

Latvian Soldier's Story:
Roberts Dāvids Timermanis
(1909–1945)

Ēriks Jēkabsons, Reinis Ratnieks

LATVIAN SOLDIER'S STORY:

**Roberts Dāvids Timermanis
(1909–1945)**

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The photographs displayed in the book are from Eigis Dāvis Timermanis' private archive.

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Reinis Ratnieks, 2020

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Foreword

Eigits Dāvis Timermanis commenced his collaboration with the University of Latvia Foundation in 2009 by extending his support to foundation's scholarship *Ceļamaize* ("Bread for the Journey") and book donations to the University of Latvia.

2011 was the year of the initial talks regarding Timermanis' wish to support the most diligent and purposeful University of Latvia students of doctoral study programmes. In a meeting at the office of the then Rector, Professor M. Auziņš, it was agreed that the support will be targeted specifically at the students of social sciences engaged in practical research.

Consequently, at the end of 2012, the University of Latvia Foundation received a donation from Eigits Dāvis Timermanis in the form of three real estate properties, the revenues yielded by which should be used to support excellent students performing research significant for the national economy.

To date, Timermanis' scholarships have been granted to three doctoral students from the Faculty of Business, Management and Economics: Ieva Pūķe, Madara Apsalone and Kristīne Petrovska. Ieva Pūķe received support for a research project on the factors affecting marketing process in young exporting companies. Madara Apsalone accomplished a research work "The Role of Socio-Cultural Factors in

Promotion of Knowledge Management and Organizational Innovations as the Source of Long-Term Competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises in Latvia”, whereas Kristīne Petrovska presented the assessment of systemic risks in the banking business using as an example Latvia as a small and open economy.

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis, the father of Eigīts Dāvis Timermanis, was an alumnus of the University of Latvia. In 1932, R. D. Timermanis entered the University of Latvia Faculty of Economy and Legal Sciences, the Department of Economy, and graduated in 1937.

In 2018, at the request of the University of Latvia Foundation, Eigīts Dāvis Timermanis gave 3500 euros for establishment of the Alumni Trail in the University of Latvia Botanical Garden. This donation is dedicated to the memory of his father as the alumnus of the University of Latvia.

Thanks to the support rendered by Eigīts Dāvis Timermanis, two historians — Professor Ēriks Jēkabsons and *Mg. hist.* Reinis Ratnieks — have collected archive materials and other sources that have resulted in a book about Captain Roberts Dāvids Timermanis. This volume contains a consuming material for those who are interested in Latvia's military history of the first half of the 20th century and the history of national resistance.

The University of Latvia Foundation hereby expresses its gratitude to Eigīts Dāvis Timermanis for his support rendered to the leading University of Latvia researchers and projects.

Laila Kundziņa, Executive Director of the University
of Latvia Foundation, Member of the Board

CHAPTER 1

Latvian soldier

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis

Introduction

This book is dedicated to a Latvian and a soldier Roberts Dāvids Timermanis — one of many patriots of this country, who in the middle of the 20th century was forcibly drawn into the tragic events sweeping over the state and people of Latvia. He was destined to live at the time when the young people of Latvia who had chosen the military career experienced the birth of the Latvian state on the ruins of the Russian empire, its progress as a sturdy and vibrant European country and its destruction followed by total annihilation of the people's achievements of two decades, their hopes and aspirations. Moreover — a substantial part of the national elite was ruthlessly physically exterminated and the Nazi occupation regime forced the Latvian soldiers to take up arms and fight against the Soviet Union, hoping that at the end of the war, like in 1919, the situation would be favorable for restoring the independence of Latvia, if the weapons were held by the Latvians. All those events were also experienced by Roberts Timermanis. Besides, at the end of the war, he was

among those who continued to fight against the occupants underground and perished in this clash of unequal forces.

Due to the abovementioned circumstances, the life of Roberts Dāvids Timermanis provides us with an opportunity to examine one of the most complicated periods in the 20th century history of Latvia, starting from the years of its independence until its second occupation by the Soviets after World War I. This exploration has been performed by consecutively following up Roberts Dāvids Timermanis' childhood, youth, choice of profession, service as an officer in the Latvian Army, studies at the military college and further service in army, experience in the years of occupation, the Latvian legion and post-war partisan life in the Latvian forests, tragically cut short by an occupant's bullet. Along with the close contemplation of R. D. Timermanis' life and activities, the authors briefly characterize the general military, political and social situation at that time.

Family, childhood and youth

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis' family stems from the Latvian farmers' stock of Zemgale. His father Dāvis (in official documents — Dāvids) was born on 28 April 1863 in Dobeles district, Vircava civil parish, in the family of Timermaņi — farmer Dāvis and his wife Libe. He was christened in May and his god-fathers were Dāvis Mikluns, Indriķis Brēdiķis and Ansis Rutke.¹

¹ The State Historical Archives of Latvia of the National Archives of Latvia (hereinafter — LNA-LVVA), 5213. f., 2. apr., 909. l., b. p. (extract from Vircava civil parish register of births).

The time of Dāvis Timermanis' birth, childhood and youth — the 1880s — was characterized by several important historical processes and phenomena in the life of the Latvian people: the 1850s and 1860s saw the beginning of the national awakening and its rapid development until the 1880s, when the movement of New Latvians (*jaunlatvieši*) and its main trends in the intellectual circles grew more radical, not excluding leftist beliefs, such as Marxism, that had become popular among the young intellectuals. All that largely coincided with the general reforms carried out by the Russian government in the 1860s–1870s and with the specific reforms implemented in the Baltic provinces in the 1880s, aimed at their equalization with the rest of the Russian territories and ultimately at total Russification. In the rural areas of Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Zemgale, on the one hand, differentiation of the Latvian peasants was observed, when the more prosperous farmers gradually bought out their houses and farmland from the landlords, while the poor or disinherited either worked as farmhands or moved to the booming towns (including Jelgava and Bauska) to join the ranks of workers, servants, white-collar or public service staff, provided that funds were sufficient to obtain the necessary education. Moreover, peasants in the quest of farmland in large groups moved to inner Russia and established dozens of Latvian colonies in various provinces. In 1882–1883, the government conducted a revision in the Baltic provinces under the supervision of Nikolai Manasein, a senator of Finnish extraction, encouraging the hopes of Estonian and Latvian farmers for the improvement of their material and social status and reduction of the landlords' privileges.

Nevertheless, their numerous written complaints about the Baltic German gentry actually triggered commencement of Russification of the Baltic provinces. At the end of the 1880s, the police, local governments and legal system were reformed by annihilating the estate courts (*kārtu tiesas*) and introducing in the Baltic provinces the Russian system of magistrate's courts and regional courts (the civil parish courts remained intact, retaining a different subordination). Industrial production boomed in the big towns, whereas in the rural estates and the peasants' everyday lives alongside the social changes appeared industrially manufactured tools and even machines, fabrics, kerosene lamps and hand-lanterns, as well as sundry new food products. Both in towns and the countryside, apart from the traditional pubs as places of entertainment sprung up various societies and social organizations arranging public events and encouraging their members' self-education and achievement of their personal economic goals. The influence of the church gradually decreased and a vast amount of secular literature (both original and translated), as well as press was eagerly absorbed by households greatly expanding the readers' outlook and informing them of political, social, military, educational and cultural processes not only in Latvia, but also in Russia and worldwide.

After obtaining his basic education, Dāvids was sent to a four-year Katrīna's City School in Riga and upon graduation successfully passed the entrance examination of Moscow Military School No. 3. This gave him a certain privilege (*savvaļnieka tiesības*) in joining the military service voluntarily, compared to other soldiers, and the right of

accelerated entry into the military and younker schools. This was exactly what Dāvids intended to do. On 19 March 1883 (according to Julian calendar), he used his privilege of a volunteer to start military service in Uglica Infantry Regiment No. 63, stationed in Sokolka, Grodno province (currently Sokółka in Poland). Already in August of the same year, volunteer D. Timermanis was sent from his regiment to Wilno to sit for the entrance examination in Wilno Infantry Military School. He successfully passed the exams and commenced his studies in the military school to become an officer.² At that time, the number of Latvians among the Russian Army officers had drastically increased, as several dozens of Latvian youngsters joined their ranks every year. This opportunity was provided by the military reforms implemented in the 1870s, when so-called younker schools were established, to which the sons of farmers and petty townsfolk were admitted, provided that they had obtained basic education. The main motivating factor of the Latvian youngsters to obtain military education was the material status of their parents. In each individual case, there were some additional factors, too. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, the Latvians of Vidzeme, Kurzeme and Vitebsk (Latgale) provinces belonging to the peasant class were given the opportunity to become officers, and used it rather extensively. It was a relatively easily available quality education that low-income farmers could provide for their sons and a rather good social status in the conservative and

² Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA), f. 409, op. 2, d. 35029, l. 165–174 (The list of D. Timermanis military service positions).

somewhat archaic Russian society, because the younker schools, as opposed to civil gymnasiums and colleges, were tuition-free.

At the military school, D. Timermanis showed excellent results confirmed by his appointment as a commanding officer of younkens in August 1885. In August of the following year, Timermanis finished the military school with Grade I, giving him the right to a faster promotion to the officer's rank. In those times, many Latvians studied at Wilno younker school. In the previous year, several Latvians had entered the school and finished it together with D. Timermanis in 1886, and their relatively high results were reflected in the order of their entry in the total list of graduates. On the whole, 18 younkens finished school with Grade I and among them there were four of the six Latvians who graduated that year: Juris Ozoliņš (the 2nd place in the list of graduates, later — colonel, consul of Latvia in Valka), Dāvis Timermanis (number eight according to results), Andrejs Ruberts (the 11th, major-general of the Russian Army Service Corps, between the wars lived in Latvia), Oto Pasītis (the 16th, attained the post of the head of department in the staff of the central headquarters of the Russian Army, colonel). Among the graduates with Grade II, there were two Latvians — Ansis Štreimanis (attained colonel's rank in the Russian Army Service Corps) and Ansis Zeltiņš (regiment commander of the Latvian Riflemen in World War I and colonel in the Latvian Army).³ It is an interesting fact that

³ Compiled by historian Ē. Jēkabsons: the database of Latvians — officers of the Russian Army.

three of the Latvian graduates became high-ranking officers specifically in the Service Corps.

Having graduated from the military school, D. Timermanis was promoted to the rank of *podpraporschik* (sub-senior ensign) and returned to his infantry regiment No. 63 in Sokolka. As a Grade I graduate from the younker school, after the short period of two months, in October 1886, he was promoted to the officer's rank of *podporutchik* (sub-lieutenant) and transferred to Vladimir Infantry Regiment No. 61 stationed in Belostok, Poland, where the vacancy of a junior officer was available (the regiment was famous for its outstanding battle history since the Great Northern War in the 18th century, when the soldiers of the regiment had fought in Lucavsala near Riga).

D. Timermanis also occupied a position outside the military service — in January 1888, he was appointed the superintendent of the regimental hospital and held this position until January 1893, for five years in total (quite possibly, this fact had some influence on his subsequent choice of profession). In the meantime — in March 1891 — he was promoted to the rank of *porutchik* (lieutenant), and in March 1896 received a silver medal on Alexander's ribbon dedicated to the reign of Alexander III. At that time, Latvian officers stationed in remote garrisons outside Latvia could maintain a link with their native land only by post — in the form of letters and newspapers. Besides, in those years, there existed a tradition: the people who were far away from their country donated a certain sum of money in support of a charitable or national event. Officially it was called “a pay-off from the so-called New Year visits” or similarly. Among

such persons, the name of Dāvis Timermanis appears at the beginning of 1905, when he made a pay-off from the New Year visits as “a porutchik in Belostok”⁴.

The enterprising and gifted officer decided to receive higher military education and in 1899, he was the first Latvian who did not have an aristocratic or lower middle-class, but instead came from a peasant background and tried to enter the exceptionally prestigious Alexander Military Law Academy in St. Petersburg. For this purpose, on 10 June 1899, he was sent to the headquarters of Warsaw military district to sit for the initial round of examinations (at the beginning, all the candidates of military higher education establishments sat for the initial examinations at the headquarters of their military districts and the best candidates did it at the academy). However, the first attempt was not successful, and on 5 July he had to return to his regiment. The by-laws of the military academies stipulated that an officer was allowed to sit for an entrance examination three times in total, and D. Timermanis made his second attempt on the following year. From 14 June to 6 July 1900 he once more was sent on a leave to Warsaw to sit for an initial examination of the Military Law Academy. After a short period of preparation, on 8 August, Dāvids went to St. Petersburg to sit for an entrance examination at the Academy. The competition in the Academy was stiff and the attempt to enroll failed. On 15 September he returned to Belostok. A little consolation was his promotion to the rank of staff captain in October 1900 (for long service). Nevertheless, the hope to receive higher education was not

⁴ *Balss*, 5 January 1900.

forfeited, and in the spring of 1903, at the second attempt (the first attempt in April 1902 had failed), Dāvids succeeded in passing the initial so-called Service Corps (the later Service Corps Academy) course examinations at the Service Corps of Warsaw Military district. In August, he went to the same educational establishment in St. Petersburg and this time was successful — on 15 September, D. Timermanis was enrolled into the two-year course of the Service Corps as “a staff student”. In September of the following year, he was promoted to the senior class, and on 21 May 1905 he completed the course with Grade I and was appointed to the main office of the Service Corps of the Russian Army (in June — officially transferred thereto from Infantry Regiment No. 63), and temporarily included into the surplus staff. In fact, immediately upon graduation, D. Timermanis was sent on a mission to the front-line of the war with Japan and appointed the manager of the 1st-rate forage storehouse No. 2 in Gongzhuling (a province city and terminal on China Eastern Railway where during the war with Japan the staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army and the supply units were stationed), and in December 1905 he was promoted to the rank of captain. Slightly later — in the spring of 1906 — D. Timermanis served as a secretary in the headquarters of the Field Service Corps and subsequently as an assistant accountant. In July 1907, D. Timermanis was promoted to the rank of sub-lieutenant-colonel and served as a special task officer at the Chief Headquarters of the Service Corps. Eventually, on 29 November 1907, D. Timermanis was appointed a quarter master of Artillery Brigade No. 35 stationed in Ryazan and formally enrolled in the surplus staff

of the Chief Headquarters of the Service Corps. His career opportunities looked brilliant...

On 14 November 1904 (Julian calendar) at Old St. Gertrude's Church and parish in Riga, Staff Captain Dāvis Timermanis was married to the 31-year-old governess Kristīne Ozola (born on 9 November 1872 according to Gregorian calendar), the daughter of Mārcis Ozols, a merchant of II Guild of the town of Sloka.⁵ The family legend had it that D. Timermanis met his future wife in Manchuria, where she worked as a governess. This version seems quite credible, because D. Timermanis as the Service Corps course student could be sent there on a mission. However, a certain discrepancy emerges countering a family story that Dāvis Timermanis met his wife-to-be during his business leave in Manchuria, where she worked as a governess in the family of a diplomat (possibly, a consular service officer — Ē. J.) Popov (she herself used to remember that travelers went to Lake Baikal by train, in winter crossed the lake in horse sledges, and in summer — on a ferry), eight years before their official marriage (i.e. circa 1896), yet the officer could not marry at that time, because Kristīne was a mason's daughter (probably, of peasant class), and the senior authorities were strongly against their subordinates' marriage to the women of this class. It was only after Kristīne's father had officially joined the merchant rank (i.e., bought the so-called merchant's patent for a hefty sum payable to the Treasury), that the marriage became feasible. The service records do

⁵ LNA-LVVA, 5213. f., 2. apr., 909. l., b. p.; *Baltijas Vēstnesis*, 29 October 1914.

not show any business trips to Manchuria in that period, and there was hardly any need for such at the time of peace. There are no records regarding D. Timermanis' participation in the war with China in 1899–1900, when the so-called Boxer Rebellion was suppressed with the participation of the Russian Army and many Latvians in its ranks (Kristīne used to tell that during the Boxer Rebellion she had been in China). Therefore, it is also likely that the young people met when Kristīne was visiting Latvia. In any case, their feelings were strong and constant, and Dāvis, who also had a poetic talent, dedicated a whole copy-book of poems to Kristīne who later received and kept it.⁶ On 18 September 1905, in St. Petersburg, their daughter Ilze Lūcija, and on 14 May 1907, Austra Lūcija — were born.

Unfortunately, in October 1908, Dāvis Timermanis died in Ryazan (the fact specified in the supreme ordinance announced in November when he was removed from the officers registers).⁷ The family (wife), separately by the Treasury and the Military Department, was assigned a pension of 313.50 rubles per year or 52.40 rubles per month,⁸ a sum that, due to the high value of the ruble, provided a relatively comfortable income to the family.

Roberts Dāvids was born on 8 June 1909, already after his father's death. He was christened as a Lutheran.

⁶ Kristīne Timermane passed away on 22 October 1962.

⁷ RGVA, f. 409, op. 2, d. 35029, l. 165–174 (The military service list of D. Timermanis for 1905); f. 408, op. 1, d. 15771, l. 24; *Razvedchik*, 5 January 1906; 1908. 18 November, 3 March 1909.

⁸ LNA-LVVA, 5213. f., 2. apr., 909. l., b. p. (*Pensionnaja knizhka № 2239 vydana iz lifljandskkoj Kazennoj Palaty v 1918 i 1919 godu* [Pension booklet No. 2239, issued by State Treasury in 1918 and 1919]).

The Timermanis family had lost its main breadwinner and the situation of the family was described by Roberts Timermanis' sister Ilze, already during her exile in the West: "Starting from the autumn of 1908, the life would proceed largely as follows, i.e., we know that, until the death of the head of the family (her husband), the family had lived in Ryazan, that is, approximately 225.6 km south-east of Moscow, or approximately 658 miles from Riga. From Ryazan, the family moved to Riga and stayed with the grandmother's, i.e., Kristīne Timermane's cousin Aleksandrs Lācis (on the later-called Brīvības Street, near the overpass), of whose life we know nothing. It is known, however, that Roberts Dāvids was born there. How long they stayed in Lācis' house is not known, yet there are the facts that indicate that when little Roberts was still very young, the family moved to Salas civil parish, where Mom, together with a certain Eglītis, had taken a lease of Salas civil parish rectory. She must have been quite well-to-do because she received a pension in the Russian times, 54 rubles, until the Germans came in 1917; Auntie Illa [Ilze] did not mention, or I did not write down for what period this sum was paid — a week, several weeks, a month or otherwise. The last pension was paid in gold and used for daily expenses.

By the way, I can also tell that Salas civil parish is situated in Riga district, between Babīte and Sloka civil parishes, bordering with Sloka and Riga seaside town. The nearest railway station was Asari. The civil parish consisted of islands and a demi-island in the waters of the Lielupe River and Babīte Lake.

A long time ago, Daddy's mother had allegedly paid her lease partner Eglītis' share in the rectory lease that he had failed to settle himself. As a compensation for her expenses, she had moved with her children to Eglītis' house "Slāperi" in Piņķi civil parish".⁹

Upon his entrance into the University of Latvia, R. Timermanis wrote in his autobiography: "My childhood was peaceful until 6 years of age when, driven by the large stream of refugees, we fled to Cēsis, where in the nearby "Purteteri" farmstead we spent the entire war time. In the winter of 1919, we moved to Cēsis, where we stayed in the apartment of a baron's family, who had left all their belongings with the request to look after their library and the rest of the property. At that time, I attended Cēsis civil parish school and later — E. Eglīte's Science Gymnasium, and when it was closed in 1922, I continued studies at Cēsis Bērzaine State Secondary School. As my mother did not receive pension, there was little food at home, and I had to start earning money.

In 1920, for one summer, I distributed newspapers and later, for some five summers, I worked as a shepherd. If in autumn I missed a few weeks of studies, the teacher excused me, because my results at school were good."¹⁰

Robert's sister Ilze remembered the following: when the war was approaching Riga in 1915, the family moved to Cēsis and settled at Gaujas Street No. 22. In 1917, Daddy's Mom with the younger daughter Austrā went to Petrograd; Austrā had been lucky and won the opportunity to study in

⁹ Timermanis' family archive.

¹⁰ LNA-LVVA, 7427. f., 1. apr., 17105. l., 15. lp.

the school for officers' children.¹¹ The lots had been drawn from seven years of age, yet Ilze had never been lucky. Neither was Laura, because in 1917, a revolution broke out in Russia and they had to hurry back to Cēsis. As Daddy's Mom had not received her pension since 1917, she had to look for a job to provide for her family. In the German time, i.e., in 1918, she worked as a cook in "the people's kitchen". Later she got a job in a flax mill. It is not known if she had worked in the plant or elsewhere until they moved to Riga. The children finished school in Cēsis: both girls — a gymnasium at Raunas Street, and Dad — Cēsis Bērzaine State Secondary School specializing in the exact sciences, with mathematics as the major subject. Sister Ilze also remembered that, having moved to Cēsis during the war, the family was quite hard up, they kept two goats (Kice and Grieta). Brother was a bright pupil, an active participant of the Scout movement (both sisters were Girl Guides). From 12 years of age, Roberts earned some money as a shepherd and made wicker baskets and willow flutes at a peasant farm in Veselauska civil parish, thus earning his own food and clothes. Besides, like his father, the boy was good at mathematics and liked poetry (as already said, father had written poems in his youth¹²).¹³

¹¹ The children of Russian Army officers were given an opportunity to study at military schools (boys) and at special schools for girls, where tuition fees were fully covered by the state and the education was of a very high standard that later facilitated professional career. The number of girls' schools was considerably smaller as compared to the military schools; therefore, the lots were drawn for the opportunity to enter the girls' school.

¹² Timermanis' family archive.

¹³ Ibid.

Upon his graduation from the secondary school, in the certificate issued to Roberts it was written that he had attended Cēsis civil parish school from 1916 to 1917, and E. Eglīte's Gymnasium in Cēsis from 1917 to 1922. From 1922, he went to Cēsis Bērzaine State Secondary School and from September 1925 — Cēsis State Secondary School, finishing its science course with quite good results (only 4 and 5 on a five-point scale). He received the mark “excellent” (5) for his results in religion, history, geography, cosmography, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, analytical geometry, chemistry and technology, introduction to philosophy, algebraic analysis, gymnastics, and “good” (4) — in the Latvian language, as well as German, Russian, Latin, physics, natural sciences, drawing, history of art and technical drawing.¹⁴

On 29 May 1926, at the age of 16, Roberts graduated from Cēsis State Secondary School (at that time, the graduates were divided into those who had completed the exact sciences (*reālskola*) programme and the neo-gymnasium programme, and R. Timermanis belonged to the first group) with the right to continue studies in a higher education establishment.¹⁵

On 18 July 1926, in St. John's Church in Cēsis, Roberts was confirmed by Cēsis civil parish pastor Pēteris Apkalns — the only clergyman decorated with the Military Order of Lāčplēsis (for participation in the battles of the Latvian Riflemen in World War I), later — an army chaplain.¹⁶

¹⁴ LNA-LVVA, 7427. f., 1. apr., 17105. l., 4. lp.

¹⁵ Full list of graduates of Cēsis State Secondary School is available at Dzintene. *Latvis*, 30 June 1926.

¹⁶ Timermanis' family archive (Confirmation Certificate).

Latvian Armed Forces

In the time of peace, the Latvian Army was supervised by the War Ministry and War Minister J. Balodis was formally accountable to the president of ministers (earlier — also to the Republic of Latvia Parliament — *Saeima*). The President of the State was the supreme commander of the army and navy, exercising his leadership in the time of peace through the War Ministry and the Army Headquarters. In the numerous branches of the Army Headquarters, at the Information Department (also responsible for intelligence), worked military attachés (at that time called ‘war agents’).

The core of the Armed Forces consisted of the soldiers of compulsory military service — under the Military Service Law, the citizens who had reached 21 years of age were conscripted. This process was carried out by war district authorities subordinated to the Army Headquarters Organization Mobilization Section. At the time of the authoritarian rule in Latvia, until the autumn of 1939, the former number and dislocation of military units was retained. During the military coup, the core of the Latvian Army subordinated to the Army Headquarters consisted of four infantry divisions — Kurzeme division with headquarters in Liepāja, Vidzeme division (HQ in Riga), Latgale division (Pļaviņas), and Zemgale division (Daugavpils) with three infantry regiments and one artillery regiment in each, whereas Zemgale division contained the cavalry regiment stationed in Daugavpils and one separate cavalry squadron in Svēte. Other formations included the Technical Division with headquarters in Riga (Aviation Regiment, Field Engineers (Sapper) Regiment,

Electro-Technical Battalion, Auto-Tank Regiment, Armoured Train Regiment and Daugavgrīva Artillery), as well as the army units subordinated to the Artillery Inspector's Headquarters — Heavy Artillery Regiment and the Separate Artillery Group. In 1935, Daugavgrīva Artillery was renamed Coastal Artillery Regiment, the Electro-Technical Battalion — the Communications Battalion, the separate Marine Corps Battalion was included as a squadron into the Aviation Regiment, and in March 1940, the Auto-Tank Regiment was transformed into a brigade. Besides, in 1939 (based on the German-Polish War experience), the Armoured Train Regiment was liquidated and an Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment established under the supervision of the Artillery Inspector.¹⁷ It was to the Army Headquarters that the representative Army Headquarters Company was subordinated, tasked with guarding the central government institutions and in 1936 it was transformed into a battalion (in the period of authoritarianism, this military unit was made into an model military corps, consisting solely of Latvian soldiers who had to meet very high physical and health standards). Supplies and functioning of the army were supported by a number of services concentrated in the Supplies Office, War (from 1939, Army) Court-Martial and other administrative institutions. The Technical Division in 1938 was liquidated and several services established instead (Artillery, Motor Vehicle, Engineering and Communications). A separate chief of

¹⁷ In greater detail, see Dambītis, K. Latvijas armijas Zenītartilērijas pulks. [Latvian Army Anti_Aircraft Artillery] In: *Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata* [Yearbook of the Latvian War Museum], X. Rīga: 2009, pp. 99–117.

the Military Aviation Service was appointed (General Jāzeps Baško). Since 1924, a Sea Coast Guard Defense Squadron operated, and in 1938 it was renamed Navy.¹⁸

In 1938, the Latvian Army encompassed 2 200 officers, 23 000 instructors and soldiers, in 1 January 1939, the registers encompassed 1 969 officers, 3 988 instructors, 11 188 soldiers, in total 17 145 men. Together with 1 244 free-contract workers, it comprised 18 389 men. In the autumn of 1939, at the beginning of World War II, the reserve soldiers of several age groups were temporarily conscripted and all the vacancies were filled. Thus, as at 1 June 1940, the Latvian Army consisted of 2 013 officers, medical officers and administrative officers, 27 555 deputy officers, instructors and soldiers, in total, 29 568 men. Together with 1 275 free-contract workers, the Latvian Army incorporated 30 843 men.

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis' service in the Latvian Armed Forces

Having finished the secondary school, Roberts initially tried to enter the University of Latvia, the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, yet he failed to pass the entrance examination in the Latvian literature conducted by the eminent professor Jānis Endzelīns. According to the story told by

¹⁸ In greater detail, see Bormanis, V. *Latvijas kara flote* [Latvian Navy]. *Militārais Apskats* [Military Review], 1997, No. 1, pp. 73–82; Zemžāns, M. *Latvijas Jūras kara flote 20. un 30. gados*. [Latvian Navy in 1920s and 30s]. In: *Latvijas armija vēstures griežos* [Latvian Army at the turn of history]. Rīga: Junda, 1993, pp. 60–64.

Roberts Timermanis himself, the professor had asked if the applicant knew and had read the works of the writer and clergyman Andrievs Niedra, who in 1919, during the War of Independence, had compromised himself by leading the pro-German government for several months. When Roberts answered in the affirmative, the professor became angry, exclaimed: “Niedrist, putschist!”, thus reproaching Roberts’ alleged adherence to Niedra, and gave him an unsatisfactory mark.¹⁹ After that failure, Roberts Timermanis decided to dedicate his life to the officer’s profession well-known in his family and successfully entered the Military School of Latvia in Riga, at Krišjānis Barons’ Street.

On 29 September 1926, after passing the entrance examinations, R. Timermanis was enrolled in the Military School as a cadet in the Infantry Department and on 22 December gave the solemn vow. From 25 February until 22 May 1927, he was attached to the Chief Artillery Arsenal for training of enlistees (in the period under consideration, all the cadets were sent with such tasks to the army units to practice army procedures). The results of cadet R. Timermanis were good, affirmed by his success in shooting lessons: on 13 August 1927, he was awarded the honorary title of the excellent machine-gunner and decorated with a red shoulder-cord, whereas on 15 August 1928 he received the title of the excellent automatic rifle and machine-gun shooter. On 29 August 1928, along with transfer to the 3rd course, R. Timermanis was promoted to the rank of army corporal, and on 16 November 1928, to cadet-corporal, which is a clear

¹⁹ Timermanis family archive.

proof of Robert's good results (the instructors' ranks with an attachment 'cadet' were awarded to the gifted cadets and they performed the tasks of junior commanding officers among their mates, for example, a cadet-corporal could be the commanding officer of a cadet unit).

On 1 September 1929, R. Timermanis completed the Infantry Department training course of the Military School with Grade I (in the list of seniority, in terms of study results, he occupied the fifth place among the cadets), and 21-years-old R. Timermanis was promoted to the rank of the Latvian Army lieutenant and appointed to the Cavalry Regiment. Before the completion of the official training course, on 16 August, the medical commission stated that the cadet-corporal's health condition corresponded to all the requirements of the Military School (height — 168 cm, body weight — 63 kg, however, it was noted that he was a smoker). However, when on 27 August, the Psycho-Technical Laboratory (headed by R. Drillis) of the Research Institute for Professional Suitability assessed R. Timermanis' ability to study at the Aviation School, the results were found to be moderately good, mentioning only that "in response to a sudden, strong excitement, became very nervous, nervousness subsided gradually. Low Schneider Index".

In the new place of service — at the Cavalry Regiment in Daugavpils — R. Timermanis arrived on 30 September 1929, when his leave of 28 days was over. The Cavalry Regiment consisted of five regular squadrons, one instructors' squadron, sappers, communication and maintenance teams. At the end of the 1920s, in the squadron, two new battalions were established with two swordsmen squadrons and one

machine-gun squadron in each. At that time, the regiment consisted of 1 200 soldiers and 1 200 horses. The cavalrymen were armed with machine guns, lances and swords. Starting from 1928, the best cavalrymen of the Cavalry Regiment successfully represented Latvia in international horse races.²⁰

On 24 March 1930, R. Timermanis was sent to Riga, to the Aviation School located in the Air Regiment, and enrolled as a student in so-called “replacement personnel” From 1 April, he was given a certain privilege — extra 25 lats added to his salary as an aircrew member.

In the first half of the 1920s, the Air Battalion of the Latvian Armed Forces included fighter, reconnaissance, spotting (their task was correction of artillery fire from above during combat), reserve and aviation school squadrons with 27 aircraft of various obsolete types. There were also hangars and a maintenance unit. Soon afterwards, several dozens of Italian, British, Czechoslovakian, French and German fighter, reconnaissance and training aircraft were purchased. Construction of AVD-type reconnaissance aircraft was commenced in Latvia. The base of the battery (later — the regiment) — an airfield with hangars and a meteorological station — was situated in Spilve meadows near Riga. In 1926, when the battalion was transformed into a regiment, a Squadron of Long-Range Reconnaissance was also established (from 1927, it was stationed at Krustpils Airfield). Sadly, due to the poor technical condition, aircraft frequently

²⁰ Liepiņš, A. 1. Jātnieku pulks [The 1st Cavalry Regiment]. In: *Dievs. Tēvija. Pulks* [God. Fatherland. Regiment]. B. v., 1980, pp. 71, 112, 171, 185; Andersons, E. *Latvijas bruņotie spēki un to priekšvēsture* [The Armed Forces of Latvia and their Background]. Toronto: Daugavas Vanagi, 1983, pp. 223–225, 242–260.

suffered air crashes, many — with loss of personnel. In the second half of the 1930s, Marine Corps Battalion was added to the regiment and transformed into a squadron.

Already on 8 July 1930, R. Timermanis performed his first independent flight on an airplane Avro No. 33, and on 1 August — a flight on a plane “Flamingo”.

On 15 October 1930, he successfully passed a pilot's test. Training at the school went on, and soon R. Timermanis also completed the training course of aerobatics.

In 1930, R. Timermanis' flight logbook showed 30 hours and 28 minutes, in 1931 — 30 hours and 37 minutes (in 1932 — respectively, 40 hours and 6 minutes).

In the autumn of 1931, he was promoted to the rank of a first lieutenant (term of service counted from 1 September), and on 21 November 1931 performed a flight on a Czechoslovakian plane “Šmolik 16”, possessed by the Aviation Regiment, and on 1 December 1931, he successfully graduated from the Spotting-Pilot Department of the Aviation School with Grade I. He was assigned the title of a spotter-pilot and term-of-service reduction by one year in the rank of a first lieutenant. On the same day, by the order of State President Alberts Kviesis, R. Timermanis and 30 more graduates of the Aviation School were officially transferred to their military units to serve in the Air Regiment.

First Lieutenant R. Timermanis was sent to the Fighter Squadron No. 2 and temporarily included in its surplus staff. His salary benefit, according to the existing rules, grew from 25 lats to 80 lats per month (as an aircrew member).

R. Timermanis' flight schedules showed that he flew different types of aircraft: A.D.C, Balilla and Fiat. On the

whole, in 1933, R. Timermanis managed to fly independently for 6 hours and 4 minutes. Unfortunately, on 24 April 1933, he suffered severe injuries in a crash of an A.D.C. plane No. 62, and was sent to be treated at the Latvian Red Cross Hospital in Riga, where he spent a long time convalescing.

On 22 December 1933, R. Timermanis was transferred from the Red Cross Hospital to Riga Military Hospital, from which he was discharged only on the following year. On 1934, the order issued for the regiment stated that on 24 April he had “suffered grievous bodily harm that has a negative effect on his health, i.e., his left leg has been extended by 2.5 cm and movement is slightly restricted in the joint of his right foot. These phenomena are permanent, yet they do not hamper execution of service duties.” On 18 September 1934, the medical commission of Riga Military Hospital checked R. Timermanis’ state of health and found him suitable for service in the aircrew (the same commission in October 1937 found him to be suitable for the pilot’s service ‘without restrictions’). Thus, his service in the Air Regiment continued. Already on 1 April 1934, he was transferred to the surplus staff spotter-pilot position in the reconnaissance squadron of Battalion No. 1, and on 26 October R. Timermanis was appointed to the temporary position of the head of the squadron’s radio station. He performed this task until January 1935, when he returned to his spotter-pilot position. In 1934, he had flown for 15 hours and 21 minutes in total, and in the subsequent years his flight time steadily increased, in 1935 constituting 65 hours and 32 minutes, and in 1936 — 92 hours and 54 minutes. Likewise, in 1937, “the minimum

flight programme approved by the Commander-in-Chief was successfully completed”.

In the meantime, major changes took place both in Robert's personal life and the life of the entire country. On 1 April 1934, R. Timermanis married Valija Vilensone (born on 18 January 1912), and on 23 January 1935, their son Eigits Dāvis was born, followed by a daughter Ivonna Aija on 23 August 1936. Before marriage, R. Timermanis had rented a flat in Pārdaugava (the part of Riga situated on the left bank of the River Daugava), near to his service placement — at Lielāsmuižas Street 32–3, later — at Margrietas Street 15–3 (in 1937), and at the end of the 1930s and during the German occupation — at Saulgoža Street 2–2 (Robert's mother in 1939 lived in Riga, Dzirciema Street 32–3).

After World War II, in exile, Valija Timermane shared the memories of their acquaintance: “Strolling with friends, on an autumn evening I went to the Citadel where Kr. was on duty. Leaves rustled under my feet... A walk on Anna's Day to the Rātsupe River. 1933, Kr. in the Military Hospital. Easter without an egg. 24 Apr. 1933. Accident... Telephone call. I stay with Kr's Mom. To the Red Cross...”²¹

At the night of 15–16 May 1934, a coup d'état was brought about by the President of Ministers Kārlis Ulmanis, with the support of the Defense and Interior Departments, and an authoritarian regime was instituted in Latvia. Among other things, it was manifested in the altered text of the solemn oath (the line about allegiance to the democratic

²¹ Kr. — abbreviation of pet name “Kriksītis” (“Little Snippet”) given by Valija to her husband.

system of Latvia, etc. had disappeared). R. Timermanis took the new oath on 9 August 1934.

On 15 May 1935, First Lieutenant R. Timermanis was transferred to the reconnaissance squadron of Battalion No. 1, taking the position of the aviation mechanic, and at the same time executing temporary spotter-pilot duty, and on 1 May 1936, he was appointed a spotter-pilot of Squadron No. 6.

On 23 September 1936, the squadron commander expressed gratitude to R. Timermanis “for exemplary performance of flights and demonstration of particular diligence in preparatory works for maneuvers at Liepāja Airfield from 18 IX to 22 IX”. On the other hand, the officers’ penalty record on 31 July 1936 showed the regiment commander’s reprimand about “the errors and carelessness committed while drawing up the statement on the regiment’s library books”, and on 21 October 1937, the battalion commander’s reprimand ran, as follows: “having received the task to drop a parachute with ballast above the airfield, performed the task so carelessly that the parachute almost fell upon the new aircraft”.

In 1937 and 1938, First Lieutenant R. Timermanis was included among the 1st class handgun shots and on 1 January 1938, he was attached to the headquarters of the Technical Division commanded by General Jānis Kurelis. On 8 January, R. Timermanis arrived at the headquarters and on 13 January was appointed a temporary assistant of the aide-de-camp of the division headquarters, Captain Jānis Ūdentiņš. On 25 July 1938, R. Timermanis was officially transferred from the Air Squadron to the headquarters of the Technical Division and his position as the assistant of the aide-de-camp was confirmed.

At the same time, R. Timermanis continued to fly, while serving at the division headquarters. In the study year 1938/1939, he completed the minimum flight programme approved by the Commander-in-Chief and continued to receive extra payment as a flight crew member, which in September 1939 was increased from 80 to 135 lats, and shortly afterwards — to 170 lats. In the service records, it has been noted that on 3 May 1939, he independently flew aircraft D3, on 29 June — aircraft J.12, and on 28 September passed the tests on the knowledge and skills of a fighter pilot and obtained the title and rights of a fighter pilot.

In the certification for the year 1934, the commander of the reconnaissance squadron, Captain Nikolajs Kaņeps characterized R. Timermanis thus: “Physically well developed, capable of enduring the hardships both in the time of peace and war; good mental abilities; good moral and ethical qualities; no specific traits of character; rarely drinks alcoholic beverages with no effect on service or society; studies at the higher education establishment, which does not yet affect service performance; a good spotter, as a pilot will be trained to fly D3 aircraft. Performs his service duties well, energetic, trained in tactics and team shooting. Independent within the limits of his authority, endowed with initiative. Good, should be appointed to the staff.” The above characteristic and reference were endorsed by the commander of the battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Jānis Prieditis and the regiment commander Colonel Arnolds Skurbe. In the certification for 1935, the commander of the squadron, Captain Vilis Munters was somewhat more critical, mentioning as a “specific trait of R. Timermanis’ character”

that “he likes to gossip about his colleagues behind their backs” and that his university studies demanded some of his service time. In all the other matters, including performance of the mechanic’s work, R. Timermanis was found to be good and acceptable for employment in the current position for the next period of attestation.

The commander of Squadron No. 6, Captain Bernhards Pukše, in his turn, on 26 October 1936, gave a very good characteristic to R. Timermanis, proposing him for a platoon commander’s position (although regiment commander Indāns objected to the proposal saying that “he has too little flight experience as yet to be able to lead the platoon in air operations, train and instruct them”, nevertheless, he assessed R. Timermanis’ performance as good and allowed him to keep the current position). B. Pukše wrote: “[...] does not smoke, drinks spirits on exceptionally rare occasions or not at all, which does not affect his service, knows how to behave in public, outside service, diligently and successfully studies economics and will finish his studies this academic year. Industrious in performing service assignments, energetic, obeys the rules and laws, persistent in his work, disciplined to his seniors, good to his parents and colleagues, although sometimes likes to joke about them. Good sense of tact, considerate, takes care of his subordinates, unbiased and honest to everybody. Has good relationship with officers. Of a cheerful disposition. Familiar with soldiers’ life [...] has courage to take the necessary actions, if necessary, not fearing the consequences. A good spotter-pilot. Delves into the tasks and fulfils them resolutely and scrupulously. Interested in aviation.” Similarly, B. Pukše assessed R. Timermanis on

21 October 1937, yet exactly on that day Roberts had received the reprimand for carelessness mentioned earlier, therefore the commander of Squadron No. 6 on 22 October added a critical note to his characteristic about occasional “instability” and “childish character”, while commander of Battalion No. 1 Nikolajs Bulmanis remarked: “I agree with Captain Eglitis’ remark. Spends quite a lot of time at the card table. Very well developed mentally — has graduated from the University of Latvia Department of Economics. Likes to exonerate himself inappropriately — thus, this month, having committed an obvious mistake (almost dropped a parachute with 120 kg of ballast on the new Gladiator planes), refused to admit it and tried to insist that had acted correctly. Final conclusion: Good. Should be retained in the current position.” In the attestation for 1938, Captain Jānis Ūdentiņš, temporary aide-de-camp of the Operative Department of Technical Division headquarters, praised R. Timermanis very highly, adding only that: “[he] likes to talk a lot, sometimes out of place.” In the same reference, the head of the headquarters, Colonel Jānis Kaļķis mentioned: “First Lieutenant Timermanis rather quickly learns the duties assigned to him at the headquarters. The work is promptly accomplished. If his diligence and enthusiasm does not slacken, he will make a very good headquarters staff member. I agree to the attestation: Good. Should be retained in the current position.” The last attestation in the Latvian Armed Forces was dated with 30 October 1939. Therein, aide-de-camp of the Operative Department of Technical Division headquarters J. Ūdentiņš assessed R. Timermanis’ service performance even higher (“very good”), adding that he “likes to play pranks on his colleagues,

studies law at the university, which has no adverse effect on his service, in separate cases has not been considerate enough to his subordinates”. Performs the task of assistant to the aide-de-camp “successfully and is capable to stand in for the aide-de-camp any time”. J. Kaļķis, too, as in the previous year, expressed a positive opinion of R. Timermanis. On the whole, in the above statements R. Timermanis was characterised as a gifted if somewhat youthfully reckless officer.

On 13 March 1940, having passed the difficult entry examinations, R. Timermanis was sent to the Higher Military School and enrolled for a course under the general programme. On 10 May, he was formally transferred from the Technical Division Headquarters to the Air Regiment.²²

Studies at the University of Latvia

During the service in the Latvian Army, many soldiers additionally studied at higher education institutions upon receiving a special permission from their commander or superior. In September 1932, R. Timermanis, with the permission of the Commander of the Aviation Regiment, began his studies at the University of Latvia Faculty of Economics and Law, Department of Economics. After the interruption of studies caused by illness (an injury caused by a plane crash), on 29 January 1934 R. Timermanis submitted a request to the rector to receive permission to continue the studies. Permission

²² Description of R. Timermanis' service based primarily on his own documents in the archive: LNA-LVVA, 5601. f., 1. apr., 6524. l., 1-43. lp.

was obtained, and on 29 October 1934 he successfully passed a diploma examination in theory of economics (questions: corporate forms and Ricardo's theory of value), and on 28 October 1936 received the assessment "good" in English examination (questions: "A daughter's rebuke by B. Harraden, The shipping agent"), whereas on 9 March 1937, with received the assessment "very good" in German language.

On 14 March 1937, R. Timermanis applied for permission to pass diploma examinations at the spring session under the trade division's product group programme, stating that he had completed all the compulsory subjects of that division, passed the necessary examinations, attended seminars and workshops, as well as passed the commission tests in languages and economic theory. Permission was granted, and on 15 April 1937 he completed the trade studies with a grade of "good" (questions: exclusion trends, direct exports, comparison of large and small companies, competition in trade, its foundations, causes, basic forms, participants, advantages of free competition, objective and subjective means of fight, the negative side of the competition, the fight against negative competition, state action and self-help, shop secrets), on 25 April achieved the rating "very good" in economic policy (questions: farming systems: crop rotation systems, free system, land management committees, settlement of compensation for land transferred to the state land fund, organization of large-scale industry, private insurance, issue of agricultural workers), whereas on 8 May obtained the grade "very good" in special accounting (questions: rediscount and special current account "on call", budget), on 31 May — a rating of "very good" in trade law

(questions etc.). On 7 October 1937, after completing his courses, the faculty awarded R. Timermanis the degree of Candidate of Economic Sciences. In the autumn of 1939, with the permission of the army commander, he began studying law at his former faculty.²³

Roberts Timermanis' studies were further defined by his joining and activities in the student corporation "Tervetia". Student corporations in 1920s –30s were an integral part of academic life, moreover, they helped to retain links between their members even after graduation — in theory and writing for the entire lifetime. R. Timermanis joined the corporation immediately after commencing his studies, successfully passed the candidate's time and received the corporation's ribbon after the serious accident and treatment in hospitals, thus becoming a full member of the corporation. However, his active involvement in the corporation was overshadowed by the incident in which R. Timermanis became involved in the autumn of 1935: late in the evening, defending a woman's honor, he was forced to intervene in a street incident in Riga with an active member of "Lettonia" student corporation — Hermanis Dišlers, and Gustavs Falks, graduate member of "Selonija" student corporation. As a result, the case was heard on 18 October 1935 in the court of the Association of Corporations — the Presidium Convention. R. Timermanis was sentenced to three years' expulsion from the corporation for "behavior unworthy of a corporation member in a public place". He appealed in cassation against this judgment, but on 1 May 1936 the Presidium Convention court upheld

²³ LNA-LVVA, 7427. f., 1. apr., 17105. l., 2.–34. lp.

the judgment. The matter was unpleasant, but its analysis also reflects a certain important component of the university life at that time — the superiority of the members of the old or first-established Latvian student corporations over the members of the “new corporations”, as well as the negative role of alcohol in circles of student corporations. In some cases, their members permitted themselves to violate the norms of etiquette in society (this was the motivation of R. Timermanis’ actions, as he got involved in resolving the incident).²⁴

At the time of the German occupation, on 15 August 1941, R. Timermanis in his application to the rector explained that he had studied until the autumn semester of 1940, when “the faculty curriculum was changed in the spirit of the relevant period” and “with the decision of the rector at the time the students who did not attend the lectures and had not reported their study break, were considered to be expelled”. R. Timermanis thereby informed that he was not going to resume studies at the time of writing, therefore he asked to be issued with the documents submitted to the University of Latvia.

Family

Roberts’ sister Austra, born in St. Petersburg on 14 May 1907, from 1917 to 1922 studied in M. Neija’s Private Women’s Neo-Gymnasium in Cēsis, in 1924/1925 she studied at and completed the Cēsis City Women’s Secondary School course

²⁴ Timermanis’ family archive.

that corresponded to the type of neo-gymnasium, achieving only good and very good grades (the school was also called Bērzaine State Secondary School).

In 1928, she began her studies at the University of Latvia Faculty of Economics and Law, Department of Law, studied intermittently, and on 8 October 1936 completed her studies with a candidate's degree in law. During her studies, she joined the women's corporation "Varavīksne" and the University of Latvia Student Temperance Society.²⁵

Sister Ilze (born on 18 September 1905) worked in a pharmacy in Riga, married Ventspils district construction inspector Erhards Virāts (he passed away in 1939), and had three sons — Ivars (1933–1935), Andors (1936–1994) and Vilnis (1937–1975).

The state gradually resolved the material support for R. Timermanis' mother. On 12 June 1929, the Law on Pensions for Former Russian Retirees came into force, which gave Kristīne Timermane the right to receive a pension for her deceased husband. However, the request was initially rejected due to lack of documentation. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Latvian Consulate in Leningrad, it was possible to obtain supporting documents in the Soviet Union, Leningrad (the Leningrad Division of the Central Historical Archive). In a statement to the Minister of Welfare on 29 November, Kristīne Timermane wrote: "After the death of my husband, Dāvids, son of Dāvis Timermanis, myself and my three minor children received a full pension, which I regularly received until 1918. When the Germans

²⁵ LNA-LVVA, 7427. f., 1. apr., 13015. l., 1.–37. lp.

occupied Latvia, this payment was stopped. As the pension of the former Russian pensioners has now been restored, by 1 July I submitted a request to pay it to me, too, but I was not able to send all the documents, so my request was rejected. All the documents concerning my husband's work were lost during the war, and thus with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I tried to obtain them anew. The archive statement that was sent to me and issued by the former Russia does not mention the amount of my husband's salary (requested in the communication of the Pension Division of the Department of Social Welfare of October 7, 1929), and so I ask you to resolve this issue, esteemed Minister, at your discretion, because my husband's last salary was 300 rubles a month. Please grant me a pension, because my children have grown up and are not able to support me, I don't have any funds myself, I am 58 y. old and unable to work, because I suffer from limb rheumatism [...]"²⁶

On 22 December 1930, the State Minister of Welfare Vladislavs Rubuls signed an act granting a pension to the family member of a former Russian pensioner Kristīne Timermane as the widow of Dāvids Timermanis, who died in 1908. It was established that D. Timermanis had "served" for 25 years, 6 months and 3 days "in positions that gave the right to a pension under Russian law and that the respective right is provided for such employees also by the laws existing in Latvia", thus, 26 years were included in the long service pension benefit. The last position — a brigade quarter master with a salary over 100 rubles a month, would give the right

²⁶ LNA-LVVA, 5213. f., 2. apr., 909. l., b. p.

to a pension of 80 lats a month had he not died. Thus, from December 1930, Kristīne Timermane was granted a pension of 40 lats per month (nevertheless, in the summer of 1934, the amount of the pension was only 20 lats).²⁷

Occupation

Finland, Latvia and Estonia were included in the secret annex of the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of 23 August 1939, and on 28 September the three countries, supplemented by Lithuania, were included in the “sphere of interests” of the Soviet Union in German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. This was followed by the concerted destruction of the Polish state by Germany and the USSR, and even before it was completed, the first ultimatums were issued to the Baltic states demanding the signing of mutual assistance agreements. Each of the Baltic governments, faced with the threat of aggression on the one hand, and the promise of independence on the other, signed agreements providing for the establishment of Soviet troop bases on their territories (the number of soldiers in the base garrisons was equal to or even higher than that of national armies). Only Finland did not submit to the ultimatum, and this refusal was followed by a long and bloody war with the USSR, the loss of territory and people, but independence was retained. The Finnish government was at the time condemned by a significant part

²⁷ LNA-LVVA, 5213. f., 2. apr., 909. l., b. p.

of country's society in the view that the Baltic states accepted ultimatums, did not lose their territories and thousands of soldiers, and what did it matter that they had permitted the establishment of Soviet garrisons? Such accusations only were voiced until June 1940... They ceased after that date.

At the beginning of June 1940, when the eyes of the whole world were focused on the agony of France under the German strikes in the west of Europe, the USSR government decided on military aggression against the Baltic states. In a few days, 4–7 June, a massive force about ten times the size of the Baltic armies was concentrated at their borders: at least 541 000 infantry men, 3 938 tanks, 2 516 aircraft, naval and airborne units, warships and the troops of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) preparing for immediate mass deportations (incidentally, from 10 to 15 June, the NKVD prepared a plan for the deployment of 56 000 Baltic states' army prisoners of war in camps, where they would also fill the places of the Polish officers shot in April). On the night of 5–6 June and in the evening of 7 June, the plan of the attack was discussed in the Kremlin under Stalin's own command. On 13 June, Lev Mekhlis, the head of the Red Army's Main Political Directorate, in his order announced to army politicians that "Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia will become Soviet outposts [...] The Red Army will help the working people to dispose of the domination by the capitalist-landlord clique [...] Preparations for the attack must be kept in the utmost secrecy".

On 14 June the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR indicated in a telegram to the plenipotentiaries of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland that the Baltic

Entente, concluded in 1934 and providing solely for diplomatic co-operation had not been dissolved (in October 1939, he himself had informed the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, V. Munters, that he was not interested in it “in the least”), military co-operation had intensified (mutual visits of military personnel), the Lithuanian Prime Minister has not said anything praiseworthy about the USSR in the magazine “*Revue Baltique*”. The report was intended for “orientation”, but was actually an outline given to diplomats for the ultimatums to be prepared. On the same day, the Red Army and Navy launched a complete blockade of the Baltic states from the sea and the blockade of Estonian airspace, but at noon Soviet warplanes brought down a Finnish passenger plane that had flown from Tallinn to Helsinki. All crew members and passengers died at sea.

On the same day, an ultimatum was issued to Lithuania, demanding a change of government, the introduction of an unlimited “additional contingent” of troops, and the trial of officials responsible for the “abduction of Soviet soldiers.”

At three o'clock on the night of 15 June, about 100 Soviet border guards attacked the Latvian Border Guard Brigade's 3rd Abrene Battalion Guard House in Masļenki, surprising and killing three border guards, two wives of border guards and one child, and taking 10 border guards and 27 civilians across the border and burning down the building. The next morning, the Latvian side set up a commission of inquiry, which began its work. The Lithuanian government, in turn, after a long night sitting, at 7:00 decided to acquiesce to the Soviet demands. On the same night, Soviet soldiers attacked a Lithuanian border guard post, killing one border guard.

On 15 June, Soviet tanks reached Kaunas, the President of Lithuania fled to Germany, and in the evening the “special representative” of the Soviet government, V. Dekanozov, arrived in Lithuania and began to form a new government. In Riga, the Foreign Ministry contacted envoys from the United States, France and Germany, but they only expressed their regrets regarding the actions of the Soviets — their governments at this time, “when the war rages in the West, there is no opportunity to intervene in the events in Eastern Europe.” During the day, an alarm was announced in all units of the Latvian Army, and the fighter planes of the Aviation Regiment went to the reserve airfields. Corporal Žanis Tomsons of the Air Regiment recalled: “The combat personnel spent the night by the planes. Silence, threatening silence. Captain J. Pagrods, the senior officer of the airport, had been walking near the radio station since yesterday afternoon, walking with his very, very long cigarette, which did not probably go out even while eating...”²⁸

The further events developed, as follows: 16 June. At 13:00 in Moscow, the envoy Fricis Kociņš arrived at the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs with the results of the previous investigation into the Mašlenki incident, was called to the telephone, and Molotov’s secretary requested that the envoy arrive at the Kremlin at 14:00 (13:00 Latvian

²⁸ *Latviešu karavīrs Otrā pasaules kara laikā: dokumentu un atmiņu krājums* [Latvian soldier during the Second World War: a collection of documents and memories]. Vol. 2. *Pirmās latviešu aizsardzības vienības Otrā pasaules karā* [The first Latvian defense units in the Second World War]. Freivalds, O. (ed.). Minstere: Daugavas Vanagu Centrālās valdes izdevums, 1972, p. 95.

time). There, Molotov read out the USSR ultimatum and announced that an answer would be expected no later than by 23:00. He demanded the resignation of the government and announced that negotiations with K. Ulmanis on the formation of a new government would be conducted by an authorized representative of the USSR or a special authorized person. Molotov disregarded Kociņš' objections that Lithuania had not joined the military co-operation agreement concluded between Estonia and Latvia in 1923, and ignored his attempts to extend the ultimatum to enable the envoy personally fly to Riga with the report. Molotov categorically demanded a timely response. Furthermore, he announced that two additional army corps would be brought to Latvia "for the time being". Exactly the same ultimatum was submitted to the Estonian government.

At 16:00 Kociņš managed to reach the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riga over the phone and recited the text of the ultimatum to V. Munters. In Riga, K. Ulmanis consulted with the army's leadership: it confirmed that successful resistance was impossible, it would mean not only the destruction of the army, but also death of civilians, because aviation and artillery would destroy cities. The resistance would have been feasible only if there were no Soviet military bases in the country and if all three Baltic states confronted the situation together.

At 19:00 The Cabinet of Ministers had a sitting with the participation of K. Ulmanis, V. Munters, Minister of the Interior K. Veidnieks, Minister of War K. Berķis, Minister of Justice H. Apsītis, Minister of Trade and Industry J. Blumbergs. The Minister of Foreign Affairs reported

on the ultimatum. The militarily hopeless situation drove the Cabinet to accept the claim and resign. The sitting closed at 22:00.

At 19:45 Kociņš arrived in the Kremlin and handed over to Molotov the government's response, which K. Ulmanis had apparently already accepted before the government's sitting: "The Latvian government, unable to accept the motives that prompted the Soviet government to impose demands in the form of ultimatum on the Latvian government, declares that it has always fulfilled and will continue to fulfill the mutual assistance agreement of 5 October 1939, the Latvian government is ready to provide free passage to Soviet troops, however, in order for this to take place properly, it asks for an urgent indication of the points, routes and numbers in which at least the first detachments of troops intend to come..."

President K. Ulmanis did not arrive in Daugavpils to attend the Latgale Song Festival, and at 17:00 gave his opening speech over the radio. Journalist Konstantīns Karulis: "The anthem sounds solemn; it is sung by the whole boundless crowd. Repeated over and over again, three times the anthem sounds over Stropi, uniting thousands upon thousands. The words of the President have led people to perceive that something extraordinary is afoot. Hearts are full of terrible premonitions and the words of the anthem are accompanied by tears. [...] During the intermission, the first signs of anxiety are noticeable: the guards have to gather at the cars and immediately go to their civil parishes. This message passes through groups of singers and files of listeners, and people look at each other confusedly. What to expect? Maybe it has already happened?"

Corporal of the Aviation Regiment Ž. Tomsons: “The day dragged on unbearably long. Sitting buckled up in my fighter and waiting for the signal to battle, I experienced a feeling that I cannot write down, communicate in any way — it must be experienced personally.”

Deputy officer of the 7th Sigulda Infantry Regiment K. Osis in Alūksne: “The regiment has placed all battle carts out of the site and masked them. They are filled with ammunition freshly received from warehouses. The staff plans are drawn up following a secret order of battle and mobilization. Five tankettes arrive from Riga and park on the square behind the soldiers’ accommodation. Any type of leave is suspended. Everyone must arrive at the billets and be ready. Everything is being arranged for battle...”

The team of the submarine “Ronis” in Liepāja took the decision to leave the location in the war port to be ready for a fight or evacuation to Sweden. Commander of the submarine, Captain Hugo Legzdīņš: “In the afternoon of 16 June we unmoored. Soviet ships in the war port were causing a slight disturbance. There were four of us on the navigation bridge — Captain Mamis, the helmsman, the signalman and I. At the moment of turning, Sergeant Daniēls suddenly exclaimed, “Commander, we are aimed at with a machine gun!” Indeed, a machine gun was positioned near the building that stood on the pier, and soldiers were busy with it. However, they did not open the fire [..]” The submarine took in food supplies and waited...

June 17. At 5:00, USSR troops crossed the Latvian border in several places. The units of the 3rd army moved to Riga, over which from 10:00 flew Soviet planes, while the units

of the Soviet garrison located in Kurzeme took part in its occupation. At 13:00, Soviet forces reached Riga.

About 300 people were waiting for the Red Army in Daugavpils, approximately 1 000 people — in Kārsava. At the end of the working day, about 1 500 people had gathered in Riga's Station Square, watching the tanks. At 13:30, the Soviet tanks arriving from Pārdaugava took position in Station Square. Historian Aivars Stranga: "Until 15:30 the situation was calm, but then [...] the crowd grew and became increasingly aggressive, sharp clashes began with the police, who obviously had not expected anything of that sort..." At 16:00 USSR embassy demanded from police prefect to vacate the square, threatening that if this was not done, the Red Army would take over (quite possibly, this was done purposefully, hoping that the police would not be able to cope with a crowd, wherein operated at least some members of the communist underground — USSR agents). The crowd began attacking the police with stones and even knives. 57 police officers were wounded in the collisions (three of them — knifed), several demonstrators were injured, two of them — Ilya Tikhomirov and Pāvels Krišs — died from injuries. 26 demonstrators (9 Jews, 9 Russians and 8 Latvians) were sentenced to administrative punishment. Jānis Breikšs, a lawyer opposed to K. Ulmanis' regime, wrote about what he had seen: "...people of dubious appearance emerged from Latgale (Moscow — Ē. J.) Suburb, carrying flowers in their hands, giving them to the Red Army, and loudly begged for bread, declaring that they were starving. This comic demonstration was organized by local underground..." A. Stranga, who has expressly studied these events, writes: "The city had a significant number of

unemployed, but in the area around the station square — on the side of Moscow Suburb — lived quite a number of inhabitants of proletarian or semi-proletarian inclination, who may have had no occupation at all; there was no shortage of hooligans and even real bandits, for whom 17 June became the day to celebrate their darkest instincts.”

In the morning, the Soviet embassy by word of mouth notified the director of Riga Radio that no information could be given about the arrival of Soviet troops with an exception of that which would come from the embassy itself. Only music could be played freely. The message was read in Russian, but the embassy was dissatisfied with the quality and sent their employee, who read it out for the second time. Radio journalist K. Karulis: “It was a little past twelve. Suddenly there was a great rumble and uproar from below: a tank drove up on the opposite side of K. Barona Street. Maneuvered for a while, its caterpillar tracks slid on smooth asphalt and, catching in places, left deep grooves. The tank moved with its front right against the corner of the house. The rumble ceases, and then we observed that the barrel of the tank gun slowly rose. It gradually moved upward, until it was aimed directly at our window...”

At 16:00 K. Ulmanis went on a drive along the streets with a secretary and an aide-de-camp in an open car, on Marijas Street — shouts from the crowd: “Long live Latvia!”, “Long live the President!”

At 21:00 a unit of the Army Headquarters Battalion arrived in the Station Square, dispersing the crowd there. Subsequently, the authorities fully controlled the situation in the capital.

At 21:30 commenced the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers and the leadership of the army. After that, at 22:15 K. Ulmanis in a radio address announced (to do so, he first had to obtain the permission of the USSR embassy) the resignation of the government and his remaining in the post of the president of the state. In this radio-transmitted speech it was insisted that everything was going according to a mutual agreement and “friendly troops” were entering the country. The words “I shall remain in my place; you should remain in yours!” were spoken. After the speech, the President came to the journalists in the adjoining office. K. Karulis: “Suddenly my colleague Mahtuss spoke: Mr. President, didn’t we have to fight? The rest of us were surprised, Mahtuss did not appear to us all that militant. He was a good colleague. Although a Jew, he spoke Latvian perfectly, had served in the Daugavgrīva Artillery. The President turned askance towards him: Do you think so? And do many think so? Mahtuss said: Yes! — And what good would it be? — The President’s voice was tired, lacking his usual vigor. The President turned away and entered the chamber.”

Corporal of the Aviation Regiment Ž. Tomsons: “Night came again and passed... On the morning of 17 June, the eclipse of the Sun... Latvia sank into darkness — succumbed to superiority, brutal power. We couldn’t look our friends in the eye anymore, we didn’t talk, instead, we looked somewhere far away, where our free skies still could be glimpsed. Something great, mighty had broken within us... Like a whiplash, silence was interrupted by the air defense telephonic announcement on the loudspeaker: “Russian planes over Daugavpils!” Altitude and direction followed. All sights turned on the captain, who

with his long cigarette did not cease walking around the radio station, apparently still waiting for something. Waiting for an order for battle. But the radio station remained silent, as did the broad-shouldered captain. Only his shoulders looked as if they had drooped, his back as if it were bent...”²⁹

The army was forced to observe the events, because that was the order. General Jānis Ezeriņš, Deputy Commander of the Vidzeme Division, could no longer endure it, and by word of mouth ordered the 9th Rēzekne Infantry Regiment to show resistance to the incoming Soviet forces, and was preparing to give such an order also to the Madona garrison. The Minister of War and the Commander of the Army ordered the Commander of the Vidzeme Division to remove J. Ezeriņš from office and arrest him (this was partially fulfilled by dismissing J. Ezeriņš on leave).

A “puppet government” led by Augusts Kirhenšteins was formed to implement the country’s destruction plan. An entirely undemocratic “parliamentary election” was held in July, and the newly elected institution immediately demanded Latvia’s “incorporation” into the USSR. The annexation was legally completed in early August.

R. Timermanis and other lower and middle level officers of the Latvian Army did not and could not know of all the developments described above, yet they saw very much and suffered profoundly. Nevertheless, the soldiers had to obey the orders. The service continued. In an occupied country.

²⁹ For more detailed information, see: *Latvijas okupācijas hronika: aculiecinieku vēstījums* [Chronicle of the Occupation of Latvia: The Narrative of Witnesses]. Available at: <http://www.ir.lv/2014/3/14/latvijas-okupacijas-hronika-aculiecinieku-vestijums>

The army was renamed the “People’s Army”, so-called political leaders were introduced into the units, they “educated” and supervised officers and soldiers. On 20 July, the Army Commander made changes to the Internal Service’s rules of procedure to allow soldiers to participate in elections, to join political parties and with the permission to be granted by political leaders in each occasion separately to publish articles in the press, to take part in political meetings, demonstrations and rallies in their spare time, as well as with the permission to be granted by political leaders in each occasion separately to make public political speeches.³⁰ In 16–17 July, the soldiers had to take part in the election of the new “People’s Saeima”. As expected, the number of votes cast for the only list by the troops ranged from 90 to 100 %.³¹ At the polling stations, troops were ordered to arrive in organized manner, closed ranks, carrying national and red flags. The participation of troops in the demonstrations of 18 and 21 July was organized similarly.³² On 21 July, the newly elected “Saeima” was congratulated by communist J. Vecvagars, the political leader of the Kurzeme division. In his address, he particularly emphasized that soldiers demanded that Latvia be included in the USSR as the 14th republic.³³

³⁰ *Latvijas Kareivis*, 20 July 1940; *Latvijas okupācija un aneksija: 1939–1940. Dokumenti un materiāli* [Occupation and annexation of Latvia: 1939–1940. Documents and materials]. Compiled by I. Grava-Kreituse, I. Feldmanis, J. Goldmanis, A. Stranga. Rīga, 1995, pp. 526.

³¹ *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 17 July 1940. 17.

³² *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, pp. 152–153.

³³ *Latvijas Tautas Saeimas 1. sesija 1940. gada 21.–23. jūlijā* [The 1st Session of the Latvian People’s Saeima in 21–23 July 1940]. Stenogrammu atreferējums [Account of transcripts]. Rīga, 1940, p. 16.

Also, on this day, army units were forced to send their representatives to a “people’s demonstration”. On 18 July, the Chief of Staff of the Army issued an order stipulating mandatory subscription to communist press publications in the military units. On 25 July, the Army Internal Service Regulations were amended to replace the form of address “Mr.” with “comrade”, and abolished playing of the Latvian national anthem and the Lutheran Church hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” during the evening retreat.³⁴ From then on, the sword was no longer worn on the uniform for ceremonies and by guards of honor.³⁵

Due to the constantly manifested unfavorable attitude of the Latvian Army soldiers against the occupation of state, special information sections were established at the divisions and regiments in mid-August. These were subordinated to the division commanders and the Chief of Staff at the Army Information Department and gathered information on such manifestations.³⁶

Sending the officers off to retirement began, the “congratulatory letters” of soldiers were sent to the “People’s *Saeima*” to praise the “admission” to the USSR.³⁷ In August, Soviet films were particularly intensively shown in military units, Red Army amateur concerts and joint sports competitions took place. Red Army garrisons sent “presents” — books, posters,

³⁴ LNA-LVVA, 1527. f., 1. apr., 227. l., 165. lp.; *Sociālistiskās revolūcijas uzvara Latvijā 1940. gadā* (20. VI — 5. VIII) [*The victory of the socialist revolution in Latvia in 1940 (20th VI–5th VIII)*]. *Dokumenti un materiāli* [Documents and materials]. Rīga, 1963, p. 337.

³⁵ *Latvijas Kareivis*, 26 July 1940.

³⁶ LNA-LVVA, 1469. f., 1. apr., 2036. l., 81. lp.

³⁷ *Sarkanais Kareivis*, 10 August 1940.

teaching aids (first of all, Russian language textbooks), in the middle of August, a delegation of the Latvian Army Aviation Regiment took part in the USSR Air Force Day celebrations in Moscow.³⁸

On 26 August, the army commander issued an order to immediately organize Russian language courses in all army units and institutions,³⁹ if this had not already been done. Due to the annexation of Latvia to the USSR, on 6 August, the army commander ordered the exclusive use of USSR flags for the external and internal decoration of military units.⁴⁰

On 11 July, the USSR People's Commissar of Defense S. Tymoshenko had ordered the establishment of Baltic Military District, with the intention of forming its staff from the officers of Kalinin Military District headquarters. Colonel-General A. Loktionov was appointed the commander of the district, and Lieutenant-General P. Klenov was appointed the chief of staff.⁴¹ In the first half of August 1940, the USSR People's Commissar of Defense carried out preparatory work for inclusion of the armies of the former Baltic states in the Red Army. On 17 August, Tymoshenko issued an order to establish territorial corps in the Baltic republics on the basis of the armies of the former Baltic states. This was to be done by retiring "unreliable elements" from the army, and it was planned that such corps would be established for one year,

³⁸ *Cīņa*, 29 July 1940; *Padomju Latvija*, 19 August 1940.

³⁹ LNA-LVVA, 1526. f., 1. apr., 476. l., 152. lp.

⁴⁰ LNA-LVVA, 1474. f., 1. apr., 226. l., 291. lp.

⁴¹ *Okupācijas varu politika Latvijā 1939–1991 [Policy of the Occupying Powers in Latvia 1939–1991]*. Dokumentu krājums [Collected documents]. Rīga: Nordik, 1999, p. 83.

during which the commanding staff would learn Russian and the Red Army's regulations, and then be included in the Red Army according to the principles of extraterritoriality. Some commanders and candidates for political positions had to be chosen from amongst Russians and other nationalities serving in the Red Army. The stipulated size of the corps was to be 15 142 people (of which 208 people in the aviation squadron).⁴² On 9 September, Red Army commissioners and political leaders arrived in the units. They were "briefed" about the situation by the former political leaders.⁴³ Repressions against officers began.

On 27 August, the commander of the Baltic Special Military District, founded on 11 July, ordered A. Loktionov to establish the 24th Territorial Rifle Corps with two divisions on the basis of the Latvian Army.⁴⁴ The command of the formation of the 24th Territorial Corps was entrusted to its commander — General R. Klaviņš, but it was managed by the Chief of the Military District Staff Lieutenant-General P. Klenov. By the order of the Minister of War issued on 19 September 1940, the procedure for wearing a Latvian Army uniform in the corps was determined: the former uniform was to be worn without shoulder straps and with

⁴² *Okupācijas varu ...*, pp. 84–85; Martinionis, A. *Prievarta ir smurtu* [Coercion and violence]. Vilnius, 1998, pp. 73–74; Savčenko, V. 24. strēlnieku korpusa liktenis [The fate of the 24th Rifle Corps]. *Padomju Latvijas Komunisti*, 1989, No. 2, pp. 63–70.

⁴³ LNA-LVVA, 1474. f., 2. apr., 191. l., 34., 49., 69., 82., 96., 106. lp.

⁴⁴ The State Archives of Latvia of the National Archives of Latvia (hereinafter LNA-LVA), 698. f., 1. apr., 17. l., 1.–2., 6.–12. lp. The Lithuanian Army was transformed into the 29th and the Estonian Army into the 22nd Territorial Rifle Corps.

the Red Army service rank insignia.⁴⁵ A red star cap-badge had to be worn with the headgear of the uniform (it was also to be worn on the belt buckle, however, the soldiers usually did not comply with this requirement).⁴⁶ On 27 September, the former Ministry of War, led by R. Dambītis, was dissolved, and the People's Army Liquidation Commission, headed by the Latvian People's Commissar for Finance of the Latvian SSR A. Tabaks, began its work. This commission also included R. Dambītis (he continued to work and issue orders as an authorized representative of this commission), B. Trubiņš, People's Commissar of the State Audit Office, K. Pugo, a representative of the LCP, and Administrative Lieutenant-Colonel (military clerk) V. Saulitis, a representative of the former Ministry of War.⁴⁷

On 9 October, the position of the Commander of the Latvian People's Army was also terminated. In one of his last orders on 14 September the Commander ordered the military commandant of the city of Riga to discontinue his functions regarding the registration and supervision of soldiers on that day, except for surveillance of the People's Army garrison guards until they were replaced by Red Army guards, and to hand over the command post documentation to the headquarters of the Baltic Special War Area at its direction. The Liquidation Commission (its "office") actually

⁴⁵ LNA-LVVA, 1469. f., 1. apr., 2036. l., 82.–84. lp.

⁴⁶ E. V. Mūsu pulka beigu posms [The final stage of our regiment]. In: *Par Latviju! 8. Daugavpils kājnieku pulka 50 gadu piemiņas izdevums* [For Latvia! The 50th Anniversary Edition of the 8th Daugavpils Infantry Regiment]. A. Treus (ed.). Vasteras, 1971, p. 24.

⁴⁷ *Sarkanais Kareivis*, 28 September 1940.

ceased its activities only in March of 1941 and had placed at the disposal of the Red Army 150 train sets with armaments, equipment and other property located in the Latvian Army's warehouses.⁴⁸ Its total material value is difficult to determine, as it also included buildings, landfills, military hospitals, warehouses, airplanes, vehicles, armed trains, etc.

On 3 September, the commander of the corps R. Kļaviņš signed the 1st order for the corps. It had two divisions and also a 24th separate aviation squadron (formed from the Aviation Regiment, moving it from Bišumuiža to Gulbene).⁴⁹

The suitability of the soldiers to be transferred to the newly formed corps for service in the Red Army was assessed and selected by the war commissioners and the institutions of the People's Commissariat of the Interior, but the candidates suggested by General R. Kļaviņš were not always approved. Already at the end of August, a test of the trust of officers and instructors began in all army subdivisions, during which special lists had to be drawn up with detailed information on officers' and instructors' social background, general and military education, promotions and awards received, participation in battles during the 1919–1920 Independence War, etc.⁵⁰

Each officer and instructor was compelled to write a detailed autobiography in Russian, fill in a special questionnaire and send the entire file together with the photographs to the headquarters of Baltic Special War Area in Riga for

⁴⁸ *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, 167. lpp.; LNA-LVVA, 1526. f., 1. apr., 94. l., 268. lp.

⁴⁹ LNA-LVA, 698. f., 1. apr., 15. l., 3.–4. lp.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13. l., 17. lp.; *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, pp. 173–184.

further processing and delivery to Moscow. According to the recollections of the then Zemgale Division Chief of Staff Colonel A. Silgailis, at the end of August and in September the senior officers had to arrive at the Army Headquarters in Riga (Ministry of War building), where Red Army officers questioned them at individual tables (altogether about 100 questions were asked, including those on activities during the 1917 Bolshevik coup and the Latvian War of Independence, etc.). At the same time, Brigadier-General Borisov had arrived in Riga from Moscow to lead this work.⁵¹

Appointments to corps units up to commanders took place on the orders of the Military Council of the Baltic Special War Area. Latvian officers were appointed as commanders; however, Russian officers of the Red Army were appointed as their deputies. For example, Captain Yaroshnikov was appointed as an assistant to the commander of the 24th Aviation Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Žanis Jēre. According to the order of the People's Commissar for Defense of the USSR, on 15 November 1940, a total of 1 175 officers of the 24th Corps were included in the Red Army staff lists.⁵² At the headquarters of the corps, in accordance with the staff of the Red Army, the 3rd (special) unit was established under the command of Colonel Vesjolkin, its task was to monitor the political trustworthiness of the staff and to organize a spying network. The unit did not work on the premises of headquarters and was not in fact

⁵¹ LNA-LVVA, 1469. f., 1. apr., 2995. l., 152. lp.; *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, pp. 173–174.

⁵² LNA-LVA, 698. f., 1. apr., 15. l., 135.–170. lp.; Savčenko, V. 24. strēlnieku korpusa liktenis [The fate of the 24th Rifle Corps], p. 66.

subordinated to the commander of the corps.⁵³ Clearly, the official language in the corps was Russian, Latvian patriotic songs were forbidden during the march, the soldiers had to learn the Soviet “Katyusha”, “Vast is my homeland”, “Oh, Moscow”, “Solyiko” and other songs. The intensity of political training for soldiers and officers increased significantly.⁵⁴

The duration of compulsory military service was extended to 24 months, as stipulated in the Red Army. From the beginning of October, combat training began in parts of the corps in accordance with the Red Army’s regulations, instructions and training plans, but the number of such regulations was insufficient. Initially, the training was still conducted in Latvian, but quite soon after an order was issued to switch completely to Russian, which many soldiers and even the younger officers did not understand. In January of 1941, the corps newspaper *Sarkanais Kareivis* (“Red Soldier”) began publishing a Russian language training course.⁵⁵ Frequent relocations, caused primarily by the lack of suitable accommodation for troops, significantly hampered training in the corps. At the turn of the 1940 and 1941, the 181st Rifle Division was transferred from Zemgale and Kurzeme (Tukums, Talsi, Kandava area) to Vidzeme. Its headquarters were located in Gulbene, the 186th and 195th Rifle Regiments — in Alūksne, the 243rd Rifle Regiment — in Gulbene, the 623rd Artillery Regiment — in Balvi and Viļaka, the 624th Artillery Regiment — in Gulbene and Jaungulbene. The gradual retiring of former Latvian

⁵³ *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, p. 211.

⁵⁴ Liepiņš, A. 1. Jātnieku pulks, pp. 252–253.

⁵⁵ *Sarkanais Kareivis*, 8 January 1941.

Army officers continued constantly (especially until giving the Red Army's solemn oath on 23 February 1941).

As early as on 14 September, by the order of the army commander, a total of 95 officers, administrative officers and one doctor lieutenant-colonel from the Navy Administration, Submarine Division, Mine Division, Coastal Artillery Regiment (in November, the order was altered regarding the allocation of the First Lieutenant of the Coastal Artillery Regiment K. Šķēle into the fleet, placing him into the 24th Separate Aviation Squadron), the Aviation Regiment and 2 officers from the 2nd Ventspils and 5th Cēsis Infantry Regiments were transferred into disposal of the commander of the Liepāja Naval Base of the Red-Flagged Baltic Fleet. Simultaneously, their names were deleted from the lists of the Latvian People's Army and Navy.⁵⁶ On 27 September the army commander transferred another 723 officers⁵⁷ to the 24th Territorial Corps, and on 10 October the Latvian People's Army envoy (following an order issued a few days earlier to the Baltic Special War Area troops in personnel matters) transferred additional 928 officers. Concurrently, on the same day, another 86 officers (mainly from the Geodesy-Topography Department of the Army Headquarters, the Army Headquarters Battalion and the Military School) were allocated to the Baltic Special War Area Headquarters. A separate paragraph of the order related to the 35 former officers of the Air Force and another 11 officers of other units

⁵⁶ *Armijas komandiera 1940. g. 14. septembra pavēle [Order of 14 September 1940 by Commander of the Army].* LVVA Zinātniskā bibliotēka.

⁵⁷ LNA-LVVA, 1481. f., 1. apr., 133. l., 458.–467. lp.

assigned to aviation training in the 24th Separate Aviation Squadron. Furthermore, by order of the commissioner of the Liquidation Commission, on 6 November, Lieutenant V. Krastiņš of the Aviation Regiment (who was one of the few Latvian officers actively supporting the measures of the occupation power) was transferred to the 24th Separate Squadron. Altogether 1 886 officers, including administrative and sanitary officers of the Latvian Army were initially transferred to the 24th Territorial Corps, the Red-Flagged Baltic Fleet and the parts and institutions subordinated to the headquarters of the war district. From November 1940 to January 1941, at first by orders of the liquidation commission, whereas later — following the orders of headquarters of the Baltic Special War Area, the mass retirement of Latvian Army officers not included in the corps was continued. The substantiation of retiring in the orders usually read “Due to the impossibility to be used in Red Army personnel” or “Due to lack of a suitable position”.⁵⁸ R. Timermanis was also retired on 30 November, but, as in the case of some other retired officers, he was forced to continue for some time due to a catastrophic shortage of commanders in the corps and was not fully released until early 1941.

After the state occupation and annexation, Kristīne Timermane, who lived in Bezdelīgu Street 12–18 in Riga, applied to the Riga City Social Insurance Department on 28 December 1940, writing: “I am 68 years old, incapable of work and ill, therefore I ask to continue disbursing to me

⁵⁸ LNA-LVVA, 1481. f., 1. apr., 133. l., 1.–2., 54., 63.–67., 70.–71., 74., 95., 118.–127., 133. lp.; 2. apr., 198. l., 711.–714. lp.

a pension on the basis of documents in the former Ministry of National Welfare. I hope you will grant my request because my pension is so small, i.e., 20 lats per month, that it is not even possible get by with it and therefore it should be increased.” Upon examining the application, the official found: “Considering that the applicant’s husband, Colonel Dāvids Timermanis had served as a brigadier quarter master in the former Russian Army, and the applicant could not present another length of service, the application for a pension was rejected.” On 21 April 1941, the decision to reject the request from the Lenin District Social Insurance Division of the Riga City Council of Workers’ Deputies of the Latvian SSR was sent to K. Timermane, who at that time lived at Lielāsmuižas Street 30–3 in Riga (her son Roberts and his family rented an apartment next door, — in number 32).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ LNA-LVVA, 5213. f., 2. apr., 909. l., b. p.



Dāvids and Kristīne Timermaņi. St. Petersburg, around 1908



Military school cadet Roberts Dāvids Timermanis, 1927



Military school cadets in a lesson in the Aviation Regiment, late 1920s



Military school graduation, 1929



*Senior Lieutenant of the Aviation Regiment
Roberts Dāvids Timermanis, 1932*



*Lieutenant of the Cavalry Regiment Roberts Dāvīds Timermanis
(on the left) with a comrade-in-arms, around 1930*



Group of Aviation Regiment officers, 1930s



The crashed plane piloted by Roberts Dāvids Timermanis, April 1933



*Aviation Regiment officers. The first from the right —
Roberts Dāvids Timermanis, the second half of the 1930s*



Wedding of Roberts and Valija Timermaņi, 1 April 1934



*Graduation from the University of Latvia Faculty of Law and
Economics, Department of Economics, 1937*



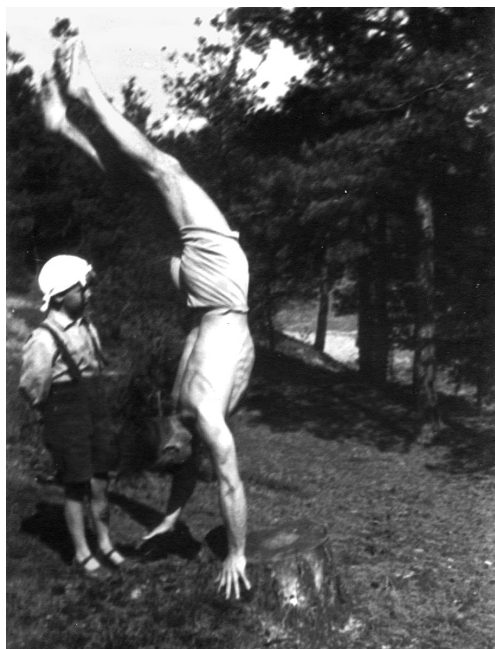
Roberts and Valija Timermaņi, late 1930s



Timermaņi family, end of 1930s



*First Lieutenant of the Technical Division Staff Roberts Dāvids
Timermanis, late 1930s*



*Roberts Dāvids Timermanis with his son Eigis Dāvis
in recreation, 1939*



Roberts Dāvids Timermanis, late 1940



*First Lieutenant Roberts Dāvids Timermanis,
Aviation Squadron of the 24th Territorial Rifle Corps, late 1940*

CHAPTER 2

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis’ experience during World War II

Activities after demobilization

After demobilization from the Red Army on 7 November 1940, Roberts Dāvids Timermanis worked in civilian companies — at first in a tar factory in Riga, Sarkandaugava, and later in the office of the company “Izejviela” (“Raw Material”). This company, under the pretext of processing various raw materials, actually collected and destroyed books, including various publications of the Republic of Latvia and foreign countries, which seemed hostile to the Soviet authorities. These books were shredded to produce pulp for the production of new paper for Soviet propaganda publications. R. Timermanis’ widow Valija recalled that she dared to secretly take several valuable volumes from the piles of books to be destroyed, such as dictionaries and encyclopedias. R. Timermanis worked in “Izejviela” until the beginning of June 1941.

Shortly before the deportations on 14 June, R. Timermanis had managed to find out about the impending disaster. He left his home with his family and went

into hiding. During the first ten days of the German-USSR war, the Timermani family lived illegally and came back to their apartment in the capital only after the Red Army retreated and German troops arrived in Riga on 1 July.

After the beginning of the German occupation, R. Timermanis returned to his employment at the company “Izejviela”. This is evidenced by the supply booklet issued by the Riga Trade Directorate on 29 August 1941 to R. Timermanis (at that time, his family lived in Riga, Saulgožu Street 2–2), which listed all the issuance of cards for purchase of food and household goods to a specific person (head of household) and merchants’ notes on receipt of goods against cards. The booklet contains a note that, on 18 December 1941, R. Timermanis has worked for the raw materials collection and processing company “Izejviela” and that he was removed from the employee lists of that company on 8 March 1942, since on that date he was transferred to the German army supply, starting active military service.¹

Service in the German army

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis’ career in the armed formations of Nazi Germany began at the invitation of Colonel Rūdolfs Kandis, the former commander of the Latvian Aviation Regiment. At that time, R. Kandis was working as a liaison

¹ The original supply booklet is stored in Eigis Timermanis family archive.

officer at the headquarters of SS group leader Bruno G. Jedicke.² At the invitation, R. Timermanis left for Tukums, where on 8 March 1942 he volunteered for the 26th Tukums Police Battalion, which had been formed two days earlier.³

The 26th Tukums Police Battalion was mainly set up by drawing volunteers from Tukums, Jelgava and Bauska districts, forming altogether three companies. The first commander of the battalion was Lieutenant-Colonel Alfrēds Gredzens.⁴ First Lieutenant R. Timermanis was appointed a battalion adjutant, and he was in charge of keeping records of the battalion's internal and external documents. In his capacity of an officer of the police battalion, R. Timermanis received a good salary and alimentation. Later, his widow Valija in her memoirs noted that during the formation of the Tukums 26th Police Battalion and his training, R. Timermanis had brought all kinds of delicacies to Riga, which were not easily available due to wartime shortages, such as greenhouse-grown radishes, salad, and other special foodstuff.

After training, in early June 1942, the 26th Battalion was sent to Belarus, where it was stationed near the city of Maladzyechna. The battalion was used to fight in the local area against the red guerrillas, who actively carried out

² Neiburgs, U. "Grēka un ienaida liesmās!" *Latvijas Otrā pasaules kara stāsti* ["In flames of sin and hatred!" *Latvian World War II stories*]. Rīga: Latvijas Mediji, 2018.

³ Memories of Eigis Timermanis, transcripts in the author's archive.

⁴ *Latviešu karavīrs Otrā pasaules kara laikā: dokumentu un atmiņu krājums* [Latvian soldier during the Second World War: a collection of documents and memories]. Vol. 2. *Pirmās latviešu aizsardzības vienības Otrā pasaules karā* [The first Latvian defense units in the Second World War]. Freivalds, O. (ed.). Minstere: Daugavas Vanagu Centrālās valdes izdevums, 1972, p. 152.

various sabotages against parts of the German army, railway infrastructure and military facilities.

More specific information about R. Timermanis' time in the 26th Police Battalion is lacking. In one of the battles against the red partisans, R. Timermanis was wounded in the right hand. Although it is not clear exactly when the injury was sustained, by an order of 18 August 1942, he was sent to a military hospital in Riga for treatment, but then transferred from the 26th Tukums Police Battalion to the 270th Abrene Sapper Battalion.⁵

After recovery, R. Timermanis arrived at the headquarters of the Abrene Battalion on 21 September 1942. The Abrene Sapper Battalion was established on 9 May 1942, when Pēteris Saulītis, the appointed commander of the battalion, began to form a team of volunteers from the North Latgale region. At the end of May 1942, the battalion consisted of 11 officers, 49 instructors and 543 soldiers. In the late summer of 1942, the battalion was involved in the construction of a railway in Russia at the back of the front. In addition to its direct tasks, the battalion was occasionally involved in the fight against the red guerrillas.

On 18 March 1943, the battalion, coming under a full German subordination, was renamed the 672nd East Sapper Battalion (in German — *Ost-Pionier-Bataillon (Lettische) 672 des Heeres*).⁶ Unlike most other Latvian battalions, it was directly subordinated to the Wehrmacht and included in the 281st Guard Division.

⁵ LNA-LVVA, 2395. f., 1. apr., 270. l.

⁶ *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, 228. lpp.

In March and April 1943, the battalion built traffic communications in the OPOCHKA and SUJKOV districts of Belarus, while in October the battalion constructed bridges in Russia, on the strategically important road Sebez-Opochka, the section between Lavishchi and Sarodishchi. During the construction of the bridges, the battalion's headquarters were located in Lavischi village.

According to the memories of R. Timermanis' son, in the summer of 1943 the company commanded by R. Timermanis had been operating in the Abrene area. There, in the village of Barausi, about 7 kilometers southeast of Augšpils, his wife and two children spent their holidays at that time to celebrate R. Timermanis' birthday. R. Timermanis' family every now and then went on horseback trips, riding the horses of the 3rd Company. In January 1944, during the red guerrilla attack, the stables were set on fire and many horses were killed. Memories also include the fact that the soldiers of the company used to play various sports games such as volleyball, in their free time.⁷

R. Timermanis' abilities during his service in the battalion were appreciated, and on 1 June 1943 he was appointed the commander of the 3rd Company of the 672nd Sapper Battalion. The battalion commander's order No. 98 of 5 June states: "On 31 May, the battalion's adjutant first lieutenant Timermanis handed over the leadership of the headquarters and the section, and from 1 June took on the 3rd company as its commander."⁸

⁷ Memories of Eigis Timermanis, transcripts in the author's archive.

⁸ LNA-LVVA, 2395. f., 1. apr., 185. l.

At Christmas of 1943, R. Timermanis was awarded the 2nd Class Iron Cross for his service merits, as evidenced by Battalion order No. 127 (9 January 1944), signed by German Lieutenant-Colonel Beck⁹, a liaison officer in the German military band “North”. R. Timermanis received his Iron Cross in January after returning from a vacation he spent with his family in Riga. According to the information provided to the chekists (NKVD interrogators) by his comrade-in-arms Pēteris Frišbergs, R. D. Timermanis obtained the rank of captain after taking up the position of commander of the company.¹⁰ Since R. Timermanis was still a first lieutenant at Christmas of 1943, the rank of captain was obtained later — in 1944 or 1945.

As the German forces retreated, in July 1944 the battalion was sent to Kurzeme, where it was subordinated to the VI SS corps. On the line Jaunpils-Irlava, the battalion performed sapper tasks and was involved in battles. After the heavy third great battle of Kurzeme in January 1945, there were only about 300 men left in the battalion. As of 1 July 1944, it had 21 officers, 70 instructors, and 681 soldiers.¹¹

After the capitulation of Germany in May 1945, most of the battalion's soldiers were taken prisoner by the Soviets, but R. Timermanis refused to surrender to the Red Army and went into the forest.¹² As a decorated German army officer, he could not hope for any favorable fate in Soviet captivity. R. Timermanis' further actions attest to his

⁹ LNA-LVVA, 2395. f., 1. apr., 182. l.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 31. lp.

¹¹ *Latviešu karavīrs ...*, pp. 228, 229.

¹² Ibid., p. 131.

unshakeable belief that after the defeat of Germany, a new war would begin, in which the West would fight against the USSR, and consequently he decided to continue the fight as a partisan.

Latvian military formations in the Nazi German army, battles in the Eastern Front and Latvia (1941–1945)

The time of the Second World War is among the most tragic epochs in the history of Latvia. It profoundly changed the fate of the country for the duration of several decades. In the first year of the occupation by the USSR, the Latvian state, its intellectuals and army were destroyed, repressions against the population comprised great masses, a foreign and aggressive ideology was imposed. This led to a situation in which the second occupier — Nazi Germany — was welcomed as a liberator, and there were high hopes for the restoration of Latvia's statehood.

Most assuredly, the arrival of Nazi Germany did not bring Latvia independence. Instead, began the execution of the aggressive policies of another totalitarian superpower. At the same time, an unusual situation arose when a part of the Latvian population chose to fight in the army of one occupying state in hopes to combat another. The desire to never again permit the horrors caused by the Bolsheviks and to take revenge on the Soviet occupiers was extremely strong. Thus, Germany became a situational ally, and Latvian men

took up arms given by the Germans to fight the Bolsheviks. The principle “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” materialized.

Germany launched an attack on the USSR on the early morning of 22 June 1941. The units of the USSR army on the western border were completely unprepared for such a rapid attack, consequently, they began to retreat in panic, only occasionally showing any serious resistance. The situation in the Red Army on the western border of the USSR at that time could be described as chaos.

On the same day, the first German airstrikes on Red Army units took place in Liepāja, and on 23 June, the 291st German Infantry Division with supporting elements launched an attack on the city, which was occupied on 28/29 June, while already on 26 June the German 56th Tank Corps occupied Daugavpils.¹³

The activation of national partisan groups began with the battles between German and USSR troops in Latvia. Partisan groups in many places were formed from former Latvian Army soldiers, police officers and guards shortly before the start of the war. A significant addition was constituted by Latvian soldiers who had deserted from the Red Army’s 24th Territorial Corps or retired before the very commencement of the war. Overall, about 6 000 to 8 000 people joined the resistance, and the size of the partisan units ranged from a few to hundreds of men.

¹³ Buttar, P. *Between Giants. The Battle for the Baltics in World War II*. Osprey Publishing, p. 75; Bleiere, D., Butulis, I., Feldmanis, I., Stranga, A., Zunda, A. *Latvija Otrajā pasaules karā (1939–1945) [Latvia in the Second World War (1939–1945)]*. Rīga: Jumava, 2008, p. 245.

National partisans attacked fleeing Red Army units to disrupt their retreat, prevent marauders' activities and protect the local population. The strongest movement was in Vidzeme, significant battles took place in Limbaži, Alūksne, Smiltene and the surroundings.¹⁴

On 5 July, the warfare in Latvia ended because German forces had moved on to the territory of Estonia and Russia. A few days later, on 8 July, the Germans ordered the partisans to lay down their arms. The partisan units were transformed into self-defense command posts, which had to ensure internal security and order. These units were gradually reduced until the self-defense forces were disbanded in August 1941 and their functions in Latvia were assigned to a Latvian police commandant's office that was established on 28 August 1941.¹⁵

It soon became clear that Germany lacked the manpower to control the occupied territories. The front had traveled several hundred kilometers into the territory of the USSR, leaving behind extremely large areas where it was impossible to maintain security with the German soldiers alone, moreover, the extremely stretched supply lines were regularly attacked by red guerrillas. The leader of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, categorically opposed the arming of non-German peoples west of the Urals, and thus

¹⁴ *Latvija Otrajā pasaules karā ...*, 249. lpp.

¹⁵ Kangeris, K. Policijas struktūras Latvijā vācu okupācijas laikā (1941–1945) [Police structures in Latvia during the German occupation (1941–1945)]. In: *Okupētā Latvija 20. gadsimta 40. gados* [Occupied Latvia in the 1940s]. Ērglis, Dz. (comp.). Rīga: LU Latvijas vēstures institūts, 2005, pp. 284, 287, 289.

the inclusion of the Baltic nations in the Wehrmacht did not take place. However, the need for additional military force was pressing, so a compromise was found by creating armed formations from non-German nations within the SS¹⁶ that would take care of security behind the Wehrmacht lines.

Implementing this idea, in September 1941, the Germans began to form closed police units or order service battalions ¹⁷ (in German — *Schutzmannschafts-Bataillone*) in the Latvian General Area. They were used by the Germans both to maintain security at the back of the front and as combat units to fill gaps in the front. These police units could be called the beginnings of the Latvian Legion.

By December 1941, five such battalions had been formed from Latvian volunteers. This was done in the first stage of the formation of Latvian police battalions. The responsiveness to the service in the police battalions was great, so no particular problems arose in their formation. On 22 October 1941, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Kārlis Mangulis, the 1st Separate Battalion of the Riga Order Service without the 4th Company left for the front in Russia. Later, this battalion was given the name of the 16th Zemgale Battalion. The battalion performed the tasks of guarding the railway lines between Dno and

¹⁶ A paramilitary organization of the German Nazi Party, which exercised repressive, racial policy, intelligence, security and other functions in the interests of the regime. The units of its military branch *Waffen-SS* fought on the front under the Wehrmacht, as well as provided security behind the front lines.

¹⁷ As of 25 August 1942, the official name of the order service battalions was “defense service units / battalions”, but from 24 May 1943 — “Latvian police units / battalions”.

Staraya Russa. In December 1941, the newly formed 19th Order Service Battalion left for Minsk, and on 30 March 1942, the 21st Order Service Battalion left for Krasnoye Selo in Russia.¹⁸

The second stage of the formation of the battalions took place from February to the autumn of 1942, when the flow of volunteers gradually slowed down and the cases of forced recruitment emerged. The third stage took place from the autumn of 1942 until the end of the war, and brought forced recruitment of police officers from the private service, i.e., Group A and B¹⁹ police officers. A total of 49 police battalions were formed during the German occupation.²⁰

Initially, during the formation of the police battalions, the Germans successfully used the Latvian anti-communist sentiment, because the main motivation of the soldiers of these battalions was to fight against the Red Army on the Eastern Front. Unfortunately, the Germans did not keep their promises and most of these battalions were directed to other tasks, including combating red guerrillas, guarding military facilities, railway lines, ghettos and other tasks unrelated to regular warfare. Several battalions operated in Ukraine and

¹⁸ Silgailis, A. *Latviešu leģions: dibināšana, formēšana un kauju gaitas Otrajā pasaules karā* [Latvian Legion: foundation, formation and battles in the Second World War]. Riga: Preses nams, 2006, pp. 30, 32.

¹⁹ Latvian order police officers in the districts were divided into three groups during the German occupation: Group A corresponded to staff police officers, Group B consisted of freelance police officers who guarded various objects and received a salary in the same way as Group A, while Group C consisted of a police reserve, which received the salary for the time served.

²⁰ *Latvija Otrajā pasaules karā ...*, pp. 347, 348.

Poland, and it was not in the interests of those serving in them to directly fight against the Red Army.

Following the German military failures on the Eastern Front since the winter of 1941–1942, the idea of forming larger military formations from the people of the Baltic states was gradually considered. Germany was short of soldiers for the war against the USSR, and since January 1942, the issue of forming an Estonian and Latvian legion had been raised in German military circles. On the one hand, the warfare against the USSR required much more troops from Germany, but on the other hand, the Nazis found the idea of arming non-Germans on the front lines unacceptable, moreover, there were some fears that the people of the occupied lands might eventually turn their weapons against the Germans themselves.

Germany's growing military difficulties eventually led to a change in the position, and a decision was made to form legion units from the people of Latvia and Estonia. This process developed most rapidly in Estonia, where, from the Nazi point of view, the population of all the Baltic states was most in line with German racist policies. There, on 28 August 1942, the Germans permitted the Estonians to form a legion.²¹

In the case of Latvia, the Self-Government of the Land initially submitted a memorandum to General Commissioner for Latvia Otto Heinrich Drexler on 4 November 1942, in which it agreed to form Latvian armed forces under German command, provided Germany gave guarantees that state independence of Latvia would be restored. The Germans

²¹ Silgailis, A. *Latviešu leģions ...*, 35. lpp.

rejected this possibility, but cooperation between the two sides on this issue continued. In January 1943, the Germans obtained the consent of the Self-Government of the Land regarding involvement in the mobilization of Latvian men. This gave an opportunity to portray the formation of the legion as a Latvians' own initiative. Of course, it was just a signboard for illegal mobilization.

On 23 January 1943, Adolf Hitler gave a verbal order to form the Latvian Volunteer Legion. Based on this, SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler the next day united three Latvian Order Service battalions (No. 16, 19, 21) fighting in the ranks of the 2nd Motorized Brigade on the Leningrad Front, giving them the name of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. Four months later, all Latvian units in the SS and police were named Latvian Legion. The written order on the formation of the legion was issued by A. Hitler on 10 February 1943.²²

Two Latvian military units were established within the Waffen-SS. The 15th Latvian SS Volunteer Division was formed as the first in 1943 (in June 1944 reformed into the 15th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS), while the 19th Latvian SS Volunteer Division was established on the basis of the 2nd Latvian SS Volunteer Brigade in March 1944 (and since June 1944 renamed the 19th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS). Despite the presence of the term “volunteer” in the title, the number of people who joined it voluntarily is estimated at only around 15–20 %. The others

²² Neiburgs, U. *Latviešu leģiona izveidošana* [Establishment of the Latvian Legion]. In: *Latviešu leģionāri* [Latvian Legionnaires]. Rīga: Daugavas Vanagi, 2005, pp. 14, 15.

were forcibly mobilized.²³ Thus, the legion also embodied one of the most tragic pages of the Second World War in the history of Latvia.

Despite their formal affiliation with the SS troops, the units of the Latvian Legion were under the supreme command of the Wehrmacht, and they were regular troops engaged only in direct warfare on the front. Unlike the soldiers of the German SS units, who swore allegiance, courage and obedience until death to the German Führer and Chancellor, Latvian legionnaires promised obedience to the Commander in Chief of the German Armed Forces and only in the fight against Bolshevism.²⁴

Latvians were not given much freedom in the formation and management of these units. The division commanders were Germans, and the division headquarters also consisted only of German officers. Latvian officers were entrusted with the command of the regiment and lower level units. The highest position a Latvian could hold in the Legion was in fact the position of Inspector General held by Rūdolfis Bangerskis, however, his capacity was considerably limited. R. Bangerskis carried out only the work of summoning and inspecting legionnaires and was used for propaganda purposes.²⁵

The creation of the Legion's units and their involvement in the battles took place at a time when the pressure of the Red Army was gradually increasing in all sectors of the war front. In May 1943, the SS Latvian Brigade (since 22 October 1943, — the 2nd Latvian SS Volunteer Brigade)

²³ *Latvija Otrajā pasaules karā ...*, p. 359.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

²⁵ Neiburgs, *U. Latviešu leģiona izveidošana ...*, p. 15.

was transferred to Volkhov positions, which were located about 25 km north of Novgorod. There, the Red Army had set up a bridge-head about 8 km deep in an attempt to break the front. These positions were notable with a rather swampy area, consequently, it was necessary to construct artificial log roads and trails, along which all the necessary delivery took place. Units of the Latvian Legion fought in the vicinity of Volkhov until September 1943. These battles were followed by a period of relative silence, interrupted by an attack of the Red Army on the outskirts of Leningrad in January 1944.

After fighting heavy battles against Soviet troops, the German army continued to retreat, and at the end of February 1944 the Latvian units — the 2nd Brigade and the 15th Division — took a joint defensive position on the banks of the Sorota and Velikaya Rivers, in a line of defense also known as the Panther position.²⁶

One of the most memorable moments of the battle took place when the Red Army units occupied a significant elevation with a mark of 93.4. In order to recapture this plateau, a special battle group was formed under command of Colonel Arturs Silgailis, which included parts of both units of the Latvian Legion. On 16 March, the battle group launched a successful attack and regained plateau a few days later. It was the first battle in which both Latvian units fought side by side, which is why 16 March is celebrated as the Remembrance Day of Latvian legionnaires.²⁷

²⁶ Kuzmins, V. *Latviešu leģionāri cīņās Austrumu frontē* [Latvian legionnaires in the battles in the Eastern Front]. In: *Latviešu leģionāri* [Latvian Legionnaires], p. 90.

²⁷ Silgailis, A. *Latviešu leģions ...*, p. 95.

In July 1944, the Red Army entered Latvia. The 15th Division was evacuated to Vidzeme after heavy losses in retreating battles, and later moved on to Germany for reforming, where at the end of the war its operation ended. The 19th Division had also suffered a large loss of men, and it was transformed into a battle group, named after the division commander, SS Brigadier General Bruno Streckenbach.

From August 1944, the battle group fought against the Red Army in Vidzeme — the positions of Lake Lubāns and Cesvaine-Kārdaba. In early September, the battle group regained the name of the 19th Division.

In the summer and early autumn of 1944, several Latvian police and border guard regiments also took part in battles on the territory of Latvia. In July 1944, separate units of the Riga Regiment, the 2nd and 3rd Police Regiments, as well as the 2nd, 4th, 5th and 6th separate units of Border Guard Regiment were involved in the battles against the Red Army in the Daugavpils area, where they suffered heavy losses.

Significant battles of the 19th Division of the Latvian Legion followed at the end of September in Sigulda's position in the surroundings of More. They were especially important because holding them around Riga gave time for the German 16th and 18th army units to evacuate from Estonia to Kurzeme. After resigning from these positions, the division forces were redeployed to Kurzeme, where on 11 October they were stationed in the vicinity of Džūkste. The battle stage of the so-called Kurzeme fortress began.²⁸

²⁸ Kuzmins, V. *Latviešu leģionāri cīņās ...*, p. 170

The warfare on the Kurzeme front took place in a series of battles, which in military history has been divided into six major battles, five of which, except for the second, also involved the 19th Division. A total of 32 German divisions participated in holding the Kurzeme front, including the 19th Division, as well as several Latvian police battalions and construction battalions.

In the first two major battles, the First and Second Baltic Fronts were tasked with destroying the Army Group "North". The main areas of attack were Liepāja and Saldus. In the first major battle, which took place eight days from 15 October, the Red Army was able to push back the German forces by only two kilometers. In the second major battle (from 27 October to 25 November), the Soviet troops were able to occupy only a small front sector at a depth of four kilometers and a width of 12 kilometers in the Priekule-Vaiņode district, and Auce, suffering huge losses. The unsuccessful attacks led to the decision of the Red Army High Command in the future operations to focus on the task of preventing the evacuation of the Army Group North to Germany.

In the third major battle of Kurzeme (from 21 to 31 December), one of the directions of the Red Army's attack was the front section between Dobeles and Džūkste defended by the 19th Division and the 106th Latvian Grenadier Regiment (part of the 21st German Infantry Division). This battle was profoundly tragic, since, for the first time during the conflict, Latvians fought against Latvians, because the 130th Latvian Rifle Corps was also involved in the attack. The fourth major battle of Kurzeme began on 23 January 1945, when the Soviet forces tried to push through to Liepāja,

but without success. In the fifth battle (from 12 February to 14 March), the 19th Division defended itself in the Džūkste and Lestene districts.

In the last battle of Kurzeme (from 17 March to 3 April), the units of the 19th Division fought in the vicinity of Blīdene. After this battle, active warfare in Kurzeme did not resume and the front stabilized on the line Jūrmalciems — Priekule — Pampāļi — Saldus — Grenči — Radziņciems — Klapkalnciems.

After the capitulation of the German armed forces, the Army Group “Kurzeme” also surrendered and 286 000 people who had fought on the German side, including about 23 000 Latvian legionnaires, were taken prisoner by the Soviets.²⁹ However, not all legionnaires surrendered, some went into hiding in the forests. The number of Latvian soldiers — legionnaires, police battalions and other units who went into the forests in the historical literature is presently estimated at around 4 000.³⁰ Some of these men continued their fight as national partisans.

In total, about 110 000–115 000 Latvian soldiers fought in the ranks of the German Armed Forces, and about 30 000–50 000 of these soldiers lost their lives in the battles.³¹

²⁹ *Latvija Otrajā pasaules karā ...*, pp. 366–367; Kuzmins, V. *Latviešu leģionāri cīņās ...*, p. 171.

³⁰ Vasiļevskis, J. *Latviešu leģionāri nacionālo partizānu rindās* [Latvian legionnaires in the ranks of national partisans]. In: *Latviešu leģionāri* [Latvian Legionnaires], p. 344.

³¹ Neiburgs, U. *Latviešu leģiona izveidošana ...*, p. 15.

CHAPTER 3

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis’ participation in the National Partisan Movement in 1945

Joining the armed resistance

After entering the forest, R. Timermanis turned his back on Kurzeme that was overrun by the Red Army forces and along Tukums-Riga highway walked in the direction of Riga. In order to avoid unwelcome interest, in the daytime he had to traverse areas of woodland, whereas at night he could venture upon open roads.

On his way to Riga, R. Timermanis on Tukums highway met his comrade-in-arms Pēteris Frišbergs who had served together with R. Timermanis in Sapper Battalion No. 672. P. Frišbergs was on the way to his native Rugāji civil parish in Abrene district, yet, after their meeting, they decided to go to Lubāna civil parish, Madona district, where P. Frišbergs had a cousin. Given that R. Timermanis was not likely to have anything to do in Riga, he simply joined P. Frišbergs and decided to engage in armed resistance. In Kurzeme, he had seen thousands of legionaries disappear in the forests instead

of surrendering to the Red Army, which made it clear that the struggle against the USSR would continue. Approximately in a month's time, both former army mates finally arrived at Lubāna civil parish.¹

On this side of Madona district, since spring small armed groups had been formed, yet the local underground forces lacked a leader who would be ready to organize them for partisan movement. This role was assumed by the former member of the Latvian paramilitary organization (*aizsargs*) and policemen at the time of the German occupation Kārlis Dankers (Bangerskis), who, with several partisans, arrived at Meirāni civil parish in the spring of 1945. K. Dankers sought the local underground men and included them into his group of partisans. Slowly, by visiting their hiding places, until the Midsummer of 1945, K. Dankers had added almost 20 men to his group.²

Although K. Dankers was a rather belligerent man, his group had not yet made any serious attacks on the Soviet invaders and their supporters. A minor exception to this had been a *Līgo* (Midsummer) Night of 1945, when the leader of the group, together with a partisan Eduards Tiltiņš, shot the Meirāni civil parish destroyer (*istrebitel*)³ Jānis Pelšs dead. The attack was caused by the fact that in the spring of 1945, J. Pelšs, under the influence of jealousy, had killed a local

¹ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 36. lpp.

² Ibid., p. 103.

³ The paramilitary unit formed by the USSR security authorities, the so-called destroyer (*istrebeli*) battalions charged with local control. Destroyers maintained the order instigated by occupying powers with the benefit of their local knowledge.

underground man named Arnolds, who was hiding together with the latter partisans of Danker's group.⁴ The situation, however, had been rather singular, because J. Pelšs, being a destroyer, nevertheless was hiding the local underground men dodging conscription in the Red Army. At the time immediately after the re-occupation, it was not an unusual thing, because the people joining the destroyer battalions came from various backgrounds including those who did not sympathize with the Soviet regime and entered the force only in order to avoid the service in the Red Army and to have access to some material benefits in the meagre post-war years.

Information about Danker's group reached R. Timermanis, who at the end of June left his hiding-place in Lubāna civil parish and moved to Meirāni civil parish, where the supporters of partisans helped him to make contact with Danker's group. At their first meeting, R. Timermanis and K. Dankers immediately reached mutual understanding and agreed that a joint partisan force should be formed to fight against the occupation regime because they both believed that a new war was imminent and that the Western Allies would come to Latvia. Until such time, the local men hiding from the Soviet regime had to be brought together. R. Timermanis was appointed commander of the partisan group due to his military experience and immediate authority among the partisans because of his leadership skills and military record, as there were few army officers with Latvian Army service experience among the 'forest brethren' (*mežabrāļi*). In the ranks of partisans,

⁴ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 4. sēj., 109. lp.; 28858. l., 1. sēj., 103. lp.

R. Timermanis was given an alias *Mežsargs* ('Forest Guard'). His first name was mostly abbreviated to 'Dāvis'.

Throughout the summer, the group created the stock of arms and ammunition mostly acquired from battlefields of World War II in Vidzeme. Timermanis' group had at least five light machine-guns, approximately 10 submachine guns, a similar number of rifles, plenty of grenades and four or five thousand cartridges, and this stock from time to time was replenished.⁵ For the time being, the forest brethren kept quiet and made no assaults against the Soviet regime.

Meeting with the representatives of the Latvian Defenders of the Homeland (Partisans) and founding of the 3rd Partisan Division

Around that time, a few tens of kilometers to the south, in Līvāni civil parish, Daugavpils district, a new partisan organization was being formed, destined to become Latvian Defenders of the Homeland (Partisan) Union (*Latvijas Tēvzemes sargu (partizānu) apvienība* — LTS(p)A). The organization rapidly expanded in Southern Latgale and Sēlija, where it attracted the local groups of national partisans, however, it had not yet established any significant contacts with the partisan groups located in Vidzeme. In order to find new allies, approximately in July 1945, the representatives of the newly established partisan organization — commander of

⁵ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 78. lp.

Partisan Division No. 2 Kārlis Blimhens-Blūms (alias Misters) and adjutant of the division inspection unit Jānis Klimkāns (alias Kals) — were ordered by the leader of the organization A. Juhņevičs to set forth.

They did not need to seek new members too long. In Meirāni civil parish of Madona district, with the help of the local partisan supporter Oskars Līdeks, K. Blimhens-Blūms and J. Klimkāns on 10 August succeeded in contacting R. Timermanis. Their meeting took place in O. Līdeks' house "Zaļenieki". Both parties immediately found a common language. It was due to the fact also that K. Blimhens-Blūms as a former first lieutenant of the Latvian Army was known to R. Timermanis since the time of their service. R. Timermanis suggested joining LTS(p)A with his group of partisans, and K. Blimhens-Blūms promptly accepted the offer. In accordance with the structure of LTS(p)A partisan units that was largely borrowed from the Latvian Army, Timermanis' Partisan Group would form a new partisan division within the organization. After the meeting with R. Timermanis, K. Blimhens-Blūms and J. Klimkāns returned to Daugavpils district.⁶

On 10 September 1945, there followed the order of LTS(p)A to form the 3rd Partisan Division within the organization. Evidently, soon after the order, R. Timermanis led his partisan group to Rugāji civil parish, Abrene district, in order to meet with the leader of the local partisans, head of the Union of the Latvian National Partisans (*Latvijas Nacionālo partizānu apvienība* — LNPA) P. Supe, whose charisma R. Timermanis had already mentioned to K. Blimhens-Blūms

⁶ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 3. sēj., 59., 60. lp.

and J. Klimkāns. R. Timermanis had established the contact with P. Supe through K. Dankers, whose native land was North Latgale.

In one day's time, R. Timermanis' partisans arrived in Rugāji civil parish and settled down in the surroundings of Daugasne village, while K. Dankers set out in search of P. Supe. After approximately two hours he returned with P. Supe, H. Auseklis and other partisans, and the mutual talks of the two parties commenced.

At the meeting, R. Timermanis and P. Supe acquainted one another with the organizations they represented and the areas they occupied. R. Timermanis handed over to the partisans of the LNPA the statutes and instructions of the LTS(p)A and both groups parted.⁷ Although there are no details available about the general content of the talks, the subsequent events show that P. Supe agreed to join the LTS(p)A. This meeting actually was an important event in the history of the Latvian national partisans in that the two largest organizations of the Latvian national partisans covering a vast territory of Latvia agreed to join forces.

Attack of Timermanis' group on the NKVD forces on 28 September 1945

During the existence of his group, R. Timermanis had avoided direct encounters with the occupants, because it was unnecessary. Firstly, it was more important for the

⁷ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 38.–40. lp.

partisans to prepare for the coming war, and his group was in the process of being included in the LTS(p)A, therefore a lot of organizational work had to be done. Secondly, military operations were not advisable due to the risk of unnecessary casualties. In the summer of 1945, the main territory of the newly formed 3rd Partisan Division in Meirāni civil parish was quite safe. The partisans had secured the support of the local destroyers, therefore the search operations conducted by Lubāna militia and destroyers did them no harm.

However, the exception was separate attacks against the supporters and officials of the regime in the vicinity. On 15 September, three partisans assaulted the finance agent Kondrāts Putnis at the farmstead “Dobupes” in Meirāni civil parish. K. Putnis was divested of money, a hunting gun, various outer garments and other belongings. In the meantime, partisans Eduards Tiltiņš, Jānis Trops and Antons Trops had robbed a farmer obviously supporting the Soviet regime and taken approximately 100 kg of pork and other food products.⁸

At the end of September, the group led by Timermanis carried out its greatest armed attack against the occupation regime. The group leaders decided that a strike should be dealt to Lubāna militia and destroyers who searched the surroundings from time to time. There is a version in the *Cheka* documents explaining — at least partially — that this action was triggered by the killing of the group's partisan Konstantīns Trops in a skirmish with the militia in May 1945.

⁸ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 116. lp.

There is also the information about a partisan's (alias Pēteris) death in Meirāni civil parish in a conflict with the militia in September 1945.⁹

The most likely explanation could be coordinated activities throughout the entire LTS(p)A. In September 1945, the groups subordinated to the organization became active and a number of attacks were carried out by the partisans against the objects and supporters of the occupation regime. The most conspicuous of these was the attack of Daugavpils Regiment HQ Company on Vārkava Post Office No. 2 under the leadership of Antons Gavars, when the communication junction was destroyed and the attack of Ilūkste Regiment HQ Company and the partisans of Dviete Company on Dviete civil parish Executive Committee on 28 September, when seven NKVD operatives and destroyers were unarmed, Executive Committee documents destroyed and a large number of arms and ammunition acquired.¹⁰

There is another version stating that the assault was carried out in revenge of the murder of a family living in farmstead "Kupsīņi" that, according to the memories of the local residents, was perpetrated by Lubāna militia. Moreover, after the assault, the occupation activists began spreading the rumors that the forest brethren were to blame

⁹ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 1. sēj., 74., 191., lp.

¹⁰ *Es sapņi par dzimteni pagālvī likšu: latvieši padomju vergu nometnēs un izsūtījumā: atmiņu un dokumentu krājums [I will lay my head upon my dream of my homeland: Latvians in Soviet slave camps and deportations: a collection of memories and documents]*, part 2. Freimanis, G. (comp.). Rīga: Sol Vita, 1994, p. 399.

for the murder of the family.¹¹ Admittedly, this version lacks more specific proof.

The plan of the campaign elaborated by R. Timermanis and K. Dankers envisaged partial elimination of Lubāna destroyers and militiamen by ambush attack. In order to carry out an assault, the enemy had to be drawn out of Lubāna, as the attack in the village could be too risky. According to the plan, several partisans had to go to Ošupe dairy in Lubāna civil parish, telephone Lubāna militia from there and report the partisan assault on the dairy. In the meantime, the other partisans would arrange an ambush in Lubāna pine forest on the road to Ošupe, wait for the occupation force lorry and open fire at it.

Starting the operation, K. Dankers with two men went to Ošupe, where he made the village Soviet secretary call the militia. Meanwhile, the second group of 16–17 partisans led by Timermanis set up an ambush at the curve of Lubāna-Ošupe road, in Lubāna forest, it being the shortest way from Lubāna. The partisans split into two groups. The first group led by Mežsargs had to open fire at the lorry from the side. For this purpose, the group had four light machine-guns. The second group under the leadership of P. Frišbergs had to shoot at the front of the lorry. This group had one machine-gun. Apart from the aforementioned machine-guns, the partisans were armed with six submachine guns

¹¹ Skallbergs, A. *Kapteina gars: publicistika un stāsti* [Captain's spirit: journalism and stories]. Rīga: apvienība "Timermanis & Vējiņš", 2010, p. 58.

and six rifles, which was sufficient number of weapons to execute the assault.

However, the partisans had underrated the anticipated number of the enemy as, in response to the partisans' attack at the dairy, it was not the staff of Lubāna militia, but 16 soldiers of NKVD Riflemen Regiment No. 288 led by Head of NKVD Lubāna civil parish Squad, first lieutenant Serebrjakov, together with Lubāna civil parish *partorg* (appointee of the Central Committee of the Communist Party) Lesnik and Head of Lubāna NKVD garrison, lieutenant Sitnikov.¹² This time, it was not a small group of poorly armed destroyers — a relatively easy target for the partisans, but the unit of the internal armed forces. Previously, K. Dankers had robbed Ošupe dairy twice and on both occasions, militia had arrived there.¹³ Obviously, the forest brethren thought that it would happen in the same way again.

When the lorry with the NKVD men had entered the range of shooting, R. Timermanis commanded his team to fire, and immediately one enemy's soldier was killed and seven wounded. During the ambush, several machine-guns failed to work, therefore the partisans could not achieve a full blast. At the same time, when the lorry stopped, the NKVD soldiers opened fierce counterfire causing confusion among the partisans and their chaotic retreat. In the skirmish, partisan Jānis Trops was wounded in arm and shoulder, and, assisted by other partisans, he managed to leave the battleground. Part of the retreating partisans, with

¹² LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 4. sēj., 150. lp.

¹³ Ibid., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 82. lp.

the wounded J. Trops, on their way turned into the nearby farmstead "Mutenieki" to dress his wounds.¹⁴

Meanwhile, a group of partisans led by K. Dankers in Ošupe dairy made all the dairy workers and local farmers who had brought milk, listen to K. Dankers' address with the following words: "Do you hear how our Latvian partisans shoot at Cheka! Why do you take your milk to Bolsheviks? Soon the British forces will help us get rid of the Bolsheviks and we shall live well, therefore we shall need dairy products for our free Latvia!"¹⁵

After the battle, R. Timermanis' group hid in the thick forests at Lake Lubāns where they discussed the outcome of the battle. R. Timermanis was generally dissatisfied with the results of the operation because the partisans not only had unexpectedly met with a strong enemy that they could not destroy, but they themselves had suffered losses. In the evening, having received the commander's permission, the partisans dispersed and walked to farmsteads.¹⁶ In the order issued by R. Timermanis on 10 October 1945 regarding formation of LTS(p)A Partisan Division No. 3, the partisans were told not to use the German ammunition in their guns, because it had gone bad and had been observed to get stuck in the gun barrels.¹⁷ That was one of the main observations after the Ošupe battle.

In the enemy ranks, the losses were considerable because within two days after the ambush four more soldiers

¹⁴ Es sapni par dzimteni pagalvi likšu ..., p. 419.

¹⁵ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 81. lp.

¹⁶ Ibid., 76., 80.-81. lp.; 40628. l., 1. sēj., 148. lp.

¹⁷ Ibid., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 266. lp.

died of injuries. Total losses of the enemy comprised five rank-and-file soldiers killed, two junior lieutenants and one soldier injured. The NKVD lorry, too, was badly damaged.¹⁸ In the entire history of the Latvian national partisans, this battle is unequivocally considered as one of the most notable episodes of the partisan struggle with the use of the ambush tactic.

It is not very clear what specific counteraction the NKVD operatives undertook after the partisans' attack, yet there were no major changes in the daily life of the partisans living in Lubāna and Meirāni civil parishes over the next few months. In the recollection of a local resident, there is a story about a woman living at "Mutenieki" farmstead, Čevere, who had helped the wounded J. Trops after the battle. NKVD men took revenge against Čevere by arresting and allegedly torturing her to death in the NKVD prison.¹⁹

In view of active partisan attacks throughout Latvia, a reform was carried out in the occupants' security institutions in order to strengthen their combat power against the partisans, and in the following autumn and winter, the occupants forcibly responded to the armed resistance. Obviously, their success mostly depended on precise information regarding the partisans and their whereabouts that they had not had at the beginning of the autumn of 1945. For the time being, the life of R. Timermanis' partisans remained rather peaceful.

¹⁸ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 4. sēj., 150., 151. lp.

¹⁹ Es sapni par dzimteni pagalvi likšu ..., pp. 419–420.

Formation of the 3rd Partisan Division and Roberts Dāvids Timermanis' activities in the LTS(p)A

After the Battle of Ošupe, work continued on the inclusion of the partisan group of Meirāni civil parish in LTS(p)A. On 10 October 1945, R. Timermanis issued a written order on the formation of the new division, although in fact its formation had been going on for at least a month. The partisan division was given the third number in the order. The full indicated name of the unit was the 3rd Division of the Latvian Defenders of the Homeland Partisans”²⁰

The headquarters of the new division were made up of group leaders. P. Frišbergs (alias Jauceišs), a former comrade-in-arms of R. Timermanis at the 672nd Sapper Battalion, who had come from Kurzeme together with him, was appointed adjutant of R. Timermanis. K. Dankers, who had previously served as R. Timermanis' deputy, became the division's chief of staff, while partisan Jānis Ikaunieks (with aliases Grantnieks, Banga) was appointed the commander of the signal corps, and his responsibilities included ensuring the division's communication with subordinate and other partisan groups, as well as providing reconnaissance information. With the help of local residents, the signal corps that consisted of about 10 people, informed the division's headquarters about the activities of Soviet security institutions in

²⁰ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 265. lp.

the surrounding area. Contacts with other partisan groups were provided by couriers.²¹

In October 1945, J. Ikaunieks was replaced by P. Frišbergs as the commander of the signal corps. As the unit's partisans based in Meirāni civil parish became soldiers of the division, they took the solemn oath, which was basically a slightly modified oath of the Latvian Army.²²

After its establishment, the headquarters of the 3rd Partisan Division were based in Meirāni civil parish, where R. Timermanis' group had remained until then. The location of the headquarters was changed from one homestead to another at regular intervals. From the point of view of partisan warfare, the stay of the division's leadership in the farmers' homesteads was a dangerous tactic, because if discovered, it could become a trap for the partisans themselves. Nevertheless, Timermanis' group at that time did not allow a high probability that the headquarters could be hit by NKVD men. This was probably also due to the fact that the local destroyers of Meirāni civil parish supported the national partisans and informed them about the upcoming operations, therefore the partisans felt relatively safe.²³

Work also began on the formation of partisan sub-divisions of the partisan division. The order of 10 October states that as of 20 September the 7th Regiment was formed under the command of P. Supe as a part of the division. The available information suggests that this was the day when

²¹ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 124. lp.; 3. sēj., 108. lp.

²² Ibid., 1. sēj., 104. lp.

²³ Ibid., 130. lp.

R. Timermanis first met P. Supe. Another subdivision formed as of 8 October was the so-called separate Madona Battalion, whose appointed commander was the former police officer Jānis Kamols (alias Alnis). Unfortunately, on the day the order was issued, J. Kamols lost his life in a clash with the NKVD men and that the formation of the battalion for a moment appeared to be disrupted.²⁴

Later, work continued on the expansion of the division. At the LTS(p)A meeting held on 11 November 1945 in Vārkava civil parish, Daugavpils district, an order was given to establish the 9th partisan regiment as part of the 3rd Division. The core of the regiment was a group of 12 partisans living in Prauliena civil parish, Madona district, led by former Latvian Army officer Andrejs Strazdiņš (alias Mauriņš). Timermanis' group had been in contact with these partisans in the past.²⁵ Later on, the partisans of the 3rd Division who had fallen into captivity, told NKVD that there was an intention to establish another regiment in Jaungulbene civil parish, which would be commanded by H. Auseklis, the deputy of P. Supe.²⁶ Considering that the planned regiments of P. Supe and H. Auseklis were essentially the entire LNPA, the staff of the division could reach up to 1000 partisans.

Initially, a very broad area of responsibility was assigned to the 3rd Partisan Division. In the order of 10 October, R. Timermanis wrote that partisan groups operating in Central Vidzeme, North Vidzeme, as well as North Latgale

²⁴ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 22233. l., 4. sēj., 111. lp.

²⁵ Ibid., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 37. lp.

²⁶ Ibid., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 104. lp.

should be included in the division, moreover, on 11 November, the Presidium of LTS(p)A issued an order to form Valmiera and Cēsis regiments. At the previous meeting of the LTS(p)A Presidium on 5 October 1945, an order was also made to establish contacts with the Estonian partisans.²⁷

As shown by further developments, the extremely large region was too extensive to be controlled from a single point with limited human resources. Until the end of 1945, when the destruction of LTS(p)A began, the division operated only in the nearby parishes, where R. Timermanis' partisans mainly stayed. Since a lot of work had to be done on the ground to strengthen the partisan movement, there simply was not enough time to go beyond Madona district. The military formations of LTS(p)A were rather modeled on the regular army than on the basic principles of partisan warfare, with which none of the leaders of the organization was conversant. This meant centralizing the leadership of large partisan units, but with increasing pressure from the occupying power's security authorities, the idea became increasingly difficult to implement.

The fact that there were problems with partisan communication even in a relatively small area was attested to by the case at the meeting of the LTS(p)A Presidium on 1 December 1945, which R. Timermanis allegedly did not attend because for some reason communications with him could not be established. J. Zelčāns asked K. Blimhens-Blūms to take over the command of the 3rd Partisan Division for a period of time, and it was followed by the decision to establish

²⁷ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 29., 38., 265. lp.

a separate battalion within the division, possibly with a view to forming a replacement structure in the absence of the 3rd Division's commanders. Arnolds Arklons (alias Apkalns), the medic of the 3rd Division, was appointed the commander of the battalion. Partisan Pēteris Mazais, who might have been the former commander of the division's signal corps P. Frišbergs, was appointed the commander of the battalion's signal unit. At the next meeting, which was attended by R. Timermanis, A. Arklons was removed from the position of the battalion commander and the misunderstanding was resolved.²⁸

Most likely, in view of these circumstances, a plan arose to separate P. Supe's 7th Partisan Regiment from the 3rd Partisan Division and to transform it into the 4th Partisan Division. The author of this idea was R. Timermanis himself, who apparently understood that the area of responsibility entrusted to him was too extensive.²⁹ The formation of the division was not fully implemented, because after the death of R. Timermanis at the end of December 1945, the LTS(p)A centre lost contact with P. Supe, but in a letter written on 17 December 1945, the commander of the 2nd Partisan Division Kārlis Blimhens-Blūms addressed P. Supe as Commander of the 4th Division.³⁰ The area of responsibility of the 4th Division included Viļaka, Ludza, Rēzekne, as well as Valmiera district, which was taken over from the 3rd Division.³¹ As the LNPA was already operating in

²⁸ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 43., 44. lp.

²⁹ Ibid., 40628. l., 3. sēj., 61. lp.

³⁰ Ibid., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 157. lp.

³¹ Ibid., 40628. l., 3. sēj., 56. lp.

North Vidzeme, the transfer of this region to the 4th Division was logical.

In an attempt to address the problems arising in the daily lives of partisans, LTS(p)A at the end of its existence passed decisions to set up various support structures. For the most part, they remained at the level of intentions, but clearly showed the organization's plans to prepare for a large-scale military conflict in the Baltic region soon.

On 1 December 1945, the 3rd Partisan Division was instructed to establish a section of the LTS(p)A supply organization, the "Aid Committee of Ladies". Previously, this had already been done in the 2nd Partisan Division. The task of the "Aid Committee of Ladies" was to organize the collection of material assistance for the partisans of the division. This meant that the committee staff collected food and clothing from the partisan supporters, thereby supplying the most necessary things in the daily life of the partisan. Thus, the partisans were relieved of efforts to provide for their livelihood. Oskars Līdeks, R. Timermanis' liaison officer who had acquired the nickname Mežzinis, was appointed the head of the "Aid Committee of Ladies" in Madona district, while Anna Driveniece (alias Krūmiņa), a local partisan supporter, led the operations of the committee in Meirāni civil parish, the predominant location of the 3rd Division's headquarters.³²

In December 1945, R. Timermanis recommended the establishment of a sanitary service in partisan units.³³

³² LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28785. l., 2. sēj., 3. lp.; 3. sēj., 40., 43. lp.

³³ Ibid., 40628. l., 3. sēj., 96. lp.

Obtaining the necessary medical assistance presented a difficulty to partisans, hence, such a structure was needed not only to help the partisans wounded in battle, but also for the daily health care.

When describing R. Timermanis' work in LTS(p)A, it is necessary to mention other positions he held in the organization. At first, R. Timermanis was a member of the LTS(p)A Presidium. There, he headed the Information Unit, which was responsible for gathering and compiling information on the local and international situation for the needs of the Presidium. R. Timermanis had a radio on which the partisan commander regularly listened to foreign radio broadcasts, and he then summarized the acquired information at LTS(p)A Presidium meetings.³⁴

R. Timermanis worked in the editorial office of the newspaper *Tēvzemes Sargs* ("Guardian of the Fatherland") published by the organization. He also was a member of the LTS(p)A awarding commission "Council of the Order *Kalpaka krusts*". For special merits, the commission awarded LTS(p)A members with the award introduced by LTS(p)A — *Kalpaka krusts* (Cross of Kalpaks), which was founded on 11 November 1945 in memory of the Commander of *Landeswehr* Latvian Armed Units Oskars Kalpaks, who was born in Meirāni civil parish. O. Līdeks was appointed the chairman of the commission.³⁵

The important role of R. Timermanis is also confirmed by the composition of the Provisional Government, which

³⁴ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28785. l., 2. sēj., 94. lp.

³⁵ Ibid., 75. lp.; 28858. l., 1. sēj., 55. lp.; 28785. l., 3. sēj., 37. lp.

was formed (to be prepared if the need arose) at the LTS(p)A meeting, which took place on 11 November 1945 in Vārkava civil parish. R. Timermanis was likely to be appointed Minister of Defense in this government.³⁶ The skills of the partisan commander were highly valued, and it can certainly be said that he was one of the most versatile leaders of the organization, capable to act not only as a commander of battle units, but also as an intellectual organizer.

Death of Roberts Dāvids Timermanis and destruction of the 3rd Partisan Division

After the notable attack of the 3rd Division's partisans on Ošupe, no further fighting took place, and LTS(p)A continued to prepare for the anticipated World War. At the same time, the organization had begun suffering significant losses since October 1945. The Soviet security services launched active anti-partisan operations throughout Latvia, which also affected LTS(p)A units, and the morale of some partisans began to decline, as the promised war against the USSR had not yet begun, whereas winter had arrived.

As far as known, with the approach of winter, the doubts had surfaced within the ranks of LTS(p)A itself as to whether the expected help from the West would actually come. According to the memories of the group's partisan Jānis Ikaunieks, in the autumn of 1945 R. Timermanis

³⁶ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 3. sēj., 62. lp.

himself no longer believed that a new war would begin.³⁷ Nevertheless, partisan leaders continued to work on building the organization and further disseminating its influence.

In the middle of December 1945, LTS(p)A planned to further expand its activities in Riga, both by founding the groups of its youth organization *Jaunais ērglis* ("Young Eagle") and by making new contacts. To accomplish this, the partisans had to deliver further instructions to Riga. On 15 December, a meeting of the LTS(p)A Presidium took place in "Mežvidi" farmstead, Meirāni civil parish, where the main topic of discussion was the strengthening of cooperation with the LNPA led by P. Supe.³⁸

After the meeting of the Presidium, J. Klimkāns, the head of the youth organization, arrived in farmstead "Saulītes" of Meirāni civil parish, where the headquarters of the 3rd Partisan Division were based at that time, and together with other partisans prepared the instructions for contact persons in Riga. Anna Driveniece, the chairwoman of the "Aid Committee of Ladies", undertook to hand over the instructions and LTS(p)A newspaper *Tēvzemes Sargs*, as she went to take care of the affairs to Riga. She was given seven letters.

A. Driveniece arrived in Riga on the morning of 20 December. Unfortunately, already on the night of 21 December, A. Driveniece was detained during the document inspection that took place in the apartment. It may have been a complete coincidence, but it cannot be ruled

³⁷ Skalmbergs, A. *Kapteiņa gars* ..., p. 63.

³⁸ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28785. l., 3. sēj., 45.–46. lp.

out that the inspection was based on some suspicion. The search of A. Driveniece produced LTS(p)A instructions and a newspaper confirming her connection with an anti-Soviet organization. Immediately afterwards, the interrogation of A. Driveniece at the NKVD began. The interrogation protocol shows that it started at 4:30 and ended around 16:00, therefore, at this first instance, A. Driveniece was interrogated without interruption for about 11.5 hours. The NKVD operatives managed to obtain her confession about the connection with LTS(p)A and the task assigned to her in Riga.³⁹

Based on the acquired information, on 23 December, by the order of the Deputy Head of the Anti-Banditry Division of the Latvian SSR NKVD Šmits, two operations of the Madona branch of the NKVD were organized in the identified LTS(p)A partisan bases in Meirāni civil parish.

One operation was directed against “Piereskalni”⁴⁰ homestead, inhabited by partisan supporter Rūdolfs Stulpiņš. Shortly before moving to “Saulītes”, in December, the headquarters of the 3rd Partisan Division had been located there.⁴¹ Searching the house, the NKVD operatives discovered only the partisan of LTS(p)A 2nd Division, Daugavpils Regiment 3rd Battalion Alfrēds Apinis, who was hiding behind a stove and who along with some 3rd Division partisans had arrived in Meirāni civil parish from Daugavpils district Līvāni civil parish and settled in the home of R. Stulpiņš.⁴²

³⁹ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 4. sēj., 297.–304. lp.

⁴⁰ The name of the homestead indicated in other sources is “Paurkalni”.

⁴¹ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 15. lp.

⁴² Ibid., 40628. l., 3. sēj., 265. lp., 5. sēj., 154.–155. lp.

The second operation was aimed at the farmstead of “Saulītes”, where at that time stayed R. Timermanis. During that time, the Žīguri family residing in the farmstead, and partisan Aleksandrs Ķevers, were also there. The partisans were awakened from sleep by the inhabitants of the farmstead, when the NKVD men had already surrounded the house. As the NKVD operatives entered the house, R. Timermanis ran out through the main door and wounded an NKVD man who tried to stop him in hand with a pistol shot. The partisan commander tried to reach the nearby forest, but a nearby NKVD hideout opened fire and injured R. Timermanis, who fell and was taken prisoner.⁴³ At that moment, A. Ķevers, most likely, was hiding in hayloft above the cattle-shed under straw. The NKVD operatives tied the eldest daughters of the farmer, Rita and Marta, to the wall of the cattle-shed and questioned them as to whether anyone else was hiding in the farm. Despite the NKVD men’s threat to burn the two girls alive together with the cattle-shed, the sisters did not betray the second partisan.⁴⁴

Although R. Timermanis was seriously injured, the NKVD men interrogated him on the spot while the house of Jēkabs Žīgurs was searched, but the owner of the house himself was brutally beaten. After about three hours, J. Žīgurs, his two eldest daughters and the wounded R. Timermanis were taken to Madona. As the partisan commander was not provided with timely medical care, his condition deteriorated rapidly. On 25 December,

⁴³ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 4. sēj., 152.–153. lp.

⁴⁴ Memories of Eigis Timermanis, transcripts in the author’s archive.

R. Timermanis died of peritonitis.⁴⁵ Thus had perished one of the most prominent partisan leaders in the local area, who had a great deal of influence, leadership talent and combat experience. With the demise of R. Timermanis, the partisan division led by him disintegrated, because the headquarters lost contact with all subordinate partisan regiments, which, despite the efforts of the Chief of Staff Kārlis Dankers, could not be restored. However, the headquarters under command of K. Dankers tried to continue its work in forming partisan groups. It was planned to pass the winter period quietly, with the fighters of partisan division living together in small groups.⁴⁶ Kārlis Blimhens-Blūms, the commander of the 2nd Partisan Division, took over the leadership of the division.⁴⁷

The death of R. Timermanis was followed by destruction of LTS(p)A. A little later, NKVD using Jānis Klimkāns, the leader of the LTS(p)A youth organization, who had become the NKVD agent (with an alias Dubins), effectively wrecked the organization from the inside.

The last serious blow struck the leadership of the 3rd Partisan Division on 27 February 1946, when partisans K. Dankers, K. Blimhens-Blūms, A. Ķevers, P. Silovs and J. Ikaunieks, who had arranged to meet J. Klimkāns, stayed in "Dambiši" farmstead, Saikava civil parish, Madona district. The partisans suspected that mass repressions brought about by the Soviet authorities against the Latvian population could be expected at the beginning of March,

⁴⁵ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 40628. l., 4. sēj., 155. lp.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 107., 108. lp.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 40628. l., 6. sēj., 112. lp.

and the meeting was planned to discuss a possible action plan in such a situation.⁴⁸

During the meeting, J. Klimkāns went out for a moment on the pretext of a headache.⁴⁹ His true intention was to give a signal and information to the 16 NKVD men, who had surrounded the farm as, on the basis of information provided by J. Klimkāns, an operation had been arranged against the headquarters of partisans. After learning about the number, armament and location of the partisans in the house, the NKVD men decided not to risk the battle unnecessarily, but to make a rapid attack by throwing grenades through the window in the room containing all the partisans.

However, this attack failed to incapacitate the partisans, and the shooting continued for some time until the NKVD soldiers could enter the room to attack partisans.⁵⁰ The memoirs of J. Ikaunieks give the following account of the events — after about six grenade explosions, the NKVD troops had also shot those partisans in the house who were no longer able to resist.⁵¹ Most likely, being stunned by the explosions, J. Ikaunieks simply did not understand what was happening. J. Ikaunieks' version is also contradicted by the fact that both J. Ikaunieks and P. Silovs were left alive. In this case, it should be taken into account that the NKVD needed to obtain information about other partisans in the area,

⁴⁸ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 81. lp.

⁴⁹ Ikaunieks, J. Lubānas–Meirānu pusē [At the Lubāna–Meirāni side]. In: *Uz ežiņas galvu liku... Traģiskās partizānu cīņas Latvijas mežos* [I rested my head on the field's edge... Tragic partisan battles in Latvian forests], part 2. Kalvāns, A. (ed.-in-chief), Rīga: Daugava, 1995, p. 259.

⁵⁰ LNA-LVA, 1986. f., 1. apr., 28858. l., 1. sēj., 6. lp.

⁵¹ Ikaunieks, J. Lubānas–Meirānu pusē, p. 259.

because J. Klimkāns alone could not know the whereabouts of all partisans subject to LTS(p)A substructures, therefore the NKVD operatives, as far as possible, had to capture the partisans alive.

As a result of the operation, K. Blimhens-Blūms, K. Dankers and A. Ķevers died, but the wounded partisans P. Silovs and J. Ikaunieks were captured. The owners of the farmstead Artūrs and Emīlija Krieviņi were also arrested. With this operation, the command of the LTS(p)A military branch in the direction of Central Vidzeme was destroyed and the 3rd Partisan Division ceased to exist.

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The events of winter 1945–1946 did not even nearly succeed in terminating the national armed resistance in the Lake Lubāns area and the surrounding parishes. The fights continued for several years, both involving partisans from the local area and groups from other areas. However, the brief lifespan of Latvia's then probably largest national partisan organization after a series of NKVD operations against its leading members in Vidzeme and Latgale, had actually come to an end, although some of its units continued to exist.

The reasons for the relatively rapid defeat were mainly brought about by the weak conspiracy of the LTS(p)A partisans. In the winter, when partisan groups should have sought shelter in forest bunkers, instead, both partisan leadership and ordinary partisans lived in farmsteads, and that mostly had tragic consequences. According to historian

and researcher of South Latgale national partisans Jānis Viļums, it is also difficult to understand why R. Timermanis, being a part of LTS(p)A intellectual core, on this fateful night of 23 December 1945 was in “Saulīši” homestead without a more serious armed security.⁵² Of course, this would not guarantee survival either, because, as shown by the history of the partisans, being in a surrounded building was one of the worst situations in which partisans could find themselves. It was not possible to remain inside indefinitely, because the Cheka troops used to simply burn down the houses with all the partisans, while the possibility of escaping from the buildings was very scarce if they were located in an open field. In this case, however, the headquarters of the 3rd Partisan Division did not even have much opportunity to resist.

The battle on 27 February 1946 in “Dambīši” of Saikava civil parish attested to the fact that the partisans had not taken their harsh experience into account, and this repeatedly led to a tragic outcome. Unfortunately, the participants of the armed resistance learned the most essential partisan fighting skills in cases of painful losses. It was a part of the partisan war.

R. Timermanis undertook to organize national partisan groups in the eastern part of Madona district and beyond in a united movement that could potentially become part of a large uprising army in the event of a major war. If the scenario that the partisans had so much hoped for had come true, and there would have been an opportunity to regain independence of Latvia, the fights of the national partisans

⁵² Author's conversation with J. Viļums in 2018.

in Latvian consciousness would equal in importance to those of the War of Independence in 1918–1920 and its heroes. Unfortunately, a slow defeat dragged on and on, and for several decades partisan struggles were a prohibited subject, and thereby the post-war freedom fighters and their contribution gradually sank into oblivion. Fortunately, after the restoration of the country's independence, the life stories of these people are being sought out and studied. The life of R. Timermanis is one of the examples of the abilities and actions of a patriotic person through the ages, whatever they may be.



*Roberts Dāvids Timermanis with children in early 1942.
Private archive of Eigis Timermanis*



*Roberts Dāvids Timermanis on his 34th birthday on 8 June 1943,
Abrene. Private archive of Eigis Timermanis*



*Roberts Dāvids Tīmermanis in Borousy, autumn of 1943.
Private archive of Eigis Tīmermanis*



Roberts Dāvids Timermanis after his capture



“Saulītes” in December of 1994. Rita Žigure stands by the door through which Roberts Dāvids Timermanis tried to break out on the fateful night of 23 December 1945. R. Žigure, her sister Marta and her father were arrested for supporting LTS(p)A partisans.

Private archive of Eigis Timermanis

CHAPTER 4

National armed resistance against the Soviet occupation in Latvia (1944–1957)

Unlike many European countries, the end of the Second World War did not bring freedom to Latvia, but instead resulted in an occupation spanning several decades, which meant further misery to the people of Latvia. As the territory of Latvia repeatedly went into the occupation of the USSR, communist terror continued, the economic system formed during independence was destroyed and the self-confidence, entrepreneurship and other qualities of the Latvian people, which had no place in the USSR communist ideology, were eradicated.

At the end of the war, during the reoccupation of the Baltic states, armed resistance groups formed in response to the return of the Soviet occupation regime, and so the armed struggle continued throughout most of Latvia for more than 10 years after World War II. Armed resistance to the Soviet regime also took place in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. The struggles of the national partisans in this part

of Europe were a direct indication of the people's refusal to accept the communist regime in their country.

The vigor of the partisan struggle took strength in hopes that the West would not neglect the occupied Baltic states and provide them with political or military support. The relatively recent events of the War of Independence, when the people of Latvia won the freedom of their country with the support of the Western Allies, were still vividly remembered, and people believed that recent history could be repeated. Unfortunately, the expectations did not come true and the partisan battles ended in gradual defeat. Nevertheless, the memory of this resistance has remained alive even after the restoration of Latvia's independence and gives reason to be proud of the many thousands of people who, despite hardship and threat of the oppressive power, were able to disrupt the occupation regime in Latvia and cause unrest even in the upper echelons of USSR power.

Establishing of partisan groups (1944–1945)

The precondition for the establishment of the national partisan movement was the massive transition of people into an illegal status, which was caused by the activities of the USSR in the occupied territories. As early as in the first half of the war the USSR was already preparing to fight against the persons who were undesirable to this power, and with the return of the Soviet occupation to Latvia, the policy of this regime was actively implemented. The need for these actions was engendered by 3–4 years of German

control over the territory of Latvia. In principle, the USSR treated with suspicion almost everyone who had remained in Latvia in the summer of 1941 after the invasion of the German army.

The gravity of these repressions was indicated by the fact that from July 1944, when the Red Army entered the territory of Latvia, until 20 January 1945, in the part of Latvia occupied by the USSR 5 223 people had been subjected to the repressions. The arrests were extremely widespread. Overall, 18 410 people were arrested by the communist regime's repressive authorities within the period from 1944 to 1945. To compare, in 1940–1941 the Bolsheviks arrested 7 402 people.¹ The main sections of society that were subjected to repressions included those who had served in the German military and security forces, civil servants of the German occupation regime, and so on. Former Latvian Army officers and guards, who were not affected by repressions in the first year of the Soviet occupation could not feel sure of their safety, and thus many of them with the entry of the Red Army went into hiding. After the capitulation of Nazi Germany on 8 May 1945, the partisan movement in Kurzeme was significantly strengthened by at least a few thousand former legionnaires, who, unwilling to be captured by the USSR, went into the forest with weapons in their hands and continued fighting as national

¹ Jansons, R. Latvijas PSR Valsts drošības tautas komisariāta darbība: 1944–1945 [Operation of the People's Commissariat of National Security of the Latvian SSR: 1944–1945]. In: *Okupētā Latvija, 1940–1990* [Occupied Latvia, 1940–1990]. Ērglis, Dz. (comp.). Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2007, p. 264.

partisans. The repressive policy of the USSR naturally led to the situation when 40–50 % of national partisans consisted of people having previously served in German military formations. Later, Soviet historians argued about the reasons for the formation of the national partisan movement and proclaimed that it was formed by Nazi Germany's 'adherents',² however, this opinion is countered by the composition of partisan contingent, since almost as many fighters were those who had escaped mobilization in the Red Army.³

The basis for conscription of the Latvian population to the Red Army was the Directive issued by the Headquarters of the 2nd Baltic Front for Mobilization of Latvian residents born in 1895–1926 and subject to military service and recruitment. By 20 September 1944, 24 377 Latvians had been drafted. Mobilization in each district began immediately after the withdrawal of German troops.⁴

At the same time, desertion and evasion from the draft were common, for various reasons. Nationalists in principle did not intend to serve in the enemy's armed forces, the return of which meant the reinstatement of the Stalinist

² Dzintars, J. Latviešu fašistiskā buržuāzija hitleriešu izlūkdieneškalpībā [Latvian fascist bourgeoisie in the service of Hitler's intelligence service]. *Latvijas PSR Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis*, 1982, No. 10, pp. 52–56.

³ Strods, H. *Latvijas nacionālo partizānu karš, 1944–1956* [Latvian National Partisan War, 1944–1956]. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2012, p. 21.

⁴ Riekstiņš, J. Latvijas iedzīvotāju mobilizācija Sarkanajā armijā [Mobilization of the Latvian population in the Red Army]. In: *Okupētā Latvija 20. gadsimta 40. gados* [Occupied Latvia in the 1940s]. Ērglis, Dz. (comp.). Rīga: LU Latvijas vēstures institūts, 2005, pp. 420, 421.

dictatorship. Many feared death on the front because they were well aware of the Red Army's heavy losses on the front, and seeing the impending defeat of Germany, these people did not want to die defending the interests of a foreign country at the very end of the war. The deserters of the Latvian Legion and former police officers called up to the Red Army were also in a troublesome situation, because even if they concealed their previous service affiliation, these people seriously risked being exposed within the ranks of the Red Army.

The desertion was massive. Until 1 January 1945, the officially known number of deserters in the territory of Latvia controlled by the USSR was 2 038 people and it continued to grow.⁵ However, the transition to an illegal status was not always immediate. In Abrene district, for example, in August 1944, many locals initially simply ignored the order to submit to mobilization in the Red Army because the Soviet authorities had not appeared in remote villages for weeks due to lack of staff. The transition to an illegal state only took place when deserters and those who had ignored the mobilization order began to be pursued.⁶

Repressions were an integral part of the regime's economic policy, especially in the countryside, where the wealthy peasantry was attacked. These attacks culminated in

⁵ Riekstiņš, J. *Latvijas iedzīvotāju...*, p. 437.

⁶ Turčinskis, Z. *Bruņotās pretošanās kustības sākums Latvijā 1944. gada rudenī: situācija Abrenes apriņķī* [The beginning of the armed resistance movement in Latvia in the autumn of 1944: the situation in Abrene district]. *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2016, No. 2, pp. 102–103.

the deportations of 25 March, 1949. The repressions led to addition of ordinary farmers without a special experience in warfare to the ranks of partisans inhabiting the forests.

The men, who had gone underground, began to gather together to facilitate survival, and discussed further plans. Confident nationalist leaders emerged, uniting these groups of illegals, calling for the collection of weapons and ammunition left on the battlefields to prepare for the fight against the Soviet occupiers. Partisan groups formed spontaneously. There was no order to start a partisan war, nor was there any previous experience in doing so. The organization of partisans in Latgale began in the late 1944, and continued actively in the spring of 1945. In Vidzeme, national partisan groups mostly formed in the spring of 1945, when the snow had melted and warmer weather ensued, enabling the illegals to begin meeting. The situation in Kurzeme determined that the organization of partisan groups there took place slightly later, namely, in the summer of 1945.

Partisan groups usually consisted of about 5 to 20 men, but in 1945, larger partisan groups also formed in places where partisan activity was strongest. It is especially noteworthy that in the first months of 1945, about 350 people had settled in the Stompaki camp between Balvi and Viļaka. It was the largest partisan camp of its kind not only in Latvia, but also in the whole Baltics.⁷ While Soviet power in the countryside

⁷ *Stompaku purvā norisinājās nacionālo partizānu lielākā kauja pret Padomju armiju* [The largest battle of the national partisans against the Soviet army took place in Stompaki Bog]. Available at: <https://lr1.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/latvijas-perles/stompaku-purva-norisinajas-nacionalo-partizanu-lielaka-kauja-pre.a101583/> [last viewed 03.03.2019].

was weak, large partisan groups lived relatively undisturbed. The partisan movement had a widespread support from farmers, consequently, in the first years after the war obtaining food and other necessities for everyday life did not present excessive difficulties.

Organizations of the Latvian national partisans

Along with the creation of larger and smaller partisan groups, there were also attempts to centralize these groups through the establishment of partisan organizations. These organizations were formed throughout Latvia, and the main purpose of their existence was to unite partisan forces to fight for the restoration of Latvia's independence.

Beyond uniting and leading the partisans in the armed struggle against the occupation regime, the partisan organizations also carried out propaganda work, creating various appeals and newspapers that were distributed among the local population. These activities served as a reminder that there still were forces fighting against the occupation regime in Latvia. During the partisan fights, about 14 different newspapers with a circulation of 10–100 copies⁸ were published. This shows

⁸ Turčinskis, Z. *Karš pēc kara: Latvijas nacionālo partizānu cīņas 20. gadsimta 40. gadu beigās — 50. gadu sākumā* [War after war: Latvian national partisan battles in the late 1940s — early 1950s]. In: *Karš pēc kara 1944.–1956. Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja gadagrāmata* [War after the war 1944–1956. Yearbook of Museum of the Occupation of Latvia]. Rīga: Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja biedrība, 2006, p. 95.

that the partisans did not rely solely on the armed forces. It was also an ideological and intelligent movement.

In the eastern part of Latvia, where partisan battles had been taking place since August 1944, the partisan organization “Latvian National Partisan Association” (LNPA) was established. The then 24-year-old agronomist Pēteris Supe (alias Cinītis) became the head of the organization. In order to fight for Latvia’s independence while remaining in Latvia, in 1944 he was involved in German attempts to leave groups of saboteurs behind the lines of the Red Army in order to slow down its offensive. P. Supe was appointed commander of a group of saboteurs named “Lapland”, which, after formation and training, at the night on 2 October 1944, was landed in Rugāji, Abrene district. The Germans had ordered the group to carry out various sabotages behind the lines of the Red Army, but the saboteurs’ contacts with their headquarters were severed and P. Supe along with his men resorted to uniting local illegalists in preparation for the partisan battles.⁹ This was the beginning of the establishment of the LNPA.

LNPA was founded on 10 December 1944 in Viļaka civil parish. According to historian Zigmārs Turčinskis, most likely the initiative to create LNPA came from P. Supe, inspired by the appeal that he had read in the newspaper of

⁹ Turčinskis, Z. Latvijas Nacionālo partizānu apvienības izveidošanās un darbība Stompaku periodā (1944. gada oktobris — 1945. gada marts) [Establishment and operation of the Latvian National Partisan Association in the Stompaki period (October 1944 — March 1945)]. In: *Okupācijas režīmi Latvijā 1940.–1959. gadā* [Occupation Regimes in Latvia, 1940–1959]. Ērglis, Dz. (comp.). Rīga: LU Latvijas vēstures institūts, 2004, pp. 443, 445, 446.

the Central Council of Latvia “New Latvia” (published on 10 March 1944), wherein Latvians were called to unite in their efforts to restore the state of Latvia.¹⁰

LNPA was originally established as a centre to head the partisan movement throughout Latvia, but after unsuccessful attempts to establish contacts, it was limited to leading partisan groups in the northern and central parts of Vidzeme, as well as in North Latgale. In the autumn of 1945, when the organization was at its largest, it comprised about 1 000 partisans.¹¹

The organization was extremely active. According to NKVD, in 1945 LNPA fighters had carried out over 300 attacks, killing more than 100 Soviet regime workers and supporters.¹² In addition to the fighting, there was also active propaganda work. A propaganda section was set up under the auspices of each regional headquarters to publish newspapers. LNPA published six newspapers in its territory. The last handwritten newspaper of LNPA — *Dzimtene* (“Fatherland”) — was released in 1950.

As the situation in the partisan war was volatile and over the years the partisans suffered losses, staff turnover and reorganization of LNPA took place frequently. P. Supe and his deputy Henriks Auseklis (alias Tērauds) were killed on

¹⁰ Turčinskis, Z. *Bruņotās pretošanās kustības ...*, pp. 112., 114.

¹¹ Turčinskis, Z. *Karš pēc kara ...*, p. 96.

¹² НКВД–МВД СССР в борьбе с бандитизмом и вооруженным националистическим подпольем на Западной Украине, в Западной Белоруссии и в Прибалтике (1939–1956) [*The NKVD–MVD of the USSR in the fight against banditry and the armed nationalist underground in Western Ukraine, Western Belarus and the Baltic states (1939–1956)*]. Владимирцев, И. М., Кокурин, А. И. (сост.). М., 2008, p. 350.

1 April 1946 by the Cheka agent Jānis Klimkāns. P. Supe was replaced by Antons Circāns (alias Vārpa), but he lost his life on 7 July 1947. The Group of LNPA Central Headquarters ceased to exist, and the activities of LNPA became the responsibility of the Alūksne Sector, Central Vidzeme and North Latgale Headquarters. Despite suffering losses, the organisation continued to operate for about six years, i.e. until 1953.¹³ Thus, its lifetime ceased only in the last year of active national partisan fights.

Similar organizations were created in other regions of Latvia. Since the beginning of 1945, a strong national partisan organization was formed in the southern part of Latgale, founded by Dean Antons Juhņēvičs of Līvāni civil parish and Latvian Army instructor Jānis Zeltiņš (Zelčāns), as well as the former guardsman Juris Rudzāts (alias Rūsiņš). The statutes of the new resistance organization were jointly developed, and it was given the name Latvian Defenders of the Homeland (Partisan) Union (LTS(p)A). In the event of a more extensive war, this partisan organization was preparing to take over the state power with an appointed interim government consisting of members of the LTS(p)A.¹⁴

The organization also had its own military branch, which was modeled on the Latvian Army, namely, by dividing the territory of Latvia into four parts. The statutes of LTS(p)A provided for the establishment of subordinate partisan divisions, each of which would be responsible for a specific area. In mid-July 1945, even before the official establishment of LTS(p)A, the 2nd Partisan Division was

¹³ Turčinskis, Z. *Karš pēc kara ...*, pp. 96, 97.

¹⁴ Strods, H. *Latvijas nacionālo partizānu karš ...*, 1999, p. 281.

established, with First Lieutenant Kārlis Blīmhens-Blūms (Misters) as its commander.

Roberts Dāvids Timermanis became the commander of the 3rd Partisan Division. Toward the cessation of the organization, the 4th Partisan Division was formed, led by the head of the LNPA P. Supe. However, most of the plans remained in their infancy due to the short lifespan of this organization.

LTS(p)A was formed in hopes that the long-awaited war between the USSR and the West could begin no later than the autumn of 1945, hence, there was no thought at all about how to hold out if the partisan fight lasted longer than expected. On 23 October 1945, the NKVD troops surrounded the headquarters of LTS(p)A Ilūkste Regiment. The partisans managed to hold their own almost for 24 hours and break out of the siege, but the regiment was left almost without ammunition. Regiment commander Staņislavs Urbāns began negotiations with the occupiers on legalization, and from mid-December 1945 to early 1946, about 90 regiment partisans legalized. A similar mass legalization took place in other LTS(p)A partisan units, because the partisans were not prepared for winter. In the first year of the fight, many partisans tried to pass the winter in the farmsteads of the supporters, but this used to have tragic consequences, as the buildings were often searched and, in the event of siege, became a trap for the partisans themselves.

The destruction of LTS(p)A was most seriously prompted by J. Klimkāns, the head of its youth organization, who, apparently realizing that help would not come from the West, around the beginning of 1946 agreed to become an NKVD agent under the nickname Dubins. Later, J. Klimkāns

provided Cheka with information about the members of the resistance movement known to him. This cooperation was very advised and did not seem to raise any suspicions among the other partisans. Thanks to the successfully coordinated operations and the subsequent consent of J. Klimkāns to cooperate, from the end of December 1945 to February 1946, the top command of LTS(p)A was entirely destroyed. No member of the organization had surmised that the traitor could be such a high-ranking member of the organization as J. Klimkāns. This was one of the greatest blows to the Latvian national partisan movement during its entire existence.

In Kurzeme, where the partisan movement was very strong, there were also larger-scale attempts of partisan organisation.

On 9 September 1945, the North Kurzeme Partisan Organization (NKPO) was founded in Zlēkas civil parish, Ventspils district, headed by Miervaldis Ziedainis, whose legal status was supported by forged documents. The goal of the organization was to establish contacts with the West, however, NKPO soon came to an end when the NKVD on 30 September 1945 arrested Aleksandrs Zutis, the head of the organization's headquarters, and on 2 October 1945 captured M. Ziedainis himself.

In the same year, two strong partisan organizations were established: the "Latvian National Partisan Organization" under the leadership of Alberts Feldbergs and the "Latvian National Partisan Unit "Kurzeme"" led by Ēvalds Pakulis (alias Šerifs). The two organizations maintained close contact, often gathered together to discuss the course of future fighting, and in the autumn of 1946 united about 345 partisans.

Unfortunately, as in the case of LTS(p)A, the actions of the MGB agent Marģers Vītoliņš (alias Tankists), who was infiltrated among the partisans, at the end of the same year led to the arrests of many leaders and ordinary partisans, thereby destroying these organizations. In the following years, mostly small groups operated in Kurzeme, as these were more difficult to detect.¹⁵

On average, the lifespan of most partisan organizations was two years, as secrecy always suffered in the event of attempts to centralize larger or smaller partisan groups, especially if a large number of partisans lived in one place. Some partisan commanders recognized this, for example, Kārlis Mūsiņš (alias Kārlis), who led the strongest national partisan group in North Vidzeme from 1945 to 1953. Meeting with the LNPA headquarters group led by A. Circāns in Sinole civil parish of Valka district at the end of June 1947, K. Mūsiņš rejected the offer to join the LNPA. K. Mūsiņš believed that larger groups of partisans are more susceptible to the blows of Cheka and many partisans living together find it more difficult to provide themselves with the livelihood, therefore, in his view, partisans should await World War III in small groups.¹⁶

¹⁵ Jansons, R. Kurzeme. In: *Nezināmais karš. Latviešu nacionālo partizānu cīņas pret padomju okupantiem 1944–1956* [The Unknown War: Latvian National Partisan Fights against the Soviet Occupants 1944–1956]. Kiršteins, A. (ed.). Rīga: Domas spēks, 2012, p. 218.

¹⁶ Turčinskis, Z. *Ziemeļvidzemes mežabrāļi. Latvijas nacionālo partizānu cīņas Valkas apriņķī un Alūksnes apriņķa ziemeļu daļā. 1944.–1953. gads* [Forest brethren of North Vidzeme. Latvian national partisan battles in Valka district and northern part of Alūksne district. 1944–1953]. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2011, pp. 183–184.

Collisions of partisans with occupation regime forces (1944–1945)

The first clashes with the forces of the occupation regime were not long in coming. On 24 August 1944, in the village of Pužulova, Šķilbēni civil parish, Abrene district, a group of local men who had disregarded the mobilization order killed four soldiers of the NKVD reconnaissance and search group looking for local deserters.¹⁷ In Latvian historiography, this is still the first known partisan attack on the occupying forces after the Red Army entered Latvia in 1944.

In Latgale, the attacks of national partisans were intensive during the winter of 1944–1945. After the establishment of the Saliņi dwellings in the Stompaki Bog between Viļaka and Balvi, the partisans of the LNPA started to amass food supplies. This was done by robbing local supporters of the occupation regime, mainly Communist Party activists and destroyers in their homes. Louder campaigns also took place from time to time. For example, on 14 January partisans opened fire at the party's district committee building in Viļaka.

The partisan activities were quite concentrated until the end of February 1945, when the NKVD began to pay attention to the threatening situation in the Abrene district. The occupiers' efforts to eliminate resistance in the region led to the biggest battle in the history of Latvian national partisans, which took place on 2–3 March 1945 in the Stompaki Bog, known as the Battle of Stompaki. About

¹⁷ Turčinskis, Z. *Bruņotās pretošanās kustības ...*, pp. 102–103.

350 partisans fought against 438 soldiers of the 143rd Rifle Regiment. In this case, the balance of power was quite similar, because when planning the operation, the chekists estimated that no more than 30–40 people lived in the bog camp. The outcome of the battle for the partisans was relatively successful, as they managed to resist the NKVD forces throughout the day of 2 March, but with the onset of darkness they had to gradually retreat. The losses of the partisans in the Battle of Stompaki included 28 killed and 11–15 wounded men, while their enemies lost at least 32 men. There were no more battles of this scale in the further course of the Latvian partisan fights, but this episode showed the partisans' ability to withstand an equal opponent in a frontal battle.

Particularly active operations of national partisan groups in Latgale and Vidzeme began in the spring of 1945, when, with the advent of warmer weather, the partisan groups carried out intensive attacks on the occupation regime. On 17 April 1945, a group of Kārlis Krēmers in Dzelzava civil parish, Madona district, shot the Communist party organizing representative (*partorg*) Mikhail Kodalev on his wedding day and injured several other Soviet activists.¹⁸

In the following spring and summer months, partisan attacks intensified. An example of this is North Vidzeme,

¹⁸ Turčinskis, Z. Vidzeme. In: *Nezināmais karš: latviešu nacionālo partizānu cīņas pret padomju okupantiem 1944–1956: nacionālo partizānu cīņu un piemiņas vietas* [*The Unknown War: Latvian National Partisan Fights against the Soviet Occupants 1944–1956: National Partisan Fight and Memorial Sites*]. Rīga: Domas spēks, 2010, p. 129.

where partisan groups in larger units of up to 50–60 men took part in attacks on civil parish centres. In Valka district, on 15 June, partisans occupied Mālupe, on 2 July — Ilzene and Zeltiņi, while on 3 July — Dūre. On 12 July, partisans attacked the centre of Gaujiena civil parish in Vireši and Sinole. A representative of Communist Party of Latvia from Ilūkste complained that “the party committee cannot stick their heads out of the window”. In Abrene district, 30 % of the village councils were destroyed as a result of partisan activity, while another 30 % were unable to start work.¹⁹ Actually, in 1945, the partisans, taking advantage of the weakness of the Soviet regime, had more or less paralyzed its power outside the regional centres. 1945 was a time when the term “partisan war” was really apposite, because partisan attacks took place almost daily.

In this regard, a unique episode of partisan fighting is the so-called Alsviķi ceasefire, which lasted from 29 September to 9 October 1945. The initiator of the ceasefire talks was Eduards Grāvītis (1913–1973), a pastor of the Zeltiņi Lutheran Congregation, who had become illegal, and, being a pacifist, considered the options how to achieve the legalization of as many people as possible, because Western help had not yet arrived. His idea was to start negotiations with the occupation regime on the potential conditions for surrender that would allow at least some partisans to return to normal life without the threat of repression. E. Grāvītis succeeded to attain the meeting with the NKVD at the negotiating table at the republican level.

¹⁹ Turčinskis, Z. *Karš pēc kara ...*, pp. 100, 101.

On 28 September 1945, in the building of the Alsviķi Civil Parish Executive Committee, Lieutenant Colonel Aleksei Korneyev, the Head of the Anti-Banditry Division of the Latvian SSR NKVD, met with Antons Circāns (Vārpa), the Head of the LNPA Liaison Department, and E. Grāvītis. During the talks, the both sides agreed to conclude a 10-day ceasefire, during which the liaison officers had to visit the partisan groups based within the district to find out their views on legalization.

The ceasefire agreement between the partisans and the NKVD operatives in the entire Valka Region was in fact an attempt by the chekists, through showing “goodwill”, to get as many as possible fighters residing in the forest to report to the authorities and end their resistance, since the pressure exerted by the partisans in that region was considerable. However, the result was different, because the ceasefire immensely raised the authority of the LNPA in the eyes of local partisans, and the number of legalizations in Valka district decreased.²⁰

Notable partisan battles continued throughout the year. One of the most famous episodes of Latvia's national partisan fight episodes was the capture of Kabile by the Kabile National Partisan Group on 24 December 1945. In this operation, 20 partisans besieged the NKVD operatives and destroyers on duty, several of whom were killed. The partisans released the people imprisoned in the executive committee building and seized the executive committee documents.²¹

²⁰ Turčinskis, Z. *Ziemeļvidzemes mežabrāļi ...*, pp. 88, 89, 92.

²¹ Jansons, R., *Kurzeme*, p. 218.

The armed response of the occupation regime to the national underground activities at the beginning of the partisan fights was quite ineffective. Initially, the predominant approach was area search operations involving large numbers of troops, and the scale of these operations was often quite significant. On 25 May, the partisan group led by Dominiks Baranovskis occupied the centre of Bērzpils civil parish. In response to this attack, on 12 June, 1 444 NKVD soldiers searched the surrounding forests. On 3 and 4 July, 673 soldiers were involved in the operation against the Nīcgale partisan regiment in Nīcgale civil parish, Daugavpils district.²² From 31 May to 8 August 1945, Operation “Vostok” took place in the eastern districts of Latvia, during which four Red Army divisions and four NKVD battalions searched forests and farmsteads. The result was only 21 killed partisans and seven injured, while the number of detainees was 3 471, consequently, more civilians than partisans were actually arrested.²³

The situation changed with the restructuring of the occupying forces, when the NKVD/NKGB operational headquarters were established in the regions where the partisans abounded the most — Vidzeme, Latgale and Kurzeme, which allowed both institutions to exchange information faster and use forces more effectively in the fight

²² Turčinskis, Z. *Latvijas Nacionālo partizānu ...*, p. 474.

²³ Turčinskis, Z. *Bruņotā pretošanās padomju un nacistiskajai okupācijai (1940–1957)* [Armed resistance to Soviet and Nazi occupation (1940–1957)]. In: *Nepārtrauktības doktrīna Latvijas vēstures kontekstā* [The doctrine of continuity in the context of Latvian history]. Jundzis, T. (scientific ed.) Rīga: LZA Baltijas stratēģisko pētījumu centrs, 2017, p. 115.

against partisans. At the same time, the approach of winter was a great help to the Cheka, since the partisans lost their mobility because they were forced to prepare for winter and switch from a mobile lifestyle to remaining in bunkers. As a result, the course of the fighting gradually became more favorable to the occupiers.

In Valka district, 19 partisans were killed and nine were captured in a series of operations from 20 November to 10 December. In 26–27 December of 1945 in Kuldīga district, about 200 NKVD soldiers fought against a partisan group of 20–30 men led by Artūrs Ernests Legzdīņš, and even two tankettes and a reconnaissance aircraft were used in the battle, as were additional forces with 45 soldiers. Despite the considerable disparity of force, the operation was not successful, as the partisans managed to hold out throughout the day and evening of 26 December, and, moreover, to break out of the siege. The group commander and six partisans lost their lives in the battle. There is no information about the losses in the ranks of adversaries, but they had to be significant.²⁴

As the activities of partisans have so far been comprehensively studied in only a small part of Latvia, there is no complete information on the total losses in partisan fights in their first stage, however, the situation is described relatively

²⁴ Jansons, R., Kurzeme, p. 218.; Jansons, R., Zālīte, I. LPSR valsts drošības dienesta izveidošana un tā represīvie uzdevumi [Establishment of the LSSR State Security Service and its repressive tasks]. In: *Totalitārie režīmi un to represijas Latvijā 1940.–1956. gadā* [Totalitarian regimes and repressions in Latvia 1940–1956]. Šneidere, I. (comp). Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūts, 2001, pp. 373–476.

well in the KGB documents. According to the information available therein, during 1944–1946 1 350 partisans lost their lives and 1 429 were arrested. Of these, 940 lost their lives in 1945, while 870 partisans were arrested. Observing the number of legalized individuals in these years, which is 2 674 persons,²⁵ then the total partisan losses in 1944–1946 reached 5 453 people.²⁶

Despite the losses suffered by the partisans, in the early stages of the fighting, the major destroyer of the partisan groups was the morale that led to the legalization of many fighters. The partisans were waiting for a new military conflict in Europe to emerge no later than at the beginning of the autumn of 1945, but the approach of winter made it clear that they would have to remain underground for a long time, for which many were neither morally nor physically prepared. The Cheka recognized this, and therefore announced an amnesty, under the conditions of which the partisans could apply to the local authorities in person to become legalized and return to normal life. The invitations were published in the newspapers of the Latvian SSR and republished from time to time. The most significant was the call for legalization by the People's Commissar of the Latvian SSR, Augusts Eglītis, published in the newspaper *Cīņa* on 12 September 1945, which came as a result of talks conducted by Pastor E. Grāvītis.²⁷

²⁵ *НКВД–МВД СССР в борьбе с бандитизмом ...*, p. 154.

²⁶ According to the data of KGB, about 12 250 active partisans operated in the territory in the period of 1944–1956.

²⁷ Turčinskis, Z. *Ziemeļvidzemes mežabrāļi ...*, p. 89.

During the announced legalization campaign, both those who had forfeited hope and “unstable elements” left the partisan groups, — those, who were not committed to the partisan movement, but had entered it in search of refuge in the forests. The problems were caused by the repressions against the relatives who remained at home, which forced many partisans to leave the forests. For example, in Rozēni and Mazsalaca civil parishes of Valmiera district, three partisan groups had formed, which were potentially able to carry out serious attacks on the occupation regime in the local area, but did not want to commence armed actions before the start of a new war. As a result of the repressive measures by NKVD, almost all members of these partisan groups were legalized during 1945. This showed that working close to their homes and keeping in touch with relatives caused difficulties to the partisans.²⁸

The call to leave the underground had significant results, because, according to the data of KGB, 1 638 partisans were legalized in 1945. Many partisans also legalized in 1946, but in the following years the cases of voluntary surrender of partisans decreased.²⁹ The most serious groups remained in the forests, and their members continued to wait for assistance from the West or simply did not believe in the promises of amnesty.

²⁸ Ratnieks, R. Nacionālo partizānu grupu veidošanās un darbība Ziemeļrietumvidzemē 1944. rudenī — 1945. gadā [Formation and operation of national partisan groups in Northwest Vidzeme in the autumn of 1944–1945]. *Latvijas Universitātes Žurnāls. Vēsture*, No. 5, p. 71.

²⁹ НКВД–МВД СССР в борьбе с бандитизмом ..., p. 154.

The promised amnesty did not grant a peaceful living for a longer period of time. Cheka immediately began to interrogate those who had left the forests voluntarily in order to obtain information about the partisans left in the forests, and these people were often recruited as Cheka operatives with the task of turning against the former members. The arrests of many former partisans began around 1948, and many of them were jailed and sent away during the deportations of March 1949 as belonging to the category “legalized bandit”. In many cases, the partisans who had fled the deportations returned to the forest and joined the remaining partisan groups.

Battles of the Latvian national partisans in subsequent years

1945–1946 was an active period of partisan fights, when extensive groups of partisans carried out large-scale attacks on Soviet regime institutions and their officials. However, as of 1946, the partisans were forced to gradually adapt to the growing pressure exerted by the security services of the occupying power. The partisan groups became smaller and more conspiratorial. The attacks by larger, united groups were replaced by more detailed, carefully planned attacks on individual destroyers, Soviet activists and officials.

For example, in May 1946, in Alūksne District, partisans on Vidzeme highway killed Gusev, the head of the MGB (USSR Ministry of State Security) district division, with all his guards. In October of the same year, a group of

Ludolfs Eiklons killed three Red Army officers, the chairman of the civil parish executive committee and the *partorg* in Ranka civil parish, Cēsis district.³⁰ A well-thought-out and successful operation was carried out on 28 April 1949 by the group of Mārtiņš Pokļevinskis, who from the ambush destroyed the leadership of Jēkabpils district MGB — four officers along with the head of the MGB District Division Major Sokolov.³¹

Changes in the dynamics of partisan fighting were introduced by the deportation of March 1949. Thereby, the occupying power wanted to break the resistance to the protracted collectivization, as well as to eliminate the support base of the national partisans. USSR Council of Ministers Top Secret Decision No. 390–138 determined the categories of the population to be deported. The title of the decision describes the groups to be deported: “The expulsion of kulaks and their families, illegal bandits and nationalist families, families of bandits shot in armed clashes and convicted, legalized bandits continuing hostile activities, and their families, as well as the supporters of bandits under repressions, from the territories of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia”.

The operation to be performed was codenamed “Priboj”. In the context of this deportation, in 25–30 March, 42 125 people were deported from Latvia, including 10 987 children under the age of 16, and 211 children were

³⁰ Turčinskis, Z. Vidzeme, p. 131.

³¹ Turčinskis, Z. Bruņotā pretošanās padomju ..., p. 120.

born on the way to the place of deportation and in the custody at special camps.³²

Unfortunately, the national partisans could not hinder the deportations, because in March 1949 the snow lasted for a long time and the fighters who had spent the winter in the forests could start moving freely only in the beginning of April. Some people managed to escape deportations or fled into the forest. These people often joined partisan groups, but so did many women and children, which hampered the operations of partisans. Such groups lost mobility and found it more difficult to provide for their survival.

The deportations led to a significant escalation of the heretofore waning partisan fights, as the groups were joined by new fighters and merciless retaliatory actions were taken against the most active communists in the area. The chairs of local executive committees, the destroyers, the Cheka operatives and the regime's economic workers, especially the collective farm chairmen, following the mass collectivization of agriculture, were killed in partisan attacks. Due to a curious coincidence, on 30 June 1949, the group of Aleksandrs Sarja (alias Saša) managed to shoot Chemodanov, Deputy Minister of Forestry of the Latvian SSR, who, along with the director of the local forestry trust Valdmanis and Latvian Communist Party instructor Polyakov, had stopped their car by the forest near Smiltene to pick mushrooms.³³

³² *Aizvestie: 1949. gada 25. marts* [*The deported. 25 March 1949*]. Vol. 1. Prepared by Āboliņa, A. et al. Rīga: Latvijas Valsts arhīvs, Nordik, 2007, pp. 19, 23.

³³ Turčinskis, Z. *Ziemeļvidzemes mežabrāļi ...*, p. 239.

Overall, one of the goals of the deportations was achieved — the support base of the national partisans was destroyed. Many of the supporters of the Forest Brotherhood were deported, while those who remained entered the collective farms fearing further repressions. Since the supporters had become poorer and were no longer able to provide enough food for the partisans, the partisan groups were forced to plunder shops (which was rarely done before) or to rob the most active supporters of the occupying power for food. These conditions challenged survival, since these attacks brought about a particularly sharp reactions from the Cheka.

Cruel defensive battles against the MGB forces also continued, in which the partisans, showing extremely high fighting capacity, often fought to the last man so as not to fall into captivity. On 30 April 1949, a group of four men under command of Bernhards Zariņš, in Rencēni civil parish, Valmiera district, fought against 66 MGB soldiers for about 3 hours. All partisans were killed in the fight, but the MGB had five dead, including two officers, as well as one wounded.³⁴

In the second half of 1949, the occupying power organized extensive anti-partisan operations, which, as usual, were particularly successful in the winter. On 19 December 1949, 547 soldiers of the 24th MGB Rifle Regiment surrounded the bunker of Karankēvičs group in the forests of Sēlija, around which full-profile trenches were made. In the three-hour battle, 5 partisans were killed and 11 wounded ones surrendered.

³⁴ Strods, H. *Latvijas nacionālo partizānu karš...*, 1999, pp. 455–459.

On 25 February 1950, 550 soldiers of the 24th MGB Rifle Regiment surrounded the combined group under the leadership of Grāversons and Indāns in the Aknīste district. Twelve partisans lost their lives in the battle, which lasted about five hours, but one seriously injured woman who did not take part in the battle was captured. The opponent lost at least 10 men and seven were injured.

There were also partisan collective suicides to escape from falling into captivity. On 16 April 1952, a large group of six people led by Dailonis Breikšs, committed suicide in the territory of the Rauna village council of Cēsis district. The clashes also reaped the lives of entire families who had tried to escape the Cheka terror by seeking shelter in the forest. In 1950, after being surrounded by the siege in surroundings of Viļaka, the Sprukuļi family — parents with six children — lost their lives.³⁵

Despite heavy losses, the partisan movement continued for several more years. The leadership of the Soviet security services at the level of the USSR also began to focus their attention to the ‘unsettled periphery’. For example, on 8 December 1952, the operation in Gaujiena district against the group of Arsēnijs Dreijalts (Vīndedzis) was led by Colonel Ivan Ptashkin, the head of the USSR MGB 2nd Internal Security Division who had arrived from Moscow, and his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Lopukhov, while a direct sanction was issued on 10 February 1953 by Lieutenant General Boris Obruchnikov, Deputy Minister of the USSR MGB.³⁶

³⁵ Turčinskis, Z. *Bruņotā pretošanās padomju ...*, pp. 119, 120.

³⁶ Turčinskis, Z. *Ziemeļvidzemes mežabrāļi ...*, p. 295.

1953 was the last great year of partisan fighting, when 100 Latvian national partisans died in battles with Cheka forces. From 1 April 1954 to 30 October 1956, several more anti-partisan operations took place, killing 11 and capturing 49 partisans, whereas 39 became legalized. As a result, armed resistance to the Soviet regime was broken.³⁷

However, until 1956, the last active group of national partisans under the leadership of former Polish agricultural worker Staņislavs Zavadskis (Pans) was active in the Cesvaine area. As late as in June 1954 (!), the group contrived to injure Stepanov, the commander of the MGB Cesvaine district division, in the head. As Pans' partisans operated very cautiously, the MGB could not capture the group, and thus were compelled to take a humiliating step — Major General Jānis Vēvers, the head of the LSSR MGB, wrote a letter to the partisans asking them to give up and promising that no repressions would be effectuated. In order to achieve the surrendering of the group, even S. Zavadskis' mother was brought to Latvia.³⁸

The group of Pans legalized in October of 1956. The authorities of occupying power permitted S. Zavadskis to return to Poland. The promise of an amnesty was not kept, because during the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 the other partisans of the group — Pēteris Tirzītis (alias Vecais)

³⁷ Turčinskis, Z. Bruņotā pretošanās padomju ..., p. 121.

³⁸ Jēkabsons, Ē. Poļu piedalīšanās nacionālajā pretošanās kustībā Latvijā 1944.–1950. gadā [Participation of Polish nationals in the national resistance movement in Latvia, 1944–1950]. In: *Okupācijas režīmi Baltijas valstīs, 1940–1991* [Occupation Regimes in the Baltic States, 1940–1991]. Ērglis, Dz. (comp.). Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2009, pp. 323–324.

and Ivars Gabrāns (alias Puika) — were arrested, the KGB apparently feared that both could return to the forest.

However, these were not the only partisans left in the woods. The last member of Vidzeme forest brotherhood Pēteris Svīklāns (alias Petjka) arrived to surrender in KGB of Smiltene on 13 May 1957, handing over a hand-held machine gun, rifle and pistol.³⁹

³⁹ Turčinskis, Z. Vidzeme, pp. 133, 137.

Glossary

Cheka — a general designation for the security services of the USSR and their structural units in the period from 1917 to 1954, which arose from the abbreviation of the VChK — the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage founded in 1917.

Latvian SSR — a republic (territorial administrative unit of the USSR) established in the territory of Latvia occupied by the USSR in 1940.

LNPA — Union of the Latvian National Partisans. Latvian partisan organization in Northern Latgale and Vidzeme region that existed from 1944 to 1953.

LTS(p)A — Latvian Defenders of the Homeland (Partisan) Union. Latvian partisan organization in Southern Latgale, Sēlija and Central Vidzeme region that existed from 1945 to 1946.

MGB — Ministry of State Security. Its tasks included internal and external security issues. One of the KGBs predecessors.

NKVD — People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. The NKVD was a security service of the USSR, and its tasks included the maintenance of internal security and order, guarding of borders and the maintenance of prison and penitentiary camp network. One of the KGB's predecessors.

USSR — Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

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Abbreviations of archive materials in references

apr. — description

f. — fund

l. — sheet

LNA — National Archives of Latvia

lp. — page

LVA — State Archives of Latvia

LVVA — Latvian State Historical Archives

LNA-LVA

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28785. l. (Antona Juhņēviča krimināllieta) [The criminal case of Antons Juhņēvičs].

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Eigits Dāvis Timermanis’ recollection of his father Roberts Dāvīds Timermanis

Since I was less than ten years old the last time I saw my Dad, my memories are the memories of a child, later supplemented by my Mommy.

Our Dad was cheerful, full of wit and loved us very much. He often spent his weekends and summer holidays with us — children, going for walks and participating in various activities, — swimming in the sea, but in winter skiing over the hills on the outskirts of the city. I remember the time when the Aviation Regiment units were stationed in the summer camp in Daugavpils, and the smell of engine oil in the hangars has remained indelibly in my memory. From then on, I had the idea that I would like to be involved in aviation.

The peaceful life of our family was disrupted on 17 June 1940. Shortly afterwards, on 30 November, father was retired from the Aviation Regiment. Work in various industries followed, and at the beginning of June my father sent me, my sister and my Grandma to Salacgrīva. By being cautious, Dad and Mommy avoided the 14 June arrests, leaving their apartment at the crucial time.

After the arrival of German troops, Dad continued to work, but when Colonel Kandis in 1942 called the former officers to come to the aid of Latvia, Dad resumed his career as a soldier.

Dad was a fighter. From very early days, after the war, Dad had to struggle with scarcity and hardship. He had never seen his father, and grew up without him. It was not easy; I can confirm it myself. It was a hard work and incessant toil to achieve good results at schools.

Dad continued to fight — after the accident in April of 1933, many months passed in the hospitals until he was able to fly again.

During his studies, he had to fight with senior students, protecting the honor of a girl. The fight on a greater scale resumed, joining the police battalion, and subsequently in the Wehrmacht unit. The end of the World War II was not the end of my Dad's war for his Latvia. He had taken an oath of allegiance to Latvia and was ready to lay his head for the country like many others who embarked on the course of legionnaires and later became national partisans. Their sacrifice in the name of nation's freedom cannot be repaid, we can only keep their memory alive.

I would like to express my gratitude to the University of Latvia Foundation, Laila Kundziņa, for the proposal to create a book as a monument in memory of my Dad, to convey my appreciation to Professor Ēriks Jēkabsons and historian Reinis Ratnieks for their efforts in this work. Thank you most sincerely.

Eigits Dāvis Timermanis

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