinda küsi surnutelt (Ask the Dead for the Price of Death) (1977), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0174538/>, 23.01.2017.
- 2 *Kas nad lahkusid Moskva rongiga? 1. detsember 1924, artikleid ja dokumente (Did they leave with the train to Moscow? December 1st, 1924, articles and documents)*, compiled by Ant, Jüri (Koolibri, Tallinn 1996).
- 3 See *Detsembrikuumus* (2008), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1198339/>, 23.01.2017.
- 4 Mäss: detsembrimäss/aprillimäss (Riot: December Riot/April Riot), compiled by Tiit Pruuli (Eriüksus, Tallinn 2008).
- 5 See Hiio, Toomas, "Tallinn and Tatarbunary: attempted invasions 90 years ago," Baltic Scholars for Ukraine, <https://balticscholars.stanford.edu/?p=1115>, 23.01.2017.
- 6 According to a paper of Estonian communists from 1925, compiled as a part of an account of the coup of 1st December 1924 for Comintern, before and during the Great War there were 16,000 workers in two shipyards and 3000 workers in the railway carriage plant "Dvigatel" in Tallinn and 20,000 workers in textile manufacture in Narva. The estimated figure of workers and unemployed was about 75,000 plus 61,000 farmhands in the country. See "Der bewaffnete Aufstand in Esthland und seine Voraussetzungen" (1925), Estonian National Archives (RA), ERAF.6495.1.149, 3.
- 7 Peter the Great Sea Fortress was planned to protect the Russian capital St. Petersburg and was a sort of reaction to the naval race between Germany and Great Britain. It included fortresses and coastal artillery batteries on both coasts of the Gulf of Finland, on West Estonian islands and even on Åland Islands.
- 8 See Leidinger, Hannes & Verena Moritz, *Gefangenschaft, Revolution, Heimkehr. Die Bedeutung der Kriegsgefangenenproblematik für die Geschichte des Kommunismus im Mittel- und Osteuropa 1917–1920* (Böhlau, Wien, Köln, Weimar, 2003), pp. 453 ff.
- 9 During 1918–1919 the Soviet Supreme Commander was a Latvian, Jukums Vācietis; the chief of staff of Estonian red units was an Estonian August Kork. In June 1919 he was promoted to deputy commanding officer of the Red Army 7th Army.
- 10 How complicated the personal relationships inside of the tiny Estonian elites were at this time, shows the story of the first big political scandal of the young republic. The minister of the interior from May to July 1919, a social democrat Aleksander Oinas (1887–1942, died in a Gulag camp) had studied in the Polytechnic Institute of St. Petersburg at the time when the future leaders of the Estonian Bolsheviks, Viktor Kingissepp and Jaan Anvelt, were students of St. Petersburg University. They all belonged to the Estonian student society in St. Petersburg. Oinas married Alma Ostra, who had earlier been formally married to Anvelt (for obtaining the permission for travelling abroad). In April 1919, being the State Auditor, Oinas secretly met Viktor Kingissepp, living illegally in Tallinn. Kingissepp offered to negotiate a peace with Soviet Russia and asked for permission to cross the frontline. But soon Kingissepp made the meeting public in an underground communist paper. Aleksander Oinas resigned from his post, and the political opponents of the social democrats even demanded that Oinas should be sentenced by a military court for state treason.
- 11 Rosenthal, Reigo, "Kes andis käsu "Irboska veretöoks"?" (Who ordered the "bloodshed in Irboska"?), *Tuna* 2 (2008): pp. 73–78.
- 12 Rosenthal, Tamming, *Sõda pärast rahu*, p. 465.
- 13 The former cases were the "Trial of 35" on 30 June 1920, with two death sentences (Georg Kreuks and Vladimir Bogdanov, but in 1921 were exchanged to Soviet Russia), 11 men and women were sentenced to forced labour from four years to lifetime, 22 individuals acquitted. The "Trial of 50" took place on 24 September 1921 in Tartu: 28 men and women were sentenced to forced labour from 4 to 20 years, 10 to imprisonment from one to four years, and 12 persons were acquitted. The "Trial of 115" followed 19–27 May 1922: 19 men and women were sentenced to forced labour from four to ten years, 32 to imprisonment from six months to three years, and 53 were acquitted. The "Trial of (12) young communists" was held from 21–23 February

- 1924, three men and one woman were sentenced to imprisonment from five to eight years, others were acquitted.
- The “*Trial of 78*” was held on 20–22 July in Tartu. Hans Heidemann was sentenced to death and executed, 43 men and women were sentenced to forced labour from four years to lifetime, 22 to imprisonment from two to four years. Five persons were acquitted. See Rosenthal, Tamming, *Sõda pärast rahu*, 488–644; *Päewaleht* 25 September 1921, 5; *Päewaleht*, 24 February 1924, 3; *Päewaleht* 23 July 1925, 1.
- 14 Rosenthal, Tamming, *Sõda pärast rahu*, pp. 576–577.
  - 15 J. Saar, *1. detsember 1924 Tallinnas* (1992), pp. 24–25.
  - 16 See Abstracts and resolutions of 4th Congress of the Comintern, RA, ERAF.24.1.196.
  - 17 “Kommunističeskoe dviženie i bor’ba s nim v Èstii (Communist movement and struggle against it in Estonia),” a report by the head of political department of Police Main Directorate of Estonia to the Head of Central Detective Police of Finland, September 1924, *Kansallisarkisto* (KA) EK-Valpo XXXVIII B.1.a.
  - 18 Valge, *Punased I*, pp. 190–197.
  - 19 “Kommunističeskoe dviženie”.
  - 20 Rosenthal, Tamming, *Sõda pärast rahu*, p. 609.
  - 21 See Valge, Jaak, *Lahtirakendamine: Eesti Vabariigi majanduse stabiliseerimine 1918–1924* (Economic Separation: Stabilizing the Estonian Economy 1918–1924) (Rahvusarhiiv, Tallinn 2003), pp. 145–316.
  - 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 633–634, 637.
  - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 641; *Päewaleht*, 27 November 1924, 1; *Päewaleht*, 28 November 1924, 3.
  - 24 The list of released see “Algas amnesteeritute vabastamine vanglast (The release of prisoners according to Amnesty began),” *Päewaleht*, 7 May 1938, 2.
  - 25 *Lühiiülevaade Eestimaa Kommunistliku Partei ajaloost* (A short overview of history of the Estonian Communist Party), compiled and edited by A. Panksejev, A. Liebman a.o. (Eesti Raamat, Tallinn 1983), p. 65.
  - 26 Laurits, Karl, “1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest (On the events of December 1st, 1924),” *Sõdur* 50 (1932): 1281; Jussila, *Terijoen hallitus*, 105–111; Ant, Jüri, “Enamlik maailmarevolutsioon ummikus (Bolshevist world revolution at a dead end),” – *Kas nad lahkusid Moskva rongiga*, 10–21; Rebas, Hain, “Probleme des kommunistischen Putschversuches in Tallinn am 1. Dezember 1924,” – *Annales Societatis Litterarum Estonicae in Svecia IX*, 1980–1985, Stockholm, 1985 (Kompendietryckeriet, Stockholm 1986), p. 180 a.o.
  - 27 See Rebas, pp. 179–183.
  - 28 Letter of the ECP CC to the RC(B)P CC, 12 August 1924, RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, pp. 1–2.
  - 29 See statute: *Položenija ob organizacii voennogo otdela pri Èstsekcii Kominternu*, 16 September 1924, RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 4–6.
  - 30 *Rabota v Leningrade* (undated), RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 51.
  - 31 *Trebovatel’naja vedomost’ na oružie i boevye pripasy i snarjaženie*, 13 November 1924.
  - 32 See *Spravka* (undated), RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 62–62v.
  - 33 *Spisok No. 2, Mobilizovannye* 29.11.24, 59 names, RA, ERAF.24.1.277, 59; *Lääne Tööraha Kommunistlik Ülikool* (list with 40 names), RA, ERAF.24.1.275, 3.
  - 34 See Allkiri (signature) of Eduard Ambos and many others in RA, ERAF.24.1.278.
  - 35 List of employees of the Soviet representations in Tallinn, RA, ERAF.24.1.279, 2–3.
  - 36 Laurits, “1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest,” *Sõdur* 50 (1932): 1283.
  - 37 *Protokol zasedanija Èstonskoj Kommissii*, 3 September 1924, RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 133.
  - 38 Ant, “Enamlik maailmarevolutsioon ummikus,” 12.
  - 39 *Protokol zasedanija Èstonskoj Kommissii*, 3 September 1924. It was somewhat confusing in the minutes. Another possibility is that they discussed putting pressure on the Estonian government by decreasing the amount of the Soviet transit through the Estonian ports (like it has been done during the latest ten years by The Russian Federation after the move of the Tallinn soldier’s monument from the city centre).
  - 40 Otto Rästas, one of the leaders of the coup, see above.

- 41 In the document *70 пулеметов Томсона*, but surely the Thompson submachine guns were in mind.
- 42 Protokol zasedanija Ëstonskoj Kommissii, 24 September 1924, RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 135.
- 43 Protokol zasedanija Ëstonskoj Kommissii, 10 November 1924, RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 92.
- 44 Tov. Manuil'skomu, [2 October 1924], RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 99–100.
- 45 RA, ERAF.24.1.272a, 141–143.
- 46 Pseudonyms; according to the document Piiritagune sõjaline juhtiv kaader, 28.11.1924, RA ERAF.24.1.275, 1, Käbi was with general staff training. Moor was Rudolf Vakmann (1894–1937, executed during Stalin Purges), one of the leaders of Estonian Communists in the Soviet Union. His brothers Richard and Erich were court-martialled for participation at the December coup.
- 47 Tiibus to Moor and Käbi, [24.11.1924], RA, ERAF.24.1.298, 196.
- 48 Laurits, “1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest”: 1283. An Estonian chapter of Neuberg’s book or source material for it was in the achive of the Bureau of the Central Committee of ECP in Russia among the materials on the coup of December 1st: Glava III. Vosstanie v Revele, RA ERAF.24.1.292.
- 49 Glava III. Vosstanie v Revele, 4.
- 50 Laurits, “1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest”: 1284.
- 51 Glava III. Vosstanie v Revele, 4–5.
- 52 Laurits, “1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest”: 1283; Glava III. Vosstanie v Revele, 6–7.
- 53 Laurits, “1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest”, *Sõdur* 51/52 (1932): 1324–1328. Rosenthal, Tamming, *Sõda pärast sõda*, 693–712. Schaurup (later Saarup), Klemmer (later Kivinurme) and Teer were arrested by the Soviets in 1940 and executed in 1941. *Ibid.*, 703.
- 54 Finnish National Archives SKA EK-Valpo XXXVII B.1.a, Muistinpanoja perjantaina 13. XI 25 pidetyistä esityksistä kommunistisen liikkeen kehityksestä ja nykyisestä tilasta Suomessa, Virossa ja Latviassa (Notes about the presentations on the development and contemporary situation of communist movements in Finland, Estonia and Latvia, held on Friday 13 November 1925), p. 5.
- 55 The overview of the events has been published many times since the book of Saar, J. (1925) and Neuberg, A. (1928) with more or fewer details. Here the chapter by Hiio, Toomas, “1924. aasta 1. detsembri mässukatse Eestis koos eel- ja järellooga (Coup attempt of 1st December 1924 in Estonia with prequel and epilogue),” *Mäss: detsembrimäss/aprillimäss (Riot: December Riot/April Riot)*, compiled by Tiit Pruuli (Eriüksus, Tallinn 2008), pp. 45–76, has been used.
- 56 Muistinpanoja perjantaina 13. XI 25 pidetyistä esityksistä, pp. 1–9.
- 57 Preceding data are mostly taken from the overview of the meeting, compiled by a Finnish police officer. Naturally he did not take down in shorthand the situation in Finland.
- 58 See War Victims in Finland 1914–1922, The registry of names of the war dead between 1914–1922, <http://vesta.narc.fi/cgi-bin/db2www/sotasurmaetusivu/main?lang=en>, 15 March 2017.
- 59 “SSTP:n eduskuntaryhman pidatys 1923 (The Arrest of Members of the FSWP Faction in 1923),” <https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoeduskunnasta/kirjasto/aineistot/yhteiskunta/historia/kansanvallan-tulikoe/Sivut/SSTPn-eduskuntaryhmanapidatys-1923.aspx> (the website of the Finnish Parliament, 15 March 2017).
- 60 The name of Sommerling has been very familiar to the author of this article. The village near Tallinn where I am living was in the Soviet time joined to the sovhoz named after Arnold Sommerling. For older generations forgetting the toponym Sommerlingi took 10–20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this context the recent Ukrainian acts of returning to the old pre-Soviet names of many towns and villages are fully understood by me.
- 61 See 1. detsembri ülestõusust osavõtjate konverentsi aruanne ja osavõtjate nimestikud (Report and participants’ lists of the conference of the participants of the 1st December uprising), 1925, RA, ERAF.24.1.288.
- 62 See the list of persons, executed in Estonia in 1940–1941: “Individuals sentenced to death and executed in Estonia in 1940–1941 by different War Tribunals,” Meelis Maripuu, Argo Kuusik, “Political arrests and court cases from August 1940 to September 1941” – *Estonia 1940–1945: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, Hiio, Toomas, Meelis Maripuu & Indrek Paavle (ed.) (Inimsusvastaste Kuritegude Uurimi-

- se Eesti Sihtasutus, Tallinn 2006), pp. 332–360, available in Internet: <http://www.mnemosyne.ee/hc.ee/pdf/appendixes/332-360.pdf> (accessed 15 March 2017).
- 63 Gerasimov, Valery (Валерий Герасимов), “Cennost’ nauki v predvidenii (Ценность науки в предвидении),” *Военно-промышленный курьер ВПК (Военно-промышленный курьер, ВПК)* 8 (476), (27 February - 5 March 2013): 2 ([http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK\\_08\\_476.pdf](http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK_08_476.pdf)).
  - 64 Estonian National Archives (Rahvusarhiiv, RA): RA, ERAF.24 EKP Keskkomitee Venemaa Büroo (Bureau of the Central Committee of ECP in Russia), RA, ERAF.6495 Kominterni Eesti seksioon Moskvast, (Estonian section of the Comintern in Moscow), ERAF.25 Kominterni Eesti seksioon Leningradis (Estonian section of the Comintern in Leningrad), RA, ERAF.7491 Eestimaa Kommunistliku Noorsooühingu Keskkomitee (Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Youth Organisation), RA, ERAF.40 VK(b)P Keskkomitee Eesti Seksiooni Siberi Büroo (Estonian Bureau of Russian Communist (Bolshevist) Party in Siberia) and others. The archives RA, ERAF.24, ERAF.25 and ERAF.6495 are digitalized and available through Archival Information System (AIS), see [http://ais.ra.ee/static/misonais\\_en.html](http://ais.ra.ee/static/misonais_en.html) (accessed 17 January 2017).
  - 65 RA, ERAF.24.1, files no. 272–318 and others.
  - 66 Archive RA, ERA.927, Sõjaväe Kõrgem Kohus (Higher Military Court, the last name of the institution since 1938).
  - 67 Archive RA, ERAF 129SM, ENSV Riikliku Julgeoleku Komitee lõpetamata uurimistoimikute kollektsioon (Collection of unfinished investigation files of the Estonian SSR KGB) and RA, ERAF 130SM, ENSV Riikliku Julgeoleku Komitee lõpetatud uurimistoimikute kollektsioon (Collection of finished investigation files of the Estonian SSR KGB).
  - 68 See for example archive RA, ERA.949, Poliitilise politsei komissar Tallinnas (Commissioner of the Political Police in Tallinn) and the archives of the respective institutions in Narva, Petseri, Pärnu, Tapa, Tartu, Viljandi and Võru.
  - 69 Kansallisarkisto (KA), EK-Valpo XXXVII B.1.a and XXXVIII B.1.a.
  - 70 See Digar, Eesti artiklid, <http://dea.digar.ee/cgi-bin/dea>.
  - 71 See <http://www.periodika.lv/>.
  - 72 See [http://www.ester.ee/record=b1320484\\*est](http://www.ester.ee/record=b1320484*est) (accessed 26 January 2017).
  - 73 Tõrvand, J., chief of General Staff to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, December 1924, RA, ERA 957.1.109, pp. 7–8.
  - 74 The pseudonym J. Saar was used by journalist and politician Eduard Laaman (1888–1941, executed by the Soviets) or diplomat Aleksander Pallo (1890–1958, died in Stockholm). Or both: Laaman was head of the information department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during 1920–1923 and after that editor-in-chief of daily Vaba Maa (see above). Pallo was deputy head of the information department since 1924. Both were born in Estonian settlements in Crimea and Pallo was married to the sister of Laaman (*Eesti välisteestus. Biograafiline leksikon 1918–1991 (Estonian foreign service biographic lexicon, 1918–1991)*, compiled by Triin Mulla, Peep Pillak, Jüri Trei, Heini Vilbiki (Välisministeerium, Tallinn 1996), pp. 67, 87–88, [http://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/web-static/301/valisteestus\\_leksikon.pdf](http://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/web-static/301/valisteestus_leksikon.pdf) (accessed on 23 January 2017). Professor Hain Rebas wrote 30 years ago (Rebas, “Probleme des kommunistischen Putschversuches in Tallinn am 1. Dezember 1924,” 190): Wer sich hinter dem Pseudonym verbirgt, ist noch unklar. Einerseits, von V. Kures in Stockholm, wird behauptet, dass er wohlbekannte Publizist E. Laaman war. Andererseits wird von A. Sunila 1964 S. 5 angenommen, dass es ein Beamter des Aussenministeriums, A. Pallo, war.
  - 75 Saar, J., *Enamlaste riigipöörde katse Tallinnas 1. detsembril 1924. Osavõtjate tunnistuste ja uurimise andmete järel* (A coup attempt of the Bolsheviks in Tallinn on 1 December 1924 according to the data of the testimonies of participants and investigation) (Tallinn: Valvur, 1925); J. Saar, *Le 1-er décembre 1924 : Léchec du coup d'état téné par les communistes à Tallinn (Esthonie) le 1-er décembre 1924* (Walwur, Tallinn 1925).
  - 76 Saar, J., *Tallinnas 1. detsember 1924: enamlaste riigipöördekatse* (Toronto: Vaba Eestlane, 1982–1983); J. Saar, *Enamlaste riigipöörde katse Tallinnas 1. detsembril 1924. Osavõtjate tunnistuste ja uurimise andmete järel* (Tallinn: Monokkel, 1992).

- 77 A. T-n, "Ülevaade 1. detsembri sündmustest Tallinnas (Events on the December 1st in Tallinn, an overview)," *Sõdur* 51/52 (1924), pp. 11–25.
- 78 *1. detsembri sündmused Tallinnas, 1924*, Josua A. (ed.) (B. Beilinson, Tallinn 1925).
- 79 Anvelt, Jaan, "Miks meie kaotasime (Why we were defeated?)," *Klassivõitlus (Class struggle)* 52 (1925): 3–10. NB! Article was signed by Anvelt "in Tallinn, March 3rd, 1925". The issue no. 52 came out on 15 March.
- 80 Laurits, Karl, "1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmustest (On the events of December 1st, 1924)," *Sõdur* 50 (1932): 1281–1284 and *Sõdur* 51/52 (1932): 1324–1328.
- 81 Neuberg, A., *Der bewaffnete Aufstand. Versuch einer theoretischen Darstellung* (Otto Meyer, Zürich 1928); A. Ю. Нейберг, Вооружённое восстание (М.-Л.: Соцэкиз, 1931). Laurits mentions the Russian translation as one of his sources. Laurits, "1924. a. 1. detsembri sündmused," *Sõdur* 50 (1932): 1282. The book was compiled by later Marshal of the Soviet Union Vasilij Blücher, German communists Erich Wollenberg and Hans Kippenberger, members of the leadership of Comintern Josif Pjatnicki, Manfred Stern and Palmiro Togliatti, later president of communist Vietnam Ho Chi Minh and Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Mixail Tuxačevskij and Deputy People's Commissar of the Navy Josif Unschlicht.
- 82 Sunila, August, *Eesti proletariaadi relvastatud ülestõus 1. detsembril 1924 (Armed uprising of the Estonian proletariat on 1 December 1924)* (Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, Tallinn 1961).
- 83 *Eesti proletariaadi relvastatud ülestõus 1. detsembril 1924, dokumente ja materjale*, edited by August Sunila, compiled by K. Alas, V. Grünberg and L. Uuet (Eesti Raamat, Tallinn 1974).
- 84 Angelus, Oskar, "Der Putsch vom 1. Dezember 1924 in Reval," *Jahrbuch des baltischen Deutschtums* 22/1974 (1975), pp. 93–98.
- 85 Thomson, Erik, *Die Kommunisten probten den Aufstand : der misslungene Putsch vom 1. Dezember 1924 in Reval/Tallinn* (Lüneburg 1985).
- 86 Rebas, Hain, "Probleme des kommunistischen Putschversuches in Tallinn am 1. Dezember 1924," – *Annales Societatis Litterarum Estonicae in Svecia* IX, 1980–1985, Stockholm, 1985 (Stockholm: Kompendietryckeriet, 1986), pp. 161–200. Hain Rebas is an Estonian historian, living in Sweden. He has taught at the University of Göteborg and was from 1980–2008 the ordinary Professor of the History of the Nordic Countries at the University of Kiel, Germany. During 1992–1993 he served as the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Estonia.
- 87 Jussila, Osmo, *Terijoen hallitus 1939–40 (Terijoki Government)* (WSOY, Porvoo-Helsinki-Juva 1985).
- 88 Kuuli, Olaf, *Fontanka ja Moika vahel : Eesti kommunistide sisetülidest aastail 1919–1938* (Between Fontanka and Moika: on internal conflicts of Estonian communists in 1919–1938) (O. Kuuli, Tallinn 2010).
- 89 Valge, Jaak, *Punased I* (The Reds, vol. 1) (Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Demograafia Instituut, Rahvusarhiiv, Tallinn 2014).
- 90 Rosenthal, Reigo & Marko Tamming, *Sõda pärast rahu: Eesti eriteenistuste vastasseis Nõukogude luure ja põrandaaluste kommunistidega 1920–1924* (War after the peace: the confrontation of Estonian special services with Soviet intelligence and underground communists in 1920–1924) (SE & JS, Tallinn 2010); Rosenthal, Reigo & Marko Tamming, *Sõda enne sõda: Nõukogude eriteenistuste tegevusest Eestis kuni 1940. aastani* (War before the war: on the activities of the Soviet special services in Estonia up to 1940) (SE & JS, Tallinn 2013).
- 91 The diaries survived in private possessions of relatives and are published now as feuillets in Estonian cultural journal *Akadeemia* (Academy): Laaman, Eduard, "Meie vastus: päevik 1922–1940 (Our answer: diary 1922–1940)," *Akadeemia*, vol. 7–12 (2003) and 1–10 (2004); Kirotar, Elmar, "Mis saab edasi: päevik 1931–1940 (What is coming in the future, diary 1931–1940)," *Akadeemia*, vol. 9–12 (2007) and vol. 1–8 (2008).
- 92 "Ma tõstsin käe isamaa vastu, (*I rised my hand against Fatherland*)," *Rahvaleht*, from 17 November 1937 to 10 December 1937.
- 93 See reprint as a feuilleton: Teppich-Kasemets, Voldemar, "Põrandaaluse juhi paljastusi (Exposes of an underground leader)," *Akadeemia*, vol. 9–12 (2001) and vol. 1–3 (2002).