

Activities of Herbert Grant-Watson, British Foreign Office Representative in Latvia in March–August 1919*

Lielbritānijas Ārlietu ministrijas pārstāvja Herberta Granta-Vatsona darbība Latvijā 1919. gada martā–augustā

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Latvijas Neatkarības kara pirmā puse no 1918. gada novembra līdz 1919. gada vasarai bija īpaši sarežģīta, Latvijā nežēlīga kara apstākļos sadūrās visu kaimiņvalstu un sašķeltās Latvijas sabiedrības grupu intereses (vācbaltiešu, latviešu, boļševiku u. c.). Šajā situācijā bija jādarbojas Rietumu lielvalstu pārstāvjiem, turklāt plašākā pārstāvniecība bija Lielbritānijai. Kopš 1918. gada nogales Latvijā klātesoši bija britu Kara flotes kuģi, no 1919. gada pavasara un vasaras – Militārā misija un Politiskā misija, turklāt no 1919. gada marta Latvijā darbojās Ārlietu ministrijas neoficiāls pārstāvis Herberts Adolfuss Grants-Vatsons, un arī viņa darbība bija ļoti aktīva, tāpēc tās izpēte ir sevišķi būtiska. Raksta mērķis ir noskaidrot Granta-Vatsona darbības apstākļus un rezultātus Liepājā un Rīgā 1919. gada martā–augustā, aplūkojot viņa aktivitātes hronoloģiski. Darbā izmantoti avoti no Lielbritānijas Nacionālā arhīva u. c.

Atslēgvārdi: Latvijas Neatkarības karš, 16. aprīļa apvērsums, Lielbritānijas Ārlietu ministrija, Pagaidu valdība, Herberts Grants-Vatsons.

The first half of the Latvian War of Independence, from November 1918 to the summer of 1919, was particularly difficult, with the interests of all neighbouring countries and the divided Latvian society (Baltic Germans, Latvians, Bolsheviks, etc.) clashing in the midst of a brutal war in Latvia. In this situation, the representatives of the Western powers, with Britain being the most widely represented, had a presence in Latvia from the end of 1918, with British naval vessels, the Military Mission and the Political Mission from the spring and summer of 1919. From March 1919 – an unofficial

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representative of the Foreign Office, Herbert Adolphus Grant-Watson, was very active in Latvia, hence, the study of his activities is particularly important. The aim of this article is to establish the circumstances and results of Grant-Watson's activities in Liepāja and Riga in March–August 1919, examining them chronologically. This task is accomplished on the basis of the materials acquired in British National Archives and other sources.

Keywords: Latvian War of Independence, coup d'état of 16 April, British Foreign Office, Temporary Government, Herbert Grant-Watson.

Introduction

On 18 November 1918, the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed, and its government and nation were forced to fight an armed struggle with several external and internal enemies until the summer of 1920, namely, with Soviet Russia and its satellite – Soviet Latvia, as well as Germany and the Baltic Germans (in addition to a forced cooperation with Germany and Baltic Germans against the Bolsheviks until the summer of 1919), as well as the army commanded by Bermond, representing the Russian anti-Bolshevist forces. It was not until 11 August 1920 that a peace treaty was signed with Soviet Russia.

The first stages of the Latvian War of Independence, from November 1918 to the summer of 1919, were particularly difficult and strenuous for the Latvian Provisional Government.¹ Under the conditions of a brutal war and terror in Latvia, collided the interests of all the neighbouring powers (Germany, Soviet Russia, the still internationally legally existing non-Bolshevist Russia) and other neighbouring countries, and also those of the socially, politically and nationally divided Latvian society groups (Baltic Germans, Latvians,

Bolsheviks etc.). In this situation, the representation of the interests of the Western powers in the region by the political, military and humanitarian missions of Great Britain, France and the USA was essential. From the spring of 1919, the French Military Mission and warships, the US Political Mission and the American Relief Administration Mission, with their Navy transports were active in Latvia, as were the British representatives – the most widely represented of all. This was due to the British interest in the region which was quite pronounced, especially in Estonia and Latvia. Since the end of 1918, British naval vessels were present in Latvia, and in the spring and summer of 1919 they were joined by the Military Mission and the Political Mission, whose activity and involvement in the events was very high.² In addition, from March 1919, Herbert Adolphus Grant-Watson, an unofficial representative of the British Foreign Office, who was not officially part of the missions but worked closely with them, was active in Liepāja and then Riga. Grant-Watson's activities have received some coverage in the popular publications of Latvian exile community,³ he is also mentioned in the historical literature of Soviet Latvia, the exiles and the Republic of Latvia, but only in very general terms – with a brief note or highlighting the most important aspects of Grant-Watson's activities or facts found in his published reports (and even that – less than for other Allied and even British representatives in Latvia).⁴ The aim of this article is to further clarify the circumstances and results of Grant-Watson's activities in Liepāja and Riga in March–August 1919 by examining his activities chronologically in stages (determined by the markedly different military and political situation in Latvia during these periods). This is achieved by examination of documents from British National Archives and other sources.

Herbert Watson was born on 4 January 1881, educated at Trinity College, Cambridge University, worked in the British Diplomatic Service from 1905, and in the British Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the closing years of the First World War. Later he held other posts, including Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Central American Republics 1928–1933, Cuba 1933–1935 and 1937–1940, Finland 1935–1937. Married in 1905, spouse Anna, b. Low (died 1953).⁵ After his retirement he lived in Bournemouth, where he died on 21 November 1971, which was also noted by the Latvian press in exile, with special emphasis on his friendship towards Latvia and his interest in its problems.⁶ This is further confirmed by the two books written and published by Grant-Watson on Latvia.⁷ Moreover, his second wife, Catherine Grant-Watson, in correspondence with the Latvian historian of Latvia in exile, Jānis Labsvīrs, as early as autumn 1989, asked that her late husband's and her own wish be fulfilled – that a memorial service for Kārlis Ulmanis be held in Riga, which was done on 1 July 1990 at the Cathedral Church in Riga.⁸

Arrival in Liepāja

Grant-Watson had attended to the Latvian question at the embassy in Copenhagen since the beginning of 1919. On the morning of 12 February, the British warships *Caledon* and *Phaeton*, escorted by several minelayers, left Copenhagen for Liepāja, arriving at their destination on 12 February. On board *Caledon*, with the task of directly ascertaining the military-political situation in Latvia, were Foreign Office officials – Vivien Bosenquet, the former consul in Riga, who had visited Riga and Liepāja several times since December 1918,

and Grant-Watson, the second secretary at the British Legation in Copenhagen, who, together with the ships' senior officers, went ashore and held several consultations with the head of the Latvian Provisional Government, Kārlis Ulmanis, ministers and other dignitaries. The representatives returned to Copenhagen on 20 February, and on 22 February Bosenquet drew up a report on the negotiations and the political and military situation, admitting that he had also based his work on Grant-Watson's notes. On the whole, the British representatives had a rather hopeful impression of the difficult situation of the government and of its relations with the German forces, von der Goltz and the *Landeswehr*.⁹ Grant-Watson himself recalled that during a reception on board *Caledon*, Walter Cowan, commander of the British Naval Baltic Squadron, offered to accompany him on a trip to Liepāja in order to better acquaint himself with the conditions. The authorities of the mission agreed, granting Grant-Watson a leave. Cowan was also on board *Caledon*, Grant-Watson took part in the communal meals, and the diplomat was also given a revolver from the ship's armoury. He recalled how difficult and dangerous the road to Riga was because of the many mines and ice jams. The ship was brought into the port of Liepāja by a local Danish pilot, and Grant-Watson reached the shore in a boat with Bosenquet. In the city, the two negotiated with Ulmanis and the ministers with the permission of the German Governor, Rüdiger von der Goltz, but spent the nights on board.¹⁰ In any case, Grant-Watson's own notes on the trip were used by the US embassy in Copenhagen for extensive reports to the State Department on the situation in Latvia in early March.¹¹

On 6 March 1919, Austin Keenan, the head of the British Military Mission, arrived in Liepāja to begin his permanent

work in Latvia; in June, Major-General Alfred Burt took over the mission. On 19 March, Herbert Adolphus Grant-Watson, a representative of the Foreign Office, arrived in Liepāja. In early June they were joined by Stephen Tallents, Head of the Political Mission (although he had arrived in Liepāja for a few days on 11 March, but then returned to London via Estonia).

At the meeting of the government on 19 March K. Ulmanis reported that H. Grant-Watson, “*appointed as informal British counter-agent to the Latvian Government*”, had arrived in Liepāja.¹² When the meeting was recapped, it was noted in the press that he had already appeared before the government. It was also noted that the conversation with K. Ulmanis had taken place on 20 March, lasting “*a long time*”, and the German and Russian press in Liepāja was accused of misinterpreting the term “*informal representative*” (as if he had only come for information). The Latvian government newspaper “*Latvijas Sargs*” stressed that it was referring to an “*informal or de facto representative*”, which was explained by the fact that Latvia had not obtained international recognition. However, it was only a matter of weeks before Grant-Watson’s post would be renamed in accordance with “*international legal practice*”.¹³ The actual situation was more complicated, and the wait for international recognition was longer.

Grant-Watson himself recalled that he had received an official assignment to go to Latvia and Lithuania as a representative to establish “*unofficial*” relations with the governments of these new countries (while V. Bosenquet went to Tallinn), and arrived in Liepāja on the *Galatea*, where he was invited by the already arrived head of the Military Mission, Major A. Keenan, to stay in the “*large summer residence*” granted by the Latvian government for his mission. Food in the city was hard to come

by and the British subsisted mainly on army rations supplied by the Navy.¹⁴ He recalled that the Latvian Provisional Government had been pleased to see the start of his activities as *de facto* recognition by the British, and that ministers had stressed in their negotiations that the government’s tasks were to obtain recognition from the Allies, to have the naval blockade lifted and to obtain a loan to enable purchasing comestibles and war materials in the Scandinavian countries.¹⁵

According to his report of 1 April, from the moment of his arrival in Liepāja Grant-Watson regularly, in fact – daily discussed the situation with the Provisional Government and its leader K. Ulmanis, as well as with other “*prominent Letts*”. During the talks, the British representative was convinced that the government’s policy was definitely aligned with the direction of the “*Entente*” powers, especially “*England*”, which was supported by “*the majority of Letts*”, to the extent that in the event of a plebiscite of the population on the form of statehood, the proposal for a British protectorate would prevail (only “*failing this the Letts wish to be independent*”). Apparently echoing what he had been told by government representatives, Grant-Watson stressed that the Latvian government’s aim was first to root out Bolshevism and then to turn out Germanism. He noted that the government represented “*Lettish national aspirations*”, but because of the circumstances engendered by the German occupation power and the Bolshevik regime, it was not elected by universal suffrage, its position was “*weak*”, because the country was controlled by Bolshevik and German forces hostile to the “*Lettish movement*”, also “*the [German] Baltic landowners do not give them genuine support*”, because they were afraid of the estates being taken away and handed over to the Latvian peasants, but there were “*signs*” that an agreement may be reached

between Latvians and Baltic Germans, and there was a threat of a food shortage, etc. Grant-Watson believed that the situation could only change if the government included “*many of the best Letts*” from outside it, because it had “*many Ministers who are without any political or business experience*”, the main aim of the government at the moment being to obtain funds for food and to supply the army for the fight against the Bolsheviks, but “*in financial matters*” their performance was “*very ill*” in the “*business circles*” and the constantly high prices became even higher, causing an ever greater discontent among the “*working classes*”. The author of the report, however, considered that until the government was able to regain Riga and the German occupation ended, it would be impossible to fully assess the balance of forces between its supporters and opponents, and that the ongoing “*fight against Bolshevism practically excludes*” other possibilities. It is very important to note that here for the first time is an indication of the government’s intention to directly develop cooperation between the Baltic states – K. Ulmanis planned to convene a meeting of representatives of Latvia, Finland, Estonia and Lithuania in Liepāja to coordinate political, military, economic and other forms of cooperation, also noting the idea circulating in Liepāja and Kaunas to discuss a military treaty, “free ports” (placing the port of Liepāja at the disposal of Lithuania for importing goods), postal and monetary union, etc.

As to the domestic policy, Grant-Watson described it as “*socialistic*” (railways, telegraph, telephone communications in the hands of the government, exploitation of the Kurzeme state forests, monopoly on the flax trade, food supply, industrial reconstruction), caused by the enormous war losses, which were catastrophic – in particular concerning the social situation of the urban population.

It was Grant-Watson’s view that in the event of a revolt by the “*local Bolsheviks*”, the Germans would suppress them, perhaps by establishing a full control over the land and trying to set up a pro-German government, but its sustainability, and likewise the Germans’ ability to withstand a major Bolshevik revolt, was doubtful, since von der Goltz’s power was limited not only by the leftist committees of German soldiers in the army, but also by the socialists in the German government. Von der Goltz had told Grant-Watson that the Germans regarded the Lielupe River as a “*natural line of defence*” against the Bolsheviks and had therefore “*cooperated with the Letts*” in pushing the Bolsheviks back over the river, while Goltz had offered to “*assist the Letts to capture Riga*”. However, Grant-Watson was not clear about the Germans’ “*ulterior motives*” in this way, as several German officers had suggested that Goltz was trying to rebuild the army according to the “*old monarchical traditions*”, whereby he would then be able to influence the situation in Germany, so volunteers were carefully accepted and many refused, being sent to Germany. In any case, the Germans’ deep political and economic interest in Latvian affairs is demonstrated by the offer of a German loan, the efforts to take over the Latvian railways, the offer of land from the German volunteers to fight against the Bolsheviks, etc.

The Bolshevik forces on the other side of the front were, according to Grant-Watson, mainly “Letts”, so there was a “civil war” which was extremely brutal, with “*unprecedented barbarity*”, with Bolsheviks and Germans killing prisoners of war etc. “*have roused hatred and passion to such an extent that the whole life of the country must be embittered for many years to come*”. Grant-Watson stressed that in this crisis the Provisional Government had appealed to the Entente countries for food

aid and loans to supply the army. Although the Government was in a weak position, it could, in the opinion of “*people who know the situation well*”, become a “*centre of national aspirations*” which, with the help of the Entente, would be able to set up an administration and an army, and would be able to take the place of the Germans when they were withdrawn to Germany. However, without the support of the Entente, “*the Lettish government will fall*”, so Grant-Watson recommended that in order to “*maintain the Government and thereby to save the country from anarchy*”, this support should be given.¹⁶

It should be noted that on 6 April Grant-Watson also dealt with the Lithuanian government, which at the time did not seem to him “serious” because of its exaggerated territorial claims, and the British representative suggested that Palanga should be given to it, and Klaipėda – to Poland, if it would give up Danzig.¹⁷

The 16 April coup and its aftermath

Later, Grant-Watson recalled that in April Liepāja had a thaw and women gardeners were planting flowers in the parks, while he started walking along the seaside, despite the daily firing drills by the German artillery.¹⁸ Grant-Watson was on a mission in Kaunas at the time of the armed coup d'état by the Germans against the Provisional Government in Liepāja on 16 April. In view of the events, commander of British Navy squadron W. Cowan telegraphed him from Liepāja to return immediately. On 19 April Grant-Watson returned and, on Cowan's advice, settled for a time not in the city but on board the British warship *Seafire* in the harbour just as German soldiers were setting up barricades on the shore to block access to the British squadron, and it was *Seafire* that took up

position to counteract the Germans' intention (as the escalation increased, von der Goltz personally visited the site, calming the situation for the time being).¹⁹

In that critical situation, there was a direct need for the Allies to work together (in addition to Keenan and Grant-Watson, British and French warships, there was also a US mission under Warwick Greene in Liepāja). On 22 April, Cowan chaired the first major meeting of Allied representatives in the US mission building, with Keenan, Grant-Watson, French commander Jean Brisson, the Americans Greene and his deputy Ernest Dawley, who reported on the meeting with von der Goltz and the results of the conversation. It was decided to demand that Goltz remove the commanders of the *Landeswehr* shock troops and the Westphalian Free Corps, their withdrawal from Liepāja, the reinstatement of Latvian officers, etc., in return for a promise that, once the demands had been met, the Allied missions would declare their support only for a government in which all population groups were proportionally represented (meaning, above all, the Baltic Germans).²⁰ Robert Hale, a member of the American Mission, was also present at the meeting as an interpreter and described Grant-Watson in the following words:

*“I think Grant-Watson is the Foreign Office through and through. I think he is a product of Oxford, eight or ten years older than I am, intelligent, learned, cultivated, steeped in tradition, probably perfectly honest, probably with a broad constructive vision, and yet in his own way too pliable and affable to be as attractive a personality as Admiral [Cowan].”*²¹

Around the same time, the British representatives began regular visits to *Saratov*, which was in port, and consultations with the ministers of the Provisional

Government working there (K. Ulmanis had taken refuge in the British Military Mission during the coup, from where he was transferred to the ship after some time), which is also noted by historian Edgars Andersons, who writes that this happened “daily” – “to exchange information with the Latvian government and to encourage it”.²² This is confirmed by Grant-Watson himself in his memoirs, according to which, after Ulmanis was transferred from his mission, where he had taken refuge, to *Saratov* in a port raid, he visited the ship every day to discuss the situation of the Prime Minister.²³

Attempts to form a coalition government

The Allied representatives unanimously saw the solution to the situation in the formation of a broad coalition government, including representatives of minorities, primarily the Baltic Germans, and from 22 April invested a determined effort to achieve this in negotiations with representatives of the interested parties. On 9 May, for example, A. Keenan reported on the negotiations on a new government (possibly “liberal” or representatives of the Ulmanis group – seven Latvians, one “conservative”, a politically right-wing or to some extent pro-German Latvian, three Baltic Germans and one Jew). He stressed, however, that if Latvians did not have a majority in the cabinet, it was doubtful whether “a Lettish national army would receive adequate support”.²⁴ Grant-Watson reported similarly on 8 May: under pressure from the Allies, negotiations were renewed on the formation of a coalition government, which would make it possible to gain the support of the Baltic Germans to take Riga, although it would increase German influence in the cabinet. He also mentioned

that if there was a British loan to buy arms and equipment, as well as British instructors, a “Lettish peasant army” could be formed (otherwise the “Lettish movement” would be stifled by the Baltic Germans and “German rule” would always remain intact in Latvia).²⁵

Similarly, on 22 May, Grant-Watson reported that “*the Germans and the Balts are making every effort to establish their dominating influence permanently in the country*”. He described the Prime Minister of the newly formed pro-German Latvian government, Andrievs Niedra, who was supported by the German occupation authorities, as “*a Conservative pro-German Lett*”, and his government as consisting of “*few [of his] personal friends*” – mainly Baltic Germans as ministers. In addition, he reported that “*practically the whole country is passively resisting his Government, there is in reality no administration*”, almost all former government officials had left their posts, the leaders of the People’s Council and the Liepāja City Council were in prison after protesting against the situation, about 1100 Latvian soldiers of the Liepāja Newly Formed Forces who refused to submit to the orders of A. Niedra’s War Ministry, were sent to the front to have their units disbanded, only three pro-German newspapers were allowed to be published, German censorship of letters and telegrams was introduced alongside Latvian censorship, and Niedra’s only support came from German army units and the Baltic *Landeswehr*, which “*practically forms part of the German army*” because of the mass enlistment of German army soldiers (it was said that the numbers have therefore reached 15 000 men). He was apparently writing very subjectively on the basis of information provided by representatives of the Ulmanis group:

“The Balts realise that the present regime is leading directly to civil war, but Niedra

very obstinate and the Germans seem determined to keep the Government in their hands. Niedra, who is not quite normal, is a political gambler and mentally he requires the excitement of danger. In his youth he was a great card player and lately he has paid 3 or 4 visits to Riga, merely because he enjoyed the sensation of running great risks. Thus though he sees that his Government is placing the country on the edge of an abyss, he still persists through love of danger, in remaining Premier and refuses to allow a Coalition Government to be formed. The Baltic National Committee, who in cooperation with the German military authorities control the Baltic Landeswehr, will continue to support him as long as they are able to maintain the help of the German soldiers.”²⁶

Finally, Grant-Watson stated that the Baltic Germans were very bitter about the Estonians and would undoubtedly cooperate with the anti-Bolshevik Russian forces to destroy the Estonian government and “reestablish their hegemony in that province”.

Later, Grant-Watson recalled a conversation with Anatol von Lieven, commander of the Russian unit of the *Landeswehr*, in the cabin of the warship *Velox*, where he had worked for some time. Von Lieven emphasised that he was prepared to work with anyone to fight the Bolsheviks, but that he would prefer to do so with the Allies. He also asked for two ships to send his unit to the Bolshevik front at Petrograd, which was not possible, as the British had no ships available.²⁷ Grant-Watson also recalled that he and Major Keenan had been closely observing the complex military-political developments in Latvia, which had been difficult – “wild rumours” had been circulating which were difficult to verify. Every day after lunch, the two went to talk to K. Ulmanis, who kept them well informed of developments. The situation

was sometimes humiliating for the British Mission, as there were even cases of detention of some members of the Mission by the German authorities.²⁸

Crisis in late May – early July, 1919

Events developed rapidly, and on 23 May Hubert Gough, the head of the Allied Military Mission in Finland, arrived in Liepāja, where he discussed the situation with K. Ulmanis and representatives of the Allied missions, after which he advised London to consider the issue of the Baltic states as a whole. He stressed that a stable German dominance would threaten “*the future of Russia*” and the independence of the Baltic states. To prevent this, the Latvian Provisional Government had to be restored, German troops withdrawn, and Latvian units had to be assisted by British instructors and equipped. Moreover, the situation in Liepāja was humiliating and damaging to Allied prestige.²⁹ On 23–24 May, German soldiers had roughly handled and even temporarily detained a number of British sailors, leading the British Leader of the House of Lords and cabinet member George Curzon to recommend to the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, on 30 May that von der Goltz be removed from his post.³⁰ At the beginning of June, Grant-Watson reported that the Germans had not apologised for what had happened and that Cowan had banned German ships from entering the port of Liepāja, to which the Germans responded by banning British nationals from travelling on German railways.³¹ The British Admiralty also reported on 30 and 31 May that the Germans had effectively declared martial law in Liepāja, with guns trained on British ships ashore and German aircraft frequently flying low over the ships, and warned that if Liepāja was abandoned,

the British would lose their only base in the Baltic from which a blockade could be enforced, and that this might happen, unless the Allies took certain steps to reverse the situation. At the highest level, an apology from the German side was demanded. However, the efforts to get von der Goltz to withdraw from Latvia were to no avail.³²

From June 3 to 6, Liepāja hosted another meeting on board the French warship *Le Dunios* and the British warship *Royalist* of Greene, Keenan, Alexander Duff, commander of the British Navy and Light Squadron in this sector of the Baltic Sea, who arrived in Liepāja at the end of May, Tallents, John Groome, Chief of Mission of the American Relief Administration, Grant-Watson and Brisson, which were brought up by the military-political developments in Vidzeme (armed conflict between Germans and Estonians).³³ On 10 June, Grant-Watson visited the British squadron commander A. Duff in the harbour, stating that the situation was “*daily getting worse [...] and the time was rapidly approaching when he and other British subjects would no longer be able to remain ashore here*”, as the German soldiers and officers were “*becoming more and more openly hostile*” and it was only “*with greatest difficulty that incidents could be avoided*”. Goltz himself was in Jelgava and from 10 June in Riga, but his replacement “paid no attention” to Grant-Watson’s requests. Duff, however, warned Grant-Watson of the grave consequences of calling off the mission and urged him to remain in the city despite the “*nearly unbearable*” situation (among other things, at the beginning of June Duff had already issued a shore ban to the sailors of the squadron).³⁴

At the beginning of June, as German troops advanced towards the Estonian-occupied Northern Latvia after the capture of Riga, the so-called Battle of Cēsis between German and Estonian-Latvian forces began.

On 8 June in Liepāja, in view of the “*extremely critical situation in the Baltic provinces*”, the British mission leadership, together with the US mission and the British and French naval commanders in the city, decided that an Allied military mission under a British general should be sent to the Baltic states immediately, that the local forces should be provided with armaments and other necessities and that a loan should be made (immediately for Lithuania and Estonia, and as soon as a stable government could be established for Latvia).³⁵

At the same time, the British Political Mission led by S. Tallents started its work in Liepāja and arrived on 4 June (Grant-Watson later recalled that after the arrival of the mission he actively cooperated with it, though noting that Tallents was initially promised more financial support in London to establish trade links than he actually received³⁶). On 10 June, Tallents together with the head of the US mission W. Greene negotiated a ceasefire in Cēsis, which he actually led, and a truce was signed for a few days. On 16 June, on board *Royalist*, a meeting was held in Liepāja, attended by H. Gough, S. Tallents, A. Duff, H. Grant-Watson, A. Keenan, the Head of French Mission, Emanuil du Parquet, and others. The progress of the formation of the Latvian coalition government and the forthcoming withdrawal of German troops from Liepāja were discussed again, and in the following days the attempts were made to resolve the conflict in Northern Latvia.³⁷ On 18 June, fighting resumed there, and on 20–21 June the German troops were withdrawn from Liepāja. On 21–24 June, the situation was only resolved by Germany’s acceptance of the heavy peace terms on 23–24 June. On 20 June, Grant-Watson and other members of the British missions in Liepāja were transferred to *Royalist* on the orders of the British Senior Naval Officer. On the evening of 23 June,

news arrived on board the British ship in Liepāja that the German government had agreed to sign the peace treaty, which was “*duly celebrated*”. The British and other Allied missions returned to the city the following day.³⁸

On the evening of 25 June, A. Niedra arrived in Liepāja from Riga and, in the words of H. Grant-Watson, “*placed the Government of the country at the disposal of the Entente*”. The following afternoon, on board the British warship *Galatea*, Allied representatives (H. Gough, H. Grant-Watson, S. Tallents, etc.) met with A. Niedra in Liepāja. At the beginning of the meeting, Gough pointed out that Niedra’s government had not obeyed Allied orders and had violated the armistice signed at Cēsis, to which Niedra replied that he had no knowledge of the terms of the armistice and insisted that it was the Estonians who had broken the armistice. He was also satisfied that the Allies were taking responsibility for maintaining order in the country, which they had not done so far, so he and “*his friends*” had been forced to seek an agreement with the Germans. Niedra called the Estonian government a “*disaster*”. Niedra also stressed that he and Ulmanis did not have very big differences of opinion, many Baltic Germans were much more radical than he was, Niedra admitted that a large part of the population did not believe him, but that the situation could change in two months. He had come to Liepāja to return his mandate to the Allies. Gough then instructed Grant-Watson to arrange a meeting the next day between Ulmanis and Niedra, which failed. After the meeting, S. Tallents wrote a message to K. Ulmanis, asking him to exercise restraint in the new government and insisting that Niedra’s safety must be guaranteed.³⁹

On 25–27 June, the British, along with the French and the Americans, took part in all public events in the town left by

the German troops (welcoming demonstrations, the toppling of the German monument, welcoming the Latvian government ashore, etc.). S. Tallents recalled that on the afternoon of 26 June he visited K. Ulmanis on board *Saratov*, where it was agreed that “*a coalition government which should represent all parties in Latvia*” would be formed, but agreed with Mr Ulmanis that the previous government headed by him should first be restored. It was then decided that the government would return to the city the following day.⁴⁰ On 27 June, together with other Allied representatives in the city, Grant-Watson took part in the celebrations welcoming the Provisional Government to Liepāja, giving an extended speech which was translated from English for the audience by K. Ulmanis himself. In it, among other things, he expressed his support for the government, stressed his government’s favour of the principle of self-determination of peoples and its readiness to support Latvians, and his confidence in its success.⁴¹

However, the situation in Vidzeme and Riga continued to be difficult as the Estonian troops approached Riga. On 29 June, Grant-Watson, accompanied by a French representative, met with Ulmanis and the Baltic German officer representatives who had arrived from Riga, and, according to what Grant-Watson said to Duff, the latter had confirmed their readiness “*to recognise Ulmanis’ government*” and an agreement could be reached, which had hitherto been impossible “*because of the dominance of the Baltic Germans*”. On 30 June, Duff reported that Grant-Watson, after the previous day’s talks, had, like the Gough mission, “*supported the need to halt the Estonian advance towards Riga*”.⁴²

On 1 July, Grant-Watson, in a wide-ranging report on the situation, admitted that the government of A. Niedra had marked “*probably the zenith of the German element in the Baltic provinces*”. He wrote:

*“Supported by the German army of General Count von der Goltz and strengthened by numerous enlistments of German subjects, the Baltic Landeswehr was able to completely dominate the Lettish army and administration and form a military dictatorship. Every effort was then made to give the Baltic domination as permanent a character as possible. Though Count von der Goltz still remained the leading spirit, Balts were employed wherever possible to mask his power.”*⁴³

Grant-Watson believed that the Germans, emboldened by the capture of Riga, attacked Estonians and Latvians in Vidzeme in order to take Estonia and prevent further Latvian mobilisation, which would threaten German leadership of the armed forces (*“they could only hope to maintain their supremacy if the Balt army were stronger than the Lett army”*), but seriously miscalculated, underestimating the strength of the Estonian army, hoping for the support of the Russian anti-Bolshevik forces (the Judenich Corps and von Lieven’s units), which had remained neutral in the conflict, and for more help from the German troops, which immediately after the signing of the ceasefire in Cēsis began to prepare for evacuation to Germany. The defeat in the Battle of Cēsis and the abandonment of Liepāja followed, but a government emerged in Germany which clearly opposed the policy pursued by von der Goltz. When this and the inevitability of evacuation became clear, the “Balt structure” collapsed and Niedra fled Riga. In order to protect Riga and the army supplies it contained, von der Goltz diverted some German units prepared for the evacuation to defend the city and appointed Major Sixt von Arnim as Governor of Riga. After the collapse of the Niedra government, the German army units at its disposal left the “Army of Latvia” and von der

Goltz officially took command of all German forces against the Estonians in an attempt to reach an armistice, as the German soldiers showed a *“clearly averse”* to participate in a long-distance battle (the Estonians were offered to retreat towards Cēsis, the Germans – across the Daugava, with only *“a few German officers”* remaining on the right bank to supervise the evacuation of the stores). At the same time, representatives of the Baltic German National Committee arrived in Liepāja, announcing to the Entente missions their readiness to join the coalition government, working *“for the common good”*. In this situation, when panic broke out in Riga after the water pipeline was damaged by Estonian artillery fire, the Allied missions asked to support the armistice and to prevent the entry of Estonian forces into Riga (which both “Letts and Balts” were apparently against, as it would cause *“bloodshed without any corresponding advantage”*). Grant-Watson stated that power was in the hands of Estonians and Latvians, so there was no point in *“further fighting”*. He wrote:

*“Until the old Russian Empire is reconstituted it is clear that native elements if adequately supported by the Allies, will be in a position to check the Eastward movement of the Germans. The Letts are, however, not yet experienced enough to carry on the administration and govern Latvia without the assistance of the Balts, in view of the business and financial abilities of the latter. Therefore, the Balts must be admitted to take part in the Government.”*⁴⁴

Grant-Watson later wrote in his memoirs that *“Ulmanis would strengthen his position”* by inviting one or two Baltic German ministers to the government, given their experience in finance and business, but the Latvian-Baltic German adversity was too deep and the attempt failed.⁴⁵

K. Ulmanis, immediately after his return to Liepāja, on the direct advice of Grant-Watson, in order to stop the struggle at Riga, immediately announced the “*inclusion of Baltic Germans in the government*”, starting a transitional period, during which the so-called “business government” would function – Latvians K. Ulmanis (Prime Minister and agriculture), Zigfrīds Meierovics (foreign affairs), Miķelis Valters (internal affairs), Teodors Hermanovskis (traffic), General Dāvids Sīmansons (war), theologian, docent Kārlis Kundziņš (education, an unfulfilled suggestion), Jew Paul Münz (finance), Baltic Germans – Paul Sokolovski, Minister of Justice in the Niedra government (law, an unfulfilled suggestion), Eduard von Rosenberg (state audit office) and another German (trade and industry). Grant-Watson considered these to be much better candidates than the members of the previous cabinet. Finally, on the future plans of the Baltic Germans, Grant-Watson stated that they could not yet be fully determined, but that it was “*incredible*” that they would begin to fully support the idea of an “*autonomous and independent Latvia*” and that “*as they always cling to some outside power to support them against the Letts, they will probably turn themselves to the Russians and, through their intervention try to save themselves from being absorbed in the Lettish masses*”.⁴⁶

Subsequently, on 3 July, representatives of the Allied missions secured the signing of the Armistice of Strazdumuiža, which provided for the withdrawal of German troops to Courland and Zemgale in preparation for their withdrawal to Germany. At the same time, the question of the establishment of anti-Bolshevik Russian forces in Estonia and Latvia was raised. Already on 23 June, Grant-Watson, in a telegram, reiterated the concerns just expressed by Keenan about German plans to create a “*pro-German Russian army*”. He stressed

that the plan was to “*replace*” the German forces to be withdrawn with “*Russians in German pay*”, and that the plan was strongly supported by the Baltic Germans, as it would enable them to maintain their dominance and send more troops against the Estonians. He also reported that the Germans were at the moment doing everything to “*crush the national movement*” in Latvia and Estonia, and recommended that they should try to bring the newly-formed forces under Entente control to ensure that they were used in Latvia only to fight the Bolsheviks (he also noted the recent appointment of the “*owner of Lithuanian land*” and Russian naval officer Boris von Bok as the representative of Bolshevik Russia in Liepāja).⁴⁷

On 9 July, Grant-Watson telegraphed excitedly to London about the situation in Jelgava, where German soldiers were entering P. Bermond's “*Russian*” forces, was critical of von Lieven (controlled by pro-German staff officers, more concerned with local issues than “*the future of Russia*”), the Germans and Baltic Germans were trying to use the “*Russians*” to maintain their position in Courland, while Germany, although recognising Latvia's independence, was trying to convince the Russians through its agents that it supported “*United Russia*” and would supply Russian soldiers better than the Allies. Grant-Watson had therefore advised the British Military Mission to “*keep*” the Baltic Germans and Russian units “*as far apart from each other as possible*”. In his reports to London on the following days, 12, 14 and 15 July, Grant-Watson described the situation in Lithuania and its relations with Germany in detail.⁴⁸

July–August in Riga

While still in Liepāja, Grant-Watson gave a rather extensive interview to the Riga Russian-Jewish newspaper “*Rizhskoje slovo*”,

which was also reproduced by the Riga German press on 12 July. In it, he stressed his country's intentions: the question of Latvia's independence should be decided at the Paris Peace Conference, the British would only support the restoration and maintenance of order, but they saw one of the main prerequisites in the harmony and cooperation of the nationalities living in Latvia; he was also convinced of the need to support the unit of Prince Anatol von Lieven, a soldier and not a politician, etc.⁴⁹

In mid-July, before his departure for Riga, Grant-Watson organised a farewell event ("*certain sporting events and a picnic*") in Liepāja with the support of A. Duff, spending £50 of his own budget. On the evening of 17 July, Grant-Watson arrived in Riga from Liepāja (apparently by land, as on 16 July the squadron commander reported from Liepāja that he had been forced to refuse Grant-Watson a transport to the ships because of the "*considerable staff*", his wife and maid, but Duff refused to take the women, asking for Admiralty's permission⁵⁰). In Riga, Grant-Watson stayed in the apartment formerly rented by the British Consul, but set up his working quarters in the former German Nobility's so-called "Knight's House" (which was turned into Latvian Parliamentary building), where the British Mission as a whole worked (he himself recalled that the attitude of the owners of the house was particularly accommodating, not least because of the vain hope that this would help to avoid the nationalisation of the house⁵¹). On 25 July, Grant-Watson reported that he had found in the capital "*a state bordering on panic*" caused by reports of "*German and Russian activities in Courland*" (German troop activity). For this reason, he did not even attempt to carry out the order he had received from London to organise a celebration of the conclusion of the peace treaty

on 19 July, because "*any festivities at Riga would be out of place*".⁵²

In his first extensive report on the general political situation from Riga on 23 July, Grant-Watson noted that German policy in Latvia and Estonia was still largely being implemented by the government's High Commissioner in East Prussia, August Winnig, whom he described as short-sighted and lacking a proper sense of reality. The author of the report rightly concluded, in principle, that Germany continued to try to maintain influence over the Russian units in Kurzeme and Zemgale (by providing equipment, salaries, etc.), or by secretly supporting the idea of the restoration of a united Russia, and for this reason was prepared to back down from recognising Latvia, because it had proved hostile to Germany and, together with Estonia, was interfering with German-Russian relations, so that Germany viewed the Latvian national aspirations personified by K. Ulmanis' government as unprecedentedly hostile. The German military objectives were pursued by von der Goltz, who seemed to have intended to "*remain in Courland until the last possible moment*" in the hope that some opportunity would arise to avoid evacuating to Germany.

Describing the "*re-entry of the Russians on the Lettish stage*", meaning the formation of Pavel Bermondts' forces in Zemgale and their cooperation with the Germans, Grant-Watson considered it a failure, since the Latvians had been facing the Russian Bolsheviks for six months, apart from the 200-man Russian unit of the *Landeswehr* commanded by Anatol von Lieven, gaining an extremely negative impression of the Russians. He then described the developments with the numerical increase of von Lieven's Russian unit, with its battalion being sent to perform Liepāja garrison duties, when the Germans on 24 June left Liepāja, the unit's Estonian

commander Eduard Kanep and his staff (including several “pro-German” Russian officers), supported by the Germans in the hope of helping them maintain their influence, but “*the plot failed*”, as Kanep, contrary to von Lieven’s orders, put his unit at the disposal of the Entente missions, shortly after which, contrary to orders from Jelgava, he left for Judenich’s forces, leaving Liepāja entirely at the Latvians’ disposal, and this influenced von Lieven’s decision to go to Narva. Grant-Watson was negative about the impact of Kanep’s unit on the Latvians in Liepāja – the arrival on the German train, the singing of the Russian anthem, the constant display of the Russian flag and the “*tactless*” attitude towards Latvian statehood, or the belief that being on Russian territory reminded Latvians of the “*hated Russian system*” (he later remembered that they had gone ashore in Liepāja, abandoned by the Germans, and that the Minister of the Interior, M. Valters, had informed the surprised British that von der Goltz had left the city for fear of artillery fire from Allied ships, moving his headquarters to Jelgava. There was a Russian unit in the town, which was “*driving the Letts to despair*”, and the British helped to resolve the situation by arranging for it to be sent to Judenich’s army⁵³).

He stressed that after the Battle of Cēsis the Latvian and Estonian desire for independence had become much stronger, and that the Latvians who had dealings with Russia held no hope that the situation there would improve, so they did not see their future in connection with either Russia or Germany, and were increasingly fearful of the attempts to interfere in Latvian affairs. However, K. Ulmanis had assured Grant-Watson, as well as the other Allied representatives, that the Latvian Government would certainly not impede Russia trade connections through the ports of Ventspils and Rīga, and on Latvian

railways of a width suitable for Russia.⁵⁴ Grant-Watson also played the role of diplomatic representative to the Latvian government in Riga, for example, on 24 July he informed the head of the Provisional Government K. Ulmanis that the British government had lifted all restrictions on trade with Latvia and Lithuania imposed previously as on German-influenced countries.⁵⁵

The reports to London also sufficiently addressed the domestic political situation, with some problems being examined in depth. For example, on 1 August Grant-Watson reported directly and in detail to Curzon (copied to Gough) on the importance of the Jewish factor in Latvia. The immediate reason was the appointment of Paul Mintz as a “*Jewish representative*” in the position of State Comptroller of the Provisional Government (he was expected to return to Riga shortly to take up his duties). The author of the report stressed that in this way “*the section of the Jews whom he represents agree to work for the independence of Latvia*”, even though, according to Grant-Watson, “*the majority of Jews in Latvia are not in a favour of an independent Latvia, but desire that this country, at any rate commercially, financially and economically should form part of Russia, so that the whole Russian market may be open for their activities*”.⁵⁶

Grant-Watson reiterated that in a conversation with Harrison, a member of the British Political Mission, Riga-born Raphael Rosenfeld, publisher and political editor of the newspaper “*Rizskoye slovo*”, had commented that the majority of Jews in Riga and other major Latvian cities “*are bourgeois in their sympathies*”, guided primarily by economic interests, thus, this community “*does not pursue distinctively Jewish aims*”, but sought to “*promote economic and political gravitation in the direction of Russia*”, thus being “*naturally hostile to the idea Latvian independence*”. Rosenfeld

had also pointed out that the “most purely Jewish” organisation was the “Bund” – social democrats. There were also Zionists, but this movement “must not be taken very seriously” in Latvia. Rozenfeld’s views on other prominent Jewish political groups were also outlined in the report, and the main idea was that in their attitude to the question of Latvian independence the Jewish bourgeoisie and the proletariat were basically united, although based on different perceptions of their own interests – the bourgeoisie being guided by the interests of capital in connection with the restoration of Russia “more or less” to its former frontiers, therefore openly supporting the anti-Bolshevist forces, both by demanding the renunciation of anti-Semitism (expressed by the Jewish-owned newspaper “Rizskoye slovo”), while the revolutionary socialists and the social democrats were in “favour of a Greater Russia based upon democratic principles”, like the Latvian Social-Democrats, openly hostile to Alexander Kolchak, the Allied-recognised leader of the Russian anti-Bolshevik forces, whose victory would signal political reaction and the defeat of “true democracy”. Moreover, they were in favour of the Baltic states merging with “Greater Russia” on socialist principles and with a high degree of autonomy, but were against giving up “temporary independence” to the reactionary Kolchak.

Grant-Watson also wrote that there were strong (stronger than “elsewhere in Russia”) anti-Semitic tendencies among Latvians (in Russia, Jews were at the forefront of the Bolshevik movement, but in Latvia during the Soviet period there were hardly any Jews in leading positions in Riga), which did not exist before the war, but developed during it because the German occupation authorities carried out their economic “operations” through Jewish small businessmen, and they did

it in a “very reckless and avaricious manner”, which created popular hatred against Jews. Grant-Watson reported that the Government was introducing the printing of smaller denominations and that he had personally called on the Minister of the Interior, Miķelis Valters, to take “more drastic action against speculators”. However, Latvian officials were so “inefficient” that any successful action was unlikely until the situation resolved itself with an increase in import figures. In the meantime, “bitter feeling against the Jews will continue”.⁵⁷ On 9 August, Grant-Watson reported to Curzon and Gough that Jewish representatives had submitted to the demands of the People’s Council for autonomy in church, school and social aid (hospitals, shelters, kitchens for the poor, etc.), accompanied by an English translation of the submission.⁵⁸

Notably, from July and August, the question of the evacuation of German troops from Latvia was at the centre of attention of all Western missions (on 19 July and 25 July, at Vintapi near the Olaine railway station, H. Gough and R. von der Goltz discussed the withdrawal of German forces, and during this discussion it became clear that the German side was simply delaying the withdrawal, looking for pretexts, although it formally agreed to withdraw its forces within 74 days at the latest⁵⁹). Grant-Watson was no exception, repeatedly warning his government of German intentions (soldiers’ demands for land in Courland, etc.). On 4 August, Grant-Watson telegraphed to London that the Head of the Allied Mission, H. Gough, had asked him to pay particular attention to Goltz’s refusal to evacuate troops from “Courland”, declared the previous day, and further concluded that the experience of the previous weeks gave grounds to state that “no work of reconstruction” was possible while the Germans were in Jelgava, even though the time was favourable for

cooperation between Latvians and Germans, the latter having abandoned their German orientation. But if *“the moment is missed”* and General von der Goltz was allowed to incite *“natives against natives”* with intrigues, thus encouraging Bolshevism, the country may again fall into *“complete chaos”* and the Germans would find a new pretext for staying and occupying *“Courland”*. He advised the Allied governments to take firmer steps to make *“the Germans understand that the Great Powers are serious about evacuation”* (among other things, he recommended exerting pressure on the German government by drawing attention in the German press to von der Goltz’s *“schemes”*). On 3 and 6 August, he reported that the claim by German representatives that the Latvian government had promised land to German soldiers for *“colonisation”* was unfounded, etc.⁶⁰

On 4 August, he looked into the matter in more detail, and this was after the worried Latvian Foreign Minister Z. Meierovics had submitted to him documents on the meeting of 10 000 German soldiers in Jelgava on 27 July, at which the German representation was called upon to support the demand for citizenship and land promised by the Latvian side for the fight *“against Bolshevism”*. The German mission also sent a resolution of the meeting to the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking the Prime Minister to receive five representatives of the German soldiers to discuss the issue. However, the Latvian government replied that the agreement of 29 December 1918 with the German representative A. Winnig was only a *“draft treaty”* which had not entered into force, and even if it had entered into force, it would have been forfeited under the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty, while the coup d’état of 16 April in Liepāja demonstrated the true position of the German troops. The meeting was therefore refused⁶¹

(it should be added that in reality the treaty could not be considered a draft, as it was signed by both parties, but the Latvian side apparently considered it as not binding upon the parties, perhaps formally taking advantage of the lack of ratification⁶²).

Grant-Watson also paid some attention to other domestic political developments in Latvia, for example, on 5 August he reported from Riga in some detail on the resumption of the People’s Council on 11 August, focusing on the Electoral and Amnesty Laws. He stressed that the *“Libau [Liepāja] Compromise”*, or the inclusion of Baltic Germans and Jews in the government, would remain in force until the election of the Constituent Assembly, and specifically considered the positions of the leading parties on the most important points of the electoral law, noting in particular the role of the Social Democrats. According to the Allied Missions, it would be more correct to include in the law the 24-year voting age limit advocated by some civic parties, rather than the 18 or at least 21 years recommended by the Social Democrats (*“owing to the undeveloped state of the Lettish people, it would be dangerous to fix the age limit so low, especially in view of the radical and indeed revolutionary tendencies shown by some sections of the population”*), since the 24-year limit could easily be lowered later. He believed that if young, immature people took part in the elections, power could fall into the hands of *“inexperienced politicians who might wreck, ruin the whole future of the country”*. The Allies should therefore try to use their influence with the *“bourgeois parties”* to secure a higher threshold, all the more so as *“left tendencies”* would be unrestrained and it would be *“impossible to obtain support the assistance from the Balts, without whom the economic reconstruction of the country is impossible”* (he also cited the example of Estonia, which frightened the Latvian

Baltic Germans, with its Constituent Assembly threatening to confiscate land without compensation).

Describing the Latvian Social Democrats, Grant-Watson noted that they were rather “*not friendly to the Allies*” and were acutely sensitive to possible “*foreign interference*”, the Latvian workers were “*demoralised*” by the Bolshevik regime and the heavy social war (hence the continuing strikes in Riga and Liepāja, despite widespread unemployment). He also mentioned the price of wheat flour bread – 22 roubles per pound under the Bolsheviks, 2 roubles at the present moment, and with a tendency to fall to 30 kopeks during the new harvest, while the wages of a skilled worker comprised 1.50, and of an unskilled one – 0.80 roubles per hour (before the war – 25–30 and 10–12 kopeks per hour, respectively), which, however, did not reduce the intensity of the strikes. Grant-Watson believed that the discontent in society was being fuelled by Bolshevik and German agents, and that only the stabilisation of currency and supplies would resolve the situation; there was also “*quite a strong Chauvinist*” feeling in society against Germans and Russians, and that it was precisely to curb “*these writers and journalists*” that the Provisional Government was forced to introduce martial law and war censorship, the tenement houses in Riga owned by the former elite were still closed, and the 2000 or so Baltic German families who fled to Jelgava and elsewhere still did not return to the capital, the internal situation would remain difficult as long as the Germans occupy Kurzeme and Zemgale (“*it would therefore be premature to criticise the Lettish administration at present*”). Grant-Watson was particularly interested in whether the Latvian authorities had sufficient food and fuel supplies for the winter, noting that the American Relief Administration mission would cease operations on 15 June. The government would buy

one-third of the grain harvest to sell at low prices to the poor, rations of bread, potatoes, sugar and possibly herrings would be limited, 300 men were being employed to procure firewood and about half of what was needed was already available, and soup kitchens were to be set up for the poor.⁶³

On 7 August Grant-Watson telegraphed about the possibility of meeting the Latvian Government’s request for a loan of £20 million, supporting a loan of £5 million at once to meet the most important needs of the country. On 12 August, while reporting on the situation in Zemgale, he correctly noted that German soldiers were continuing to join Russian units, but incorrectly – that an agreement had been concluded between Latvians and Lithuanians to attack Bermond’s forces if they advanced from Jelgava to Daugavpils, contrary to Judenich’s orders. On 10 and 13 August – about his contacts with Vladimir Derjugin, a representative of the Russian Red Cross, who had come from Copenhagen, and was trying to get his support for the Latvian government to obtain relief for the organisation’s goods in Latvia, on 13 August – about the request sent by the Latvian government to the British government for arms and equipment for the Latvian army. On 13 August, he also wrote on the opening of the session of the People’s Council (particularly noting his satisfaction with the news that had been spread about the forthcoming evacuation of German forces from Latvia, which would further “*strain the government’s position*”), etc.⁶⁴

On the same day, Grant-Watson mentioned the creation of a Department for Latgale Affairs in the Ministry of the Interior, stressing that this area would probably be granted a temporary autonomy to ease the transition period to “*Lettish laws, etc.*”. He also described the specific features of Latgale and its population (belonging to

the Vitebsk province, unlike the Baltic provinces, a population of about 400 000 out of half a million Catholics, different legislation, etc.), as well as the “*Latvian fears*” of possible annexation by Polish “*imperialists*” due to the former Polish affiliation and the dominance of the Catholic religion in the area. He noted that this was why the Latvians sent two officers to Vilnius to discuss a plan for a concerted attack [nothing of the sort had happened at this time, it was apparently only a question of intention – Ē. J.] and noted the appointment of the Catholic Bishop of Riga, Edward O'Rourke, after a 300-year hiatus in the interests of the people of Latvia.⁶⁵ Also on 13 August, Grant-Watson telegraphed about the arrival of representatives of the German Finance Ministry in Riga to offer the Latvian Government to purchase arms and equipment, and that Ulmanis had personally informed him that the Latvian side would not accept the offer.⁶⁶

Grant-Watson's effectiveness was enhanced by the fact that he was able to work successfully with both the political and military missions. This cooperation is reflected, among other things, by the fact that in July and early August, when the head of the Political Mission, S. Tallents, was temporarily away in London, Grant-Watson took over liaison with the Latvian press (from early July Tallents organised the so-called weekly press conferences at which he briefed journalists on current events). For example, two days after his arrival in Riga, on 21 July, in a conversation with the press, he expressed his hope for peace and an end to “*national enmity*” (he particularly stressed the need for the press to “*refrain from articles and reports that promote national enmity*”, citing Liepāja as an example, where “*the population is already much more peaceful and Riga must not be left behind little Liepāja in this respect*”, and denied rumours of an “*attack*

on Riga” from Zemgale). On 28 July, he repeatedly expressed his hope for a solution of the German troop issue, etc.⁶⁷ On 4 August, Grant-Watson met with journalists in the former Armouries House (now the *Saeima*), where many members and staff of the British missions worked and lived, in a conversation that was “*relaxed and unforced*”. The main issue discussed was the situation of German troops in occupied Courland and Zemgale, and Grant-Watson spoke of Gough's visit to Latvia and talks with von der Goltz about the evacuation of troops to Germany. He also expressed confidence that the Latvian government would resolve the food question despite the departure of the American Relief Administration mission in mid-August, announced that regular mail service with England would be established in the coming week, that supplies to the Latvian army would start after the transportation issue was resolved, and was optimistic about the situation at the front.⁶⁸

On 15 August, Tallents returned to Riga and shortly afterwards Grant-Watson left for the United Kingdom. On 26 August, the newspaper “*Latvijas Sargs*” was convinced that the information in other newspapers about Grant-Watson not returning to Riga was unfounded.⁶⁹ However, it was true and Grant-Watson only telegraphed in November from his embassy in Copenhagen to congratulate the Latvian government on the anniversary of the statehood and the victory over Bermond's forces.⁷⁰ Grant-Watson wanted to return to London on his own due to urgent business, so he asked for a leave and received it. According to his own memoirs, his main tasks in Latvia and Lithuania – the reduction of German influence and the problem of the anti-Bolshevist Russian army – were still on the agenda, but they had been completely taken over by the British Military Mission. Thus, he and his wife set off

for Ventspils in a car, avoiding German sentry posts on the way, visiting the estate of his friend Baron von Baehr [probably Pope or Ugāle, but Zlēkas or Ēdole cannot be ruled out – Ē. J.] and reached Ventspils in the evening, heading for Newcastle on a merchant ship.⁷¹ Grant-Watson's activities in Latvia and Lithuania had come to an end.

Conclusions

The activities of British missions and representatives in Latvia were naturally linked to British policy in the whole region,⁷² and the policy was rather vague, even marginal from London's point of view (the Baltic Sea had not been a British economic priority since the 19th century). However, thanks to the large number of mission staff and the expectations of the Baltic governments to cooperate with Britain, the actions were very intensive and in many cases even decisive in solving local problems. The British representatives therefore played a significant role in the processes in Latvia and the Baltic states as a whole, and the favourable attitude and interest of many British officers and mission employees, first of all – of H. Grant-Watson, W. Cowan, S. Tallents and others, should also be noted. In case of Latvia, the uncertainty and importance of the British "Baltic policy" can be seen very clearly. Moreover, during the period under review, it was Grant-Watson's reports that had the most immediate and direct impact on the British government's position towards Latvia and the other Baltic states, as he was the direct representative of the British Foreign Office.

At the time addressed in the current article, the focus of British policy in the region was clearly dominated by problems related to the activities of German troops

in the Baltic area, along with the problem imposed by the Bolshevik threat, which undoubtedly increased the importance of the Latvian factor. Moreover, these difficulties had to be resolved in an effort to prevent disagreements and conflicts between local forces (in Latvia's case, primarily Latvians and Baltic Germans).

Herbert Grant-Watson was directly involved in the events in Latvia from February to August 1919 – he was almost constantly at the epicentre of the events in Liepāja, being directly and immediately informed about the current events by the highest Latvian and German officials, taking part in the Allied attempts to play the role of mediator and even initiator-mediator in the formation of a new coalition government to reconcile Latvians and Baltic Germans, observing German foreign policy and military activities, etc. Grant-Watson's reports, which are generally considered to be reasonably exhaustive, correct and comprehensive (with some inaccuracies due to lack of knowledge of the situation or reliance on the reliability of oral sources, but they are not significant and as such also provide important information about the situation at that time and the opinion of the social group represented by Grant-Watson's interlocutor-source), thus reflecting not only the current situation but also the mood of the circles with which Grant-Watson was in contact – primarily the Latvian Provisional Government, the Baltic Germans, Anatol von Lieven, and others.

Grant-Watson is undoubtedly an important political figure in his own right. His reviews of the political situation up to the time when the Political Mission headed by S. Tallents permanently started its work in Latvia in June, alongside the reports on the military situation by A. Keenan, the head of the Military Mission, formed the picture in London of the situation

in the region in general and in Latvia in particular. Moreover, in June and August they significantly supplemented the comprehensive reports of S. Tallents, all the more so as Grant-Watson remained in Liepāja for a relatively long period (until 19 July) while Tallents worked in Riga, and then the former actually replaced Tallents in his absence, thus to a large extent remaining an important source of information for London. On the one hand, Grant-Watson represented the generally cautious position of his government, while on the other he expressed a genuine interest in the settlement of the situation and

a favourable attitude towards Latvia and Latvians. While representing the view, generally characteristic of the Western Allies at this time, that without the former dominant elite in society – the Baltic German professionals, the restoration of the land would be impossible, Grant-Watson at the same time showed a genuine interest in the success of that restoration, as evidenced, among other things, by his subsequent attitude towards Latvia and the Latvians. In any case, an analysis of his work significantly contributes to the view of Latvia's creation and the War of Independence.

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KOPSAVILKUMS

Latvijas Neatkarības kara pirmais posms no 1918. gada novembra līdz 1919. gada vasarai Latvijas Pagaidu valdībai bija īpaši sarežģīts un smags. Latvijā nežēlīga kara un terora apstākļos sadūrās ne vien visu kaimiņu lielvalstu (Vācijas, Padomju Krievijas, vēl starptautiski tiesiski pastāvošās neboļševistiskās Krievijas) un citu kaimiņvalstu, bet arī sociāli, politiski un nacionāli sašķeltās Latvijas sabiedrības grupu intereses (vācbaltiešu, latviešu, boļševiku u. c.). Šajā situācijā ļoti liela nozīme bija arī Rietumu lielvalstu interešu pārstāvniecībai reģionā, ko realizēja Lielbritānijas, Francijas un ASV politiskās, militārās un humanitārās misijas. No 1919. gada pavasara Latvijā darbojās Francijas Militārā misija un karakuģi, ASV Politiskā misija un Amerikas Palīdzības administrācijas misija ar Kara flotes transportkuģiem, kā arī Lielbritānijas pārstāvji, kuri bija pārstāvēti visplašāk, – to noteica Lielbritānijas ieinteresētība reģionā. Kopš 1918. gada nogales Latvijā klātesoši bija britu Kara flotes kuģi, 1919. gada pavasarī un vasarā tiem pievienojās Militārā misija un Politiskā misija, kuru aktivitāte un iesaiste norisēs bija ļoti augsta. Turklāt no 1919. gada marta Liepājā un pēc tam Rīgā darbojās neoficiāls Lielbritānijas Ārlietu ministrijas (*Foreign Office*) pārstāvis – Herberts Adolfuss Grants-Vatsons (*Herbert Adolphus Grant-Watson*). Viņš oficiāli nepiedalījās nevienā misijā, bet ar tām cieši sadarbojās, un viņa darbība bija ļoti aktīva, tāpēc tās izpēte ir sevišķi būtiska. Zināmu atspoguļojumu Granta-Vatsona darbība guva trimdas latviešu publicistikā, viņš pieminēts arī Padomju Latvijas, trimdas un Latvijas Republikas vēstures literatūrā, taču vienīgi vispārīgi, ir tikai minēti vai iezīmēti svarīgākie Granta-Vatsona darbības aspekti vai fakti no viņa publicētajiem ziņojumiem (turklāt mazāk, nekā runājot par citiem Sabiedroto un pat Lielbritānijas pārstāvjiem Latvijā). Šī raksta mērķis ir dziļāk noskaidrot Granta-Vatsona darbības apstākļus un rezultātus Liepājā un Rīgā 1919. gada martā–augustā, aplūkojot viņa aktivitātes hronoloģiski pa posmiem (to nosaka izteikti atšķirīgā militārā un politiskā situācija Latvijā šajos laika posmos). Darbā izmantoti avoti no Lielbritānijas Nacionālā arhīva u. c.

Britu misiju un pārstāvju darbība kopumā Latvijā pašsaprotami bija saistīta ar Lielbritānijas politiku visā reģionā, un tā bija diezgan nenoteikta – no Londonas viedokļa, pat margināla (Baltijas jūra nebija britu saimnieciskā prioritāte jau kopš 19. gadsimta). Tomēr, pateicoties daudzajiem misiju darbiniekiem un Baltijas valstu valdību cerībām no sadarbības ar Lielbritāniju, to darbība bija ļoti aktīva un daudzus gadījumos pat izšķiroša vietējo problēmu risināšanā. Tāpēc Lielbritānijas pārstāvjiem bija ievērojama nozīme procesos Latvijā un Baltijas valstīs kopumā, turklāt daudzi britu virsnieki un misiju darbinieki, pirmām kārtām H. Grants-Vatsons, Valters Kovans (*Walter Cowan*), Stīvens Talents (*Stephen Tallents*) un citi, bija labvēlīgi noskaņoti un ieinteresēti sadarboties. Pateicoties minētajiem apstākļiem, Latvijā ir ļoti labi saskatāma gan Lielbritānijas “Baltijas politikas” nenoteiktība, gan tās nozīme. Turklāt aplūkojamajā laika posmā tieši Granta-Vatsona ziņojumi visātrāk un vistiešāk iespaidoja britu valdības nostāju pret Latviju un pārējām Baltijas valstīm, jo viņš pārstāvēja Ārlietu ministriju.

Aplūkojamajā periodā britu politikas uzmanības centrā reģionā izteikti dominēja problēmas saistībā ar vācu karaspēka aktivitātēm Baltijas telpā, turklāt vienlaikus ar boļševisma draudu problēmu, kas neapšaubāmi palielināja Latvijas faktora nozīmi. Turklāt tās bija jārisina, cenšoties novērst lokālo spēku (Latvijas gadījumā – latviešu un vācbaltiešu) savstarpējās nesaskaņas un konfliktus.

H. Grants-Vatsons bija tieši iesaistīts norisēs Latvijā faktiski no 1919. gada februāra līdz augustam – viņš gandrīz pastāvīgi atradās aktivitāšu epicentrā Liepājā, būdams tieši un uzreiz informēts par aktualitātēm no augstākajām latviešu un vācu amatpersonām. Viņš piedalījās gan Sabiedroto mēģinājumos spēlēt starpnieka un pat iniciatora starpnieka lomu jaunas koalīcijas valdības izveidē ar nolūku samierināt latviešus un vācbaltiešus, gan Vācijas ārpolitisko un militāro aktivitāšu novērošanā un citos svarīgos procesos un norisēs. Tāpēc Granta-Vatsona ziņojumi kopumā ir atzīstami par samērā dziļiem, korektiem un vispusīgiem (pieļautas atsevišķas neprecizitātes, ko izraisa stāvokļa nepārzināšana vai paļaušanās uz mutvārdu avota ticamību, taču tās nav nozīmīgas un arī kā tādas sniedz būtisku informāciju par pastāvošo situāciju šajā laikā un Granta-Vatsona sarunbiedrā avota pārstāvētās sabiedrības grupas viedokli), un tādējādi tie atspoguļo ne vien aktuālo situāciju, bet arī noskaņojumu aprindās, ar kurām Grants-Vatsons kontaktējās, – Latvijas Pagaidu valdību, vācbaltiešiem, Anatolu Līvenu u. c.

Grants-Vatsons neapšaubāmi uzskatāms par nozīmīgu, samērā patstāvīgu politisku figūru. Viņa politiskās situācijas apskati līdz laikam, kad darbu jūnijā Latvijā uzsāka S. Talents vadītā Politiskā misija, blakus Militārās misijas vadītāja Ostina Kīnena (*Austin Keenan*) ziņojumiem par militāro stāvokli veidoja Londonā priekšstatu par situāciju reģionā kopumā un Latvijā īpaši. Turklāt jūnijā–augustā tie būtiski papildināja izsmēļošos S. Talents ziņojumus, vēl jo vairāk tāpēc, ka samērā ilgi (līdz 19. jūlijam) Grants-Vatsons palika Liepājā, kamēr Talents strādāja Rīgā, bet pēc tam pirmais faktiski aizvietoja Talentsu viņa prombūtnes laikā un tādējādi lielā mērā turpināja būt svarīgs informācijas avots Londonai. No vienas puses, Grants-Vatsons pārstāvēja savas valdības visumā piesardzīgo nostāju, no otras puses – pauda patiesu ieinteresētību stāvokļa noregulēšanā un labvēlīgu attieksmi pret Latviju un latviešiem. Pārstāvot Rietumu Sabiedrotajiem šajā laikā kopumā raksturīgo viedokli, ka bez bijušās sabiedrībā dominējošās elites – vācbaltiešu profesionāļiem – zemes atjaunošana nav iespējama, Grants-Vatsons vienlaikus izcēlās ar patiesu interesi par minētās atjaunotnes izdošanos, ko cita starpā apliecina arī viņa vēlākā attieksme pret Latviju un latviešiem. Jebkurā gadījumā viņa darbības analīze ļauj būtiski papildināt viedokli par Latvijas tapšanas un Neatkarības kara laiku.



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