

# ZINĀTNISKIE RAKSTI

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## FROM VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS TO MILITARY ELITES. FINNISH JÄGERS AND POLISH LEGIONARIES DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR I

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World War I provided various separatist movements with an opportunity to seek national independence by collaboration with any of the belligerent powers. Polish and Finnish independence activists were ready to cooperate militarily with the Central Powers against the Russian Empire, and raised volunteer forces for this cause. The Finnish recruitment resulted in the creation of the 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion, whereas Józef Piłsudski's Polish activists raised volunteer Legions for the Austro-Hungarian army. Both included underground resistance activity and were characterized by political radicalism. After the Great War, the Jägers and the Legionaries formed the core of the national armed forces in the newly-independent countries.

*Key words:* World War I, separatism, volunteer movements, Polish Legions, 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion.

### NATIONALISM, MODERN WAR VOLUNTEERING AND WORLD WAR I

The military conflicts of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of modern war volunteerism. Although the regular armies of European countries became increasingly based on conscription, volunteer movements and formations became a feature in almost every European military conflict. In an age when suppressed nations sought to assert their independence, patriotic volunteer movements were essential in wars of national liberation. Paradoxically, in an era of nationalism, volunteer movements could become increasingly international, as idealistic youths rallied to fight on behalf of foreign nations, often strengthening the sense of romantic bond between national independence struggles.<sup>1</sup>

World War I was a milestone also in the history of war volunteerism. The outbreak of the conflict was characterized by a surge of patriotic sentiment, resulting in the voluntary enlistment by enthusiastic young men ready to defend their nation.<sup>2</sup> With the European great powers mustering their resources to the Great War, those nations that did not enjoy political independence were often faced with the choices of loyalism and separatism. In spite of the polarization of national sentiments, even the European dynastic empires could still sometimes rely on the pragmatic loyalty or cooperation of their subject nations. After the successful German advance on the Baltic front, the Tsarist Russian government chose to endorse the establishment of volunteer Latvian riflemen battalions. The traditional Latvian hostility towards German oppression turned out to be a more potent force than any hard feelings towards the Tsarist regime, and fighting on their home ground, the riflemen proved effective in the defence against the German invasion.

Outright separatist movements saw the war as an opportunity to fulfill their dreams of national independence, and continued their resistance against their imperial masters with the collaboration of other great powers. Irish nationalists, some of whom had volunteered to fight against British Empire already during the South African War, now turned to Imperial Germany for help in their armed struggle. Czech activists who wanted the independence of Bohemia and Moravia from the Habsburg monarchy collaborated with the Russian Empire, raising volunteer legions to serve in the Tsarist army. Armenian volunteers joined the Russian army and French Foreign Legion to fight against the Ottoman Empire, and all around the world, young Jewish men volunteered for the British-organized Zionist legion to fight for the liberation of Palestine from the Sublime Porte.<sup>3</sup>

The nationalist sentiments were particularly polarized in the East European borderlands which formed the frontline between the Russian Empire and the Central Powers. Both sides were able to muster national volunteer formations in their support. Two countries in particular played a key role in the strategic planning of the opposing great powers; Poland, which was the main field of battle between the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian forces, and Finland, which guarded the maritime entrances of St. Petersburg and the Russian supply lines in the Arctic. The experience of Imperial Russian rule had flared up political resistance in both countries, and the outbreak of World War I saw the emergence of underground separatist movements which were ready to collaborate with the Central Powers.

## FINLAND AND POLAND UNDER THE RUSSIAN RULE; THE ORIGINS OF THE LEGIONARY AND JÄGER MOVEMENTS

Both Finland and Poland had enjoyed a degree of self-government under the Imperial Russian rule during the 19th century, but the paths of these two borderlands had diverged quickly. Whereas Finland had remained a peaceful corner of the Russian Empire, Poland had seen two bloody uprisings against the Tsarist regime. As a result, the Grand Duchy of Finland retained her autonomous status, and loyalism towards the Empire became the *status quo*. Meanwhile, the former autonomy of the Congress Kingdom of Poland was eradicated by Imperial decree, and the failure of the insurrections fuelled the conciliatory trends in the Polish politics and culture. By the *fin de siècle*, however, a wave of Russification in the Vistula provinces triggered new political resistance and conspiratorial activity against the Russian rule. Simultaneously, an unprecedented passive resistance movement emerged in Finland as a response to the 1899 February Manifesto, which sought greater administrative integration of the Grand Duchy to the Empire.

The resistance against the Russian rule gained new momentum in Poland and Finland with the revolutionary upheavals of 1905–1907. Activists in both nations were looking for new cooperation in the struggle against Tsarism. Konni Zilliacus, the organizer of the underground Finnish Activist Resistance Party (*Suomen aktiivinen vastustuspuolue*), had met Roman Dmowski, the leader of the Polish National Democratic Party, already during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Dmowski's faction, however, favoured accommodation with Imperial Russia and rejected acts of open resistance. A new programme of Polish active resistance was instead formulated by Józef Piłsudski, an activist member of the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS), who also had contacts in Finland. Piłsudski showed up as a representative at the joint conference of anti-Tsarist national opposition parties in Kirkkonummi in 1905.<sup>4</sup>

During the revolution of 1905–1906, the somewhat disorganized performance of the Polish socialist fighting squads, the *bojówki*, convinced Piłsudski of the necessity to set up a clandestine paramilitary organization to train proper cadres for the eventual war of liberation. For this, he needed a safe base of operations. The historical territories of Poland had been divided by Russia, Prussia and Austria in the late 18th century, and of these three partitioning powers, Austria-Hungary was the most tolerant towards Polish political activity on its soil. The Austrian-controlled Kingdom of Galicia, which included the city of Cracow, enjoyed a limited self-government within the Empire, and the Habsburg

monarchy employed Polish officials in high posts. Michał Bobrzyński, a notable Polish conservative historian who served as the Vice-Roy of Galicia, was favourably disposed towards Piłsudski's initiative.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Habsburg monarchy and the Polish independence activists also had a common enemy in Russia, the new Polish resistance organization, Union of Active Struggle (*Związek Walki Czynnej*) was thus founded in Lwów (Lviv), in the Kingdom of Galicia. Two years later, the Union spawned two paramilitary formations, the Riflemen's Union (*Związek Strzelecki*) and Society of Polish Riflemen (*Polskie Drużyny Strzeleckie*), founded in Lwów and Cracow, respectively. Masked as sports and hunting clubs, these associations enjoyed official endorsement and support of Austrian authorities, including access to military shooting ranges.<sup>6</sup> By the time when World War I broke out in 1914, Piłsudski's paramilitary organizations had trained seven thousand recruits, eventually enrolled to the new Polish Legions (*Legiony Polskie*) in the Imperial and Royal army. Whereas the Legions served as part of the Austro-Hungarian army, another formation founded by Piłsudski, the Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*, POW), was in charge of underground and terrorist activity in the Russian-controlled Poland.<sup>7</sup>

The Finnish active resistance was not channelled to paramilitary activity quite as easily, although the local activists utilized somewhat similar models as their Polish colleagues. The Power League (*Voimailitto*), founded in 1906, was also ostensibly formed as a sports association, with emphasis on skiing and shooting. The activists, however, lacked a safe base of operations, and the League was soon compromised by gun-running on the Ostrobothnian coast. The League was disbanded by the Imperial Finnish Senate already on the same year. The Finnish activists also lacked a leader of Piłsudski's caliber and resolve. Perhaps most importantly, the parliamentary reform of 1907 and the continuation of Finnish political life allowed a legitimate institutional framework for defiance against Russification policies, which effectively marginalized active resistance during the years before World War I.<sup>8</sup>

Initially the Finnish activists also had no foreign support. Initiatives towards Sweden were favoured particularly by the Swedish-speaking university students. During the first constitutional resistance against the Russian Empire in 1899, Finnish activists had generally counted on British support, given the perceived position of British Empire as a humane and liberal great power, and also the British resistance against the Russian expansion towards the Mediterranean and the Central Asia. The British reputation in Finland, however, had suffered already

due to the atrocities of the South African War, and the eventual *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and Russia made the Finnish separatist activists turn gradually towards Germany. The German cultural influence among the Finnish academic youth also made the Second Reich a natural, if not completely uncontroversial partner. When World War I broke out in August 1914, the Finnish activist circles were quick to establish communication with German military and Foreign Service.<sup>9</sup>

The revelation of a new wartime Russification programme created favourable prospects to resurrect the moribund resistance movement, and the idea of organizing a Finnish volunteer unit for the German army was approved by the activists in November 1914. Many of the old veterans of the Power League, such as Ernst Almar Fabritius and Mauritz Mexmontan, the fencing instructor of the University of Helsinki, were involved in the new activities, which included the organization of a clandestine, nation-wide recruitment network. Unlike the Polish riflemen's clubs, who had a safe haven for recruitment in Galicia, the Finnish recruitment was a completely underground enterprise. Close to two thousand young men were nonetheless able to make it to Sweden by boat or by skiing across the frozen Bothnian Bay, after which they continued to Germany. The Finns were inducted to the German army at the camp of Lockstedt in Schleswig-Holstein, and eventually formed into the 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion, *Königlich Preussisches Jägerbataillon Nr. 27*.<sup>10</sup>

Both the Polish Legionaries and the Finnish Jägers were examples of separatist movements which were willing to exploit World War I and submit to collaboration, hoping that they could thus advance their own political goals of national liberation. The Polish Legionary movement can also, to some extent, be regarded as a loyalist formation, since it relied on the harmonious relationship between the Austro-Hungarian government and the Polish population of Galicia, as well as on the influence of Viceroy Bobrzyński and other *Kaisertreu* Poles in the Habsburg service. Finnish Jägers, in contrast, had no comparable spokesmen in Berlin. Completely depending on German goodwill, they were a treasonous movement in the eyes of their former Imperial master, and forced to operate underground from day one.

In the early stages of the war, separatism did not yet enjoy political hegemony, and both Polish and Finnish volunteer movements had their loyalist counterparts. Even though Finns were exempt from Russian conscription, seven hundred men joined the Tsar's army voluntarily, as NCOs and rank-and-file-soldiers.<sup>11</sup> High-ranking Finnish officers, most famously Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, remained faithful

to the Tsar and continued their career in the Russian army. Even in Poland, loyalty towards Russia was not unheard of. Roman Dmowski, who had emerged as Piłsudski's main rival and headed the new pro-Entente Polish National Committee, still believed in *modus vivendi* with Russia. The Committee organized the so-called Puławy Legion of Polish volunteers to the Russian army. The Legion distinguished itself in battles against the invading Germans in 1915, after which it was disbanded due to high casualties and Russian suspicions. Poles, of course, were not exempt from conscription, and in addition to the volunteer formations, almost 1.5 million Polish men were drafted to the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian armed forces.<sup>12</sup>

#### POLISH LEGIONARIES AND FINNISH JÄGERS ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE GREAT WAR

The theatre of war placed inevitable differences to the experience and expectations of the Polish Legionaries and the Finnish Jägers. The Finnish volunteers of the 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion were fighting an overseas campaign far away from home, hoping that someday, somehow, they could return to Finland and use their new training and experience in a war of national liberation. For the Polish recruits of Piłsudski's rifle battalions, the war was a matter of national liberation right from the start, since the operations were taking place on historic Polish soil. The expectations were high, but the inevitable anticlimax was also more severe. The first incursion of Piłsudski's sharpshooters to Kielce in August 1914 was, in fact, met with lukewarm reception by the local Polish population. Many people distrusted Piłsudski as an unknown personality, and were afraid of foreign occupation and potential Russian reprisals.<sup>13</sup> Within two weeks, the volunteers had to accept a humiliating retreat to Galicia. The price of this failed expedition was a more direct submission of Piłsudski's forces to the Austro-Hungarian command structure.

The entrance of the Finnish Jägers to the Eastern Front in the summer of 1916 was equally without glamour. After long bureaucratic vacillation by the Germans, the Battalion was dispatched to the Baltic front, taking its positions on the Misse (Misa) River in the region of Kurland (Kurzeme) in present-day Latvia. The trench life in the marshes of Kurland was characterized by all the dismal aspects of the Great War, and the Jägers soon became familiar with the monotony of mud, hunger, diseases, lice and shellfire. The Battalion also had to deal with fears of infiltration, when two Finnish Jägers suddenly deserted and defected to the Russian side in the Midsummer of 1916.

This “Midsummer Crisis” had a demoralizing impact on the Battalion, and the defectors were widely suspected of long-time collaboration with the enemy. These fears seemed to be confirmed by the fact that on the following day, the Russians shelled the positions of the Battalion with a massive artillery barrage.<sup>14</sup>

In the subsequent mythos of the volunteers, these initial setbacks were remembered as times of desperation which were erased by the eventual battle honours. The Polish Legionaries distinguished themselves already in the advance of the Central Powers towards Warsaw in 1915. During the late spring and early summer, the 1st Brigade of the Legions, commanded by Piłsudski himself, engaged the Russian forces in a pitched battle at Konary, near the Austro-Hungarian border. At the battle of Rokitna on 13 June, Captain Zbigniew Dunin-Źasowicz’s uhlans of the 2nd Brigade gained fame with their daring cavalry charge. These successful operations uplifted the spirits of the Legionaries, and by the end of the year, most of the Russian Poland had been captured by the German and Austrian forces. The Legionaries experienced their hardest battle at Kostiuchnówka (Kostyukhnivka), in present-day Western Ukraine, on 4–6 July 1916, during the initial stages of General Aleksei Brusilov’s offensive.<sup>15</sup>

By this time, the Finnish Jägers were only just beginning their front-line service in Kurland. Whereas the Polish Legionaries were occasionally engaged in swift, mobile operations, the war experience of the Jägers tended to be dominated by the vicissitudes of trench warfare. The Finnish volunteers nonetheless received their share of the action. The howitzer team of the Jäger Battalion proved itself in the battle of Ekkau-Kekkau (Iecava-Źekava), providing decisive artillery support for German forces against General Radko Dimitriev’s attack on 18 July. A week later, soldiers of the Finnish sapper company stormed the Russian trenches in the battle of Schmarden (Smārde), and the Battalion won its first Iron Crosses. Finally, the Battalion participated in the winter battles on the Aa (Lielupe) River on the Riga front in February 1917, during which both the Russians and Germans used poison-gas.<sup>16</sup>

The support of the Central Powers to the Polish and Finnish separatist movements was obviously not motivated by altruistic reasons, but instead they had their own designs for the volunteers. For the Austrians, the Polish Legions were an instrument with which to legitimize Habsburg power over the former Russian-ruled Poland as the war progressed. The Germans, in turn, considered Finland a strategically important territory which could be used as a foothold for intercepting the shipment of the Entente supplies to the Russian Arctic ports. While

the war continued, the tactical alliances between the Central Powers and their Polish and Finnish clients became increasingly characterized by distrust. For the Finnish Jägers, the continuous front-line service on the Riga front and the uncertainty of return to Finland generated unrest and a sense of betrayal. By the autumn of 1916, some of the rank-and-file Jägers were protesting against the further deployment of the Battalion in offensive operations, fearing that the Germans would simply use the men as cannon fodder instead of preserving the Battalion for the promised landing in Finland.<sup>17</sup>

Questions of authority with regard to their Austrian and German patrons were problematic both to the Polish and Finnish volunteers. Unlike the Finnish Jägers, the Polish Legionaries had one single, charismatic leader in Piłsudski, and the officer corps of the Legions was also Polish. As a talented organizer and a leader with his own sense of historical mission, Piłsudski proved unwilling to make any compromises regarding his own political goals of Polish independence, and most of the Legionaries generally followed his example. Even though the end of the Russian rule brought notable improvements in Polish social and cultural life, the occupation of Poland by the Central Powers in 1915 did not fulfill the popular expectations of national self-determination. The nominal restoration of the Kingdom of Poland under the German protection resulted in a new collision, as the Legionaries were ordered to swear allegiance to the German Empire. Piłsudski refused, having regarded the cooperation with Central Powers merely as an alliance of convenience, and was able to inspire the majority of the Legionaries to join his protest. This “Oath Crisis” of 1917 resulted in the dissolution of the Legions. Piłsudski himself was imprisoned in the fortress of Magdeburg while most of the Legionaries were either interned or drafted to the new German-organized *Polnische Wehrmacht* or to the other units of Austro-Hungarian army.<sup>18</sup>

As a smaller force and isolated from their homeland, the Finnish Jägers were more easily controlled by their German patrons. The command of the Battalion was completely in German hands, with Major Maximilian Bayer as the superior officer. Even the formal non-commissioned officers of the Battalion were German, whereas the ranks of those Finnish Jägers who served as platoon leaders of company commanders were analogous to those used for the coloured troops in the German colonial forces. The wartime communication between the Jägers and the leaders of the movement in Berlin and Stockholm was also limited, and to make matters worse, there were divisions also within the Battalion. As the upper-class recruits with university back-

ground were singled out for promotion by the Germans, the rank-and-file volunteers suspected them of adopting German attitudes, which created mutual distrust and hostility. To some extent, cleavages between the somewhat more upper-class Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking men, as well as the old language strife, were also visible in these internal class antagonisms of the Battalion.<sup>19</sup>

The attitudes of those Polish and Finnish volunteers who exercised a position of leadership were thus somewhat different. Whereas Piłsudski and most of his subordinates, who were chosen by him, assumed a leading role in the eventual protest against the Central Powers, the majority of the leading Finnish Jägers found it best to enforce the German authority. These differences in attitude can mostly be explained by the position of the volunteers. By the late 1916, the Russians had been driven out of Poland, and the Legionaries were victorious soldiers on their home ground. The Finnish Jägers, by contrast, were still fighting far away from home and dependent on German goodwill. A few of the Finnish platoon leaders, such as *Oberzugführer* Harald Öhquist, joined in the protests of the Jäger Battalion in the autumn of 1916, but most of the leading Jägers regarded acquiescence to the German orders necessary and participated in disciplinary actions towards the rank and file. By the end of the year, the restive Jägers, over two hundred men, were removed from the Battalion and ordered to a forced labour detachment at Altona-Bahrenfeld. Further protests nonetheless occurred still in the winter battles of 1917. A particularly famous case was rank-and-file Jäger Matti Saarikoski, who was shot by *Oberzugführer* Armas Ståhlberg for disobedience. The arbitrary punishment had a demoralizing effect on the Battalion, but was also rationalized by many as an unavoidable decision.<sup>20</sup>

#### POLISH AND FINNISH ARMED UNDERGROUND ACTIVITY DURING THE GREAT WAR

Besides the war volunteerism and front-line service as regular soldiers, Polish and Finnish independence activists were involved in operations which can be described as underground resistance. Both the Jäger and the Legionary movements included men who participated in sabotage and small-scale armed reprisals. Such actions were normal methods of the nationalist independence movements during the Great War, and characterized particularly the history of the Irish Republican Army, which waged its own struggle for independence by the means of coordinated assassinations and guerrilla warfare.<sup>21</sup>

As already noted, for the Finnish Jägers, underground activity was an integral part of the recruitment from the very beginning. The

possibility of being exposed by the Tsarist Russian authorities and suspicions of infiltration were a serious concern to those activists who continued to operate in Finland during the war years. As the movement became compromised, the necessity of conducting reprisals and threatening or possibly killing confirmed informers had to be considered by the activists. This pitted the Jägers against their fellow countrymen, as the domestic Finnish police institution inevitably became their enemy. The situation was somewhat comparable to Ireland, where the Royal Irish Constabulary, with its predominantly Catholic Irish policemen, was the main enemy of the IRA.<sup>22</sup> The Finnish Jägers also resorted to assassinations of policemen. In December 1916, a group of Jäger activists murdered Constable Matti Palomäki, who had done his duty and enforced the existing laws by arresting Jäger activists on the grounds of their collaboration with an enemy state. Occasional settling of scores against former policemen occurred still after the Russian Revolution in 1917, but on the whole, the changing political situation soon made it unnecessary for the Jägers to adopt assassinations as an instrument of policy to the same extent as the IRA. To some extent, the Jägers were also concerned that such actions might be counterproductive and alienate the Finnish public.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Jägers did not resort to assassinations as a standard practice, they were otherwise heavily involved in sabotage activities in Finland. The Russian supply routes made the Far North a strategically important region, which was otherwise out of the German reach. Some of the Finnish Jägers were specifically trained for sabotage operations and dispatched back to their homeland to strike against these targets. A commando of Finnish Jägers was able to destroy the Russian munitions depot in Kilpisjärvi in Lapland in June 1916, and three months later, the barracks of the border guard were blown up in the coastal town of Kemi on the Bothnian Bay. A culmination of these activities was the shootout in the locality of Simo in Northern Finland, where the Jäger activists clashed with Finnish policemen and Russian soldiers in December 1916. Russians dealt with the arrested saboteurs and recruiting agents by locking them up in the Shpalernaya prison in Petrograd, which became another iconic location in the Jäger mythos.<sup>24</sup>

Compared to the Finnish Jägers, the Polish activists had a longer history of organized underground activity and outright terrorism. Back in 1904–1906, the combat squads of the Polish Socialist Party had contested the Russian control over the Vistula provinces with their multiple attacks and assassinations of the gendarmerie and police officers.<sup>25</sup> During World War I, Piłsudski delegated the sabotage and in-

telligence tasks to his newly-established Polish Military Organization (POW), which acted as the underground wing of the Legions behind the Russian lines. Many of the POW activists were, in fact, also regular servicemen in the Legions, and after the relatively quick conquest of the Russian-controlled Poland, the POW was able to surface as a legal paramilitary organization, which reported exclusively to Piłsudski.<sup>26</sup>

With the Oath Crisis and the dissolution of the Polish Legions, the POW assumed new prominence. Having anticipated an eventual break with the Central Powers, Piłsudski had begun to direct new recruits to the POW as a fallback measure already in 1915, building up the organization into a gradual replacement for the Legions. The organization thus had twenty thousand fighters when the Legions were disbanded two years later. After the imprisonment of Piłsudski in Magdeburg, the command of the POW shifted to Colonel Edward Rydz-Śmigły, and the organization went again underground, commencing a sabotage campaign against the German and Austrian occupation forces. The organization spread its activities also to the ethnically Polish territories of Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>27</sup> Simultaneously, other conspiratorial societies sprang up, and the Socialist Party revived its own resistance network. The military wing of the PPS, *Pogotowie Bojowe*, carried out several assassinations of German and Austrian officials, including the murder of Erich Schulze, the Chief of the General Governorate's Intelligence Section in Warsaw in October 1918. On the same month, the POW orchestrated a series of coordinated murders of German informants and gendarmerie in an action known as the "Bloody Wednesday" (*krwawa środa*).<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to the Poles, the domestic underground activity of the Finnish Jäger movement, much like the front-line service of the Battalion, depended mainly on the German desires and war goals. This illustrated the greater dependency of the Finnish separatist activists from Germany, although the leaders of the movement were also able to convince the Germans that wider sabotage operations in Finland would risk alienating the general populace. Since the Grand-Duchy of Finland had enjoyed a continuous autonomy and a constitutional position within the Empire, the Jägers were also operating in a position where they had to challenge the legitimate domestic authorities. Interestingly enough, for the Polish POW, the underground activity gained prominence when it was directed against their former German and Austrian patrons. At this stage of the war, the dissolution of the Polish Legions also made the POW the one organization which sustained the continuation of the Legionary movement. Whereas for the Finnish Jägers, the sabotage activity was a result of their collaboration with the

Germans, the Polish independence activists utilized underground tactics independently as a traditional form of warfare, also in the eventual resistance against their old allies.

#### WARS OF LIBERATION, WARS OF SUPPRESSION

For the independence movements of the western borderlands of the Russian Empire, the sudden overthrow of the Tsar and the Revolution in March 1917 marked the fulfillment of their expectations. The realization of their ultimate goals remained, however, still far away in the horizon, as the Central Powers tightened their grip on Eastern Europe. At the same time, on the verge of national independence, the loyalties and the goals of the populace became even more divided.

The plurality of the Polish national aspirations was particularly evident. No less than four political entities sought to represent the Polish cause, each with their own military force. The old Galician-based Supreme National Committee (*Naczelny Komitet Narodowy*), which had directed the Legionary Movement, was replaced by the new German-appointed Regency Council in Warsaw, which remained subservient to the Central Powers. The armed forces of the Kingdom of Poland, pejoratively known as *Polnische Wehrmacht*, consisted of former Legionaries who were pressed to German service. Meanwhile, the activist-founded and Warsaw-based Central National Committee (*Centralny Komitet Narodowy*) had established links with Piłsudski and backed the underground struggle of the POW against the Central Powers. Over in Petrograd, the Russian Revolution prompted the local Poles to organize their own Supreme Polish Military Committee (*Naczelny Polski Komitet Wojskowy*), which raised three Polish army corps in the East. Finally, Roman Dmowski's Polish National Committee (*Komitet Narodowy Polski*) enjoyed the recognition of the Western Allies in Paris. Dmowski's Committee participated in the creation of the "Blue Army", a military formation consisting of Polish émigrés and former prisoners-of-war, and commanded by another former Legionary, General Józef Haller, who had managed to escape to France via Russia.<sup>29</sup>

The Russian Revolution, the imprisonment of Piłsudski by the Germans and the entry of the United States into the war, with President Wilson's promises of free and independent Poland, had significantly changed the strategic position of the Polish nation. The earlier collaboration with the Central Powers, from which Piłsudski had tried to distance himself, now became a political liability, whereas cooperation with the new democratic Russia and the Entente seemed essential

for the future of Poland. However, the Polish émigré and underground politics were characterized by an internecine rivalry and conflict between the various national committees. Furthermore, as long as the core territories of Poland remained under German occupation and Polish military units were still serving in conjunction with the Central Powers, the risk of fratricidal confrontation within the Polish nation was very real. Simultaneously, the increasing chaos in the Eastern Front placed the Polish formations in a precarious situation, where they encountered enemies everywhere. In July 1917, Polish lancers serving in the Russian army fought a battle at Krechowce in Western Ukraine, first against armed Russian deserters marauding the countryside, and after that against the advancing Germans.<sup>30</sup>

For the Finnish Jäger Battalion, the Russian Revolution marked a moment of triumph and anticlimax. The Jäger movement was finally, for the first time, openly endorsed by domestic politicians, as Oskari Tokoi, the chairman of the newly-elected social democratic Finnish Senate, extended a formal recognition to the efforts of the Jägers. The men wanted to return home, and insisted on Germans to fulfill their promises, but since the hostilities between Germany and Russia were still going on, the repatriation of the Jägers remained problematic. The Battalion ended up spending the spring and summer in the town of Libau (Liepāja). In spite of the intensive training, the prolonged stay in the Latvian port had a demoralizing effect on the Battalion, with many of the men involved in black market and spending their cash on alcohol or in bordellos. Simultaneously, political discontent manifested itself once again, and an actual *Soldatenrat* was founded within the Battalion, with the goal of establishing closer communication with the homeland.<sup>31</sup>

While Finland was still formally under the authority of the Russian Provisional Government and remained garrisoned by substantial Russian military forces, the question of independence remained as topical as ever. The political activity on behalf of Finnish independence became focused on the revived Activist Committee (*Aktionskommittén*) and more increasingly on the Military Committee (*Militärkommittén*), originally founded by the officers of the old Finnish Cadet School in 1915. After the dissolution of Tokoi's social democratic Senate by the Russian Provisional Government and new elections in the autumn of 1917, the Military Committee established contacts with the new non-socialist Finnish Senate, and assumed responsibility over the newly-established Civil Guards. Starting from the autumn of 1917, the Military Committee began to organize the repatriation of the first Jägers, in

cooperation with Germany. The first small *vorkommando* of Finnish Jägers was given the task of training the Finnish Civil Guardsmen.<sup>32</sup>

The dissolution of the Finnish parliament by Kerensky, with the tacit approval of Finnish bourgeois politicians, marked a fatal polarization in the Finnish domestic politics. The social democratic defeat in the subsequent October elections increased the bitterness of the labour movement, and the Bolshevik Revolution in Petrograd added a new radicalizing element in the mixture. Regarding the Civil Guards as a force of the bourgeois government against the working class, the Finnish Trade Union Federation endorsed the founding of Labour Guards to maintain order during strikes. By January, the polarization had escalated to an outright Civil War, as the Helsinki Red Guard had carried out a *coup d'état*, the socialists had set up a people's government and the bourgeois Senate had relocated to the town of Vaasa. Under the circumstances, the Senate forces – the Finnish White army – needed experienced cadres, and the one military formation that was available was the Jäger Battalion. With the *vorkommando* already repatriated, the first task of the Jägers was to disarm the remaining unruly Russian garrisons in Ostrobothnia.<sup>33</sup>

The main task of the Jägers was the Civil War against the Red Finnish revolutionaries. Instead of leading a popular Finnish uprising against the Tsarist Russia, as originally envisioned, the Jägers were thus called to arms against their own countrymen. A significant minority of the Jägers actually had to be left behind in Germany, either on their own accord or because they were considered politically unreliable and harbouring socialist sympathies.<sup>34</sup> The main body of the Battalion returned to Finland in February 1918, and the newly-promoted Jäger officers and NCOs formed the backbone of the Finnish government forces in the suppression of the domestic socialist revolution. After the brief sympathy which the social democrats had shown towards the Jäger movement, the Red revolution was regarded by most Jägers as a traitorous *dolchstoß* which should be dealt with a vengeance. The fact that the Jägers had to do the dirty work on behalf of old-school Finnish politicians who had initially regarded the movement as a political liability nonetheless aroused bitterness. Submitting to the authority of General Mannerheim, a former Tsarist officer, also generated friction.<sup>35</sup> By May 1918, the White Finnish forces, with the Jäger-trained conscript regiments and civil guardsmen as their vanguard, had won the Civil War. The conquest of Helsinki by Rüdiger von der Goltz's German troops placed the independent Finland firmly on the German orbit until the end of World War I.

For the Poles, in contrast, the year 1918 marked the final break from the grip of the Central Powers. After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the former Legionaries who were serving as auxiliaries in the Austro-Hungarian army mutinied and smashed through the front at Rarańcza (Redkovtsy) near the border of Bukovina. The Legionaries attempted to establish contact with the Second Polish Corps in Russia, which was now, after the Bolshevik Revolution, an army without a state. The daring attempt to create a unified Polish force ended in May 1918, as the Germans defeated the Corps in the battle of Kaniów (Kaniv).<sup>36</sup> The time of the Central Powers was nonetheless already up, as mutinies broke out in German and Austro-Hungarian forces in the autumn. By October, the German occupation authorities handed all power to the Polish Regency Council, and the final blow was dealt on 11 November, when the POW disarmed the remaining German soldiers in Warsaw and other cities at one stroke.<sup>37</sup> Piłsudski, who had been released by the Germans three days before, was appointed Commander-in-Chief in the independent state of Poland.

The liberation did not mean that peace was imminent. Whereas the Finnish Jägers had suppressed a homegrown political uprising, the former Polish Legionaries faced the prospect of ethnic conflict. The collapse of the multi-national dynastic empires marked inevitable wars of succession between the rivaling national independence movements in Eastern Central Europe. The Poles were soon at odds with the Ukrainian forces, which had also cooperated with the Central Powers during the war. The Ukrainian national movement in the former Kingdom of Galicia had followed the Polish example and raised a voluntary Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen for the Austro-Hungarian army. After the war, the Riflemen formed the core of the armed forces in the new West Ukrainian People's Republic.<sup>38</sup> The hostilities between the newly-independent Polish and West Ukrainian states began almost immediately, since both states considered the city of Lwów/Lviv, the capital of Galicia, as their national territory. For the Poles, the city was one of the cultural centres of the old Kingdom of Poland, with half of the population Polish-speaking and Catholic. For the Ukrainians, the city was the cradle of their own national movement and an equally important cultural centre. In November 1918, the West Ukrainian forces were routed by the Polish forces of Lieutenant Colonel Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski, a veteran of the Legions and the POW, but the Ukrainian siege over the city continued.<sup>39</sup>

The battles between the Polish and Ukrainian forces were fought mostly between paramilitary formations. In the struggle over Lwów, the

volunteers sometimes consisted of teenagers, the so-called “Eaglets”.<sup>40</sup> Just like the Finnish Jägers provided the Finnish White army with an experienced cadre of veteran soldiers, men who had gained experience in the Legions, the POW, Haller’s Blue Army or other such volunteer formations were the nucleus around which the nascent Polish army was assembled. The Poles continued to battle against the nationalist Ukrainian forces of the Galician-based West Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Kiev-based Ukrainian People’s Republic until 1919. The bitter, drawn-out ethnic conflict effectively played in the hands of the Bolshevik forces which were simultaneously competing for power in Eastern Ukraine, and also poisoned the Polish and West Ukrainian relations for a long time during the inter-war era.<sup>41</sup>

For the Finnish Jägers, who had fought against their own countrymen in the Civil War, the neighbouring national movements were not rivals, but instead allies. From November 1918, at the same time when the war between Poles and Ukrainians flared up, the newly-independent Estonia became a target of Bolshevik Russian offensive. The plight of the small sister nation inspired a volunteer movement in Finland, and Jäger veterans such as Bror Erkki Hannula played an important role in the organization and leadership of the privately-funded Finnish expedition to Estonia. By January 1919, the Estonian army, reinforced with four thousand Finnish volunteers, had halted the Bolshevik advance and organized a successful counteroffensive on the Narva front, securing the independent existence of Estonia.<sup>42</sup> The “tribal wars” on behalf of the kindred nations in Estonia, Ingria and East Karelia became the culmination of the Finnish national independence movement, signifying belief in the capability of the Finnish nation to win not only sovereign existence, but also national greatness in the historic struggle against the Bolshevik Russia.

Although Piłsudski had initially reacted favourably to the Russian October Revolution due to the Bolshevik willingness to recognize Polish independence, the collision between Poland and Soviet Russia soon became unavoidable. Whereas Finland had provided military support to Estonia, the Polish forces now gave assistance to the Republic of Latvia in the conquest of Dunaburg (Daugavpils) from the Bolsheviks. The outbreak of the Polish-Soviet War in 1919 marked the height of the revolutionary campaigns, as the initial Polish advance to Kiev was met with the Bolshevik offensive to the gates of Warsaw and the Polish victory in the “Miracle of Vistula”. The war decided the fate of Eastern Central Europe for the inter-war era, and completed the amalgamation of the colourful Polish paramilitary and volunteer forces into a genu-

ine national army. Men such as Kazimierz Sosnkowski and Władysław Sikorski, who had begun their career in the Union of Active Struggle, Legionary movement and the POW, emerged once again as Piłsudski's closest confidants and the most successful Polish commanders.<sup>43</sup>

Wartime involved atrocities, which were linked to the chaotic nature of the revolutionary conflicts and the politicized background of the volunteer forces. For the Finnish Jägers, the mass executions of Russian soldiers and civilians at the ramparts of Viipuri (Vyborg) on May Day 1918 were the ultimate irrational outburst of all the aggression, paranoia and ethnic hatred that had mounted up during the underground years and the overseas service in exile.<sup>44</sup> Massacres were the reality of war even more in the Central East European borderlands. The conquest of Lwów by the Polish forces in 1918 was followed by murders and looting committed by unruly Polish soldiers against the local Ukrainian and Jewish population. The events of Polish-Soviet War were equally savage. The execution of a group of local Jewish citizens on the grounds of suspected Bolshevik sympathies in Pińsk in March 1919, ordered by Major Aleksander Jerzy Narbut-Łuczynski, a veteran of the Legions, sparked an international investigation.<sup>45</sup>

The endgame of the Great War and the post-war revolutions turned the Finnish and Polish volunteer movements into genuine national military forces. In both cases, the ultimate liberation of the homeland had not played out quite in the manner which the activists had envisioned in 1914. The Finnish Jägers had ended up fighting a Civil War against domestic socialist revolutionaries, whereas the Polish Legionaries had suppressed the independence of their West Ukrainian sister nation. Both countries had nonetheless also provided military support to the neighbouring states, as a continuation of their own independence struggle, and they had dealt with the threat of Soviet Russia. Volunteer formations which had begun their story in the underground politics and collaboration with the enemy had thus won their battle, and become military establishments in the new, independent nation-states. For most parts, the Finnish Jägers and Polish Legionaries ended up as beneficiaries of the Great War. They had risked a lot, and their rewards were high. For other volunteer forces, such as the Ukrainian Sich Rifleman, a similar gamble did not bring victory.

#### MYTH, POWER AND THE NATION; VOLUNTEERS IN INTER-WAR CULTURE AND POLITICS

The story of Finnish Jägers and Polish Legionaries provided perfect material for national mythology in both newly-independent states during the inter-war era. Piłsudski, who had an eye for symbolism, had

deliberately tried to establish the Legions as the foundation myth for the resurrected Poland. The Legions relied also on evocative historical continuity, as they were specifically modelled after the Polish Legions of the Napoleonic Era.<sup>46</sup> Music played an essential role in the myth-making and the celebration of the volunteers, who had triumphed in adversity. Tadeusz Biernacki's march song of the Legions *My, Pierwsza Brygada* ("We are the First Brigade") became the official anthem of the Polish armed forces, whereas in Finland, the same niche was filled by *Jääkärimarssi* ("Jäger's March"), composed by no less a person than Jean Sibelius himself.

Poetry and literature were even more important to the inter-war mythos of the volunteers, which often took the form of a heroic cult of masculinity. The volunteers themselves contributed to this discourse. Military educator and publicist Heikki Nurmio, who had written the lyrics of *Jääkärimarssi* and served as a *hilfsgruppenführer* in the Finnish Jäger Battalion, became known for his poems which extolled the image of youthful, passionate and self-sacrificing Jäger warrior. Nurmio's poem *Nuori jääkäri* ("Young Jäger") recalled the figure of a mortally wounded youth lying on the stretcher, and was dedicated to Jäger Ensign Ahti Karppinen, who had died in the battle of Viipuri against the Reds in the Civil War of 1918.<sup>47</sup> Another comparable talent was Sam Sihvo, whose musical play *Jääkärin morsian* ("Jäger's Bride") became a hit among the Finnish audience, and was filmatized two times during the inter-war era.<sup>48</sup>

The Polish Legions had their own fair share of warrior-poets and chroniclers. Some of the men who had answered Piłsudski's call to arms, such as philosopher and science fiction author Jerzy Żulawski, were accomplished writers already before the war. Others, such as Józef Mączka, who served in the Legions and the POW and authored the patriotic poetry collection *Starym Szlakiem* ("On the Old Path"), found inspiration from the atmosphere of the front. Both men had tragic fates and perished from diseases during the war. An interesting case was Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, who had served as Piłsudski's aide and, as a member of the poetry group *Skamander*, represented somewhat more experimental literature during the inter-war era. Kaden-Bandrowski wrote a series of eyewitness accounts of his war-time service, and also the allegorical novel *Generał Barcz*, a portrait of a military strongman reminiscent of Piłsudski's image. He remained a loyal supporter of Piłsudski all through the inter-war era.<sup>49</sup>

Commemoration, myth-building and popular culture underlined the position of power which the leading veterans of the Finnish Jäger

Battalion and the Polish Legions now enjoyed as the new national military elite in their respective countries. Many of the Finnish Jäger officers continued their studies particularly in French military schools, seeking to upgrade their own military education while building the Finnish armed forces. Aarne Sihvo, who had commanded the White forces on the Karelian front and reached the rank of colonel, continued his military studies in *École Spéciale Militaire* in Saint-Cyr and also in *Scuola di Guerra* in Rome. Sihvo pioneered the introduction of armoured vehicles in the Finnish army, after the French example.<sup>50</sup> A fair number of Polish officers also studied in French military academies, which were natural destinations due to the historical Polish-French connections and the inter-war alliance between Paris and Warsaw.

For the volunteers, gaining hegemony over the national military establishment sometimes necessitated a purge of potential rivals. For the Finnish Jägers, the main target was those Finnish officers who had held high positions in the old Tsarist Russian army, and served as staff officers during the Civil War. Starting from June 1924, the Finnish army was subjected to a concerted policy of internal transfers, while former Russian-trained officers were increasingly pressured to resign. Simultaneously, freshly-promoted Jäger officers were appointed as divisional commanders. The purge was hailed as the fulfilment of patriotic and national values within the military.<sup>51</sup> Whereas the Finnish Jägers were able to exercise political pressure in a democratic country, the Polish army experienced an even harsher change-over after Marshal Piłsudski's *coup d'état* in May 1926. Under the new regime, former high-ranking officers of the regular Austro-Hungarian army such as Tadeusz Rozwadowski and Stanisław Haller were discharged and imprisoned. Whereas the Finnish Jägers had collectively organized the discharge of their rivals, the comparable officers' purge in Poland was the work of one man. The measures extended even to those Legionaries who had opposed Piłsudski's *coup*. In the following years, Piłsudski installed unquestionably reliable men such as Edward Rydz-Śmigły and other old confidants from the Legions and the POW in the leading positions in the army.<sup>52</sup>

Besides building distinguished careers in the military, former volunteers of World War I rose to positions of political power both in Poland and Finland. General Władysław Sikorski, a former legionary, held various government offices in the 1920s, and also served as the Prime Minister of Poland in 1922–1923. Of the Finnish Jägers, Aarne Sihvo established his moderate centre-right credentials by serving as a member of parliament for the Progressive Party already in 1919–1920. The careers of Sikorski and Sihvo had some similarities, since both

were known as champions of democracy. Sikorski supported the parliamentary rule in the turbulent 1920s and resisted the eventual *coup* by his former commander Piłsudski, which led to his dismissal from active service. As a commander of the Finnish armed forces, Sihvo opposed the extreme right-wing Lapua movement and its infiltration of the Civil Guard, and played a key role in the suppression of the abortive right-wing rebellion in Mäntsälä in 1932. Sihvo's actions contributed to the preservation of the legitimate government, but he was also forced to resign as a result of a whispering campaign.<sup>53</sup>

Political polarization during the inter-war era had an impact on the volunteers, whose background in nationalist organizations and wartime experience often made them susceptible to radicalization. The Polish Legionaries and the activists of the POW, who were disappointed by Piłsudski's dismissal after the Polish-Soviet War, had continued their clandestine activity in the early years of the independence. The network which the men had established within the armed forces was instrumental in the May *Coup* of 1926, which brought Piłsudski back to power and established the authoritarian *Sanacja* regime.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, a number of Finnish Jägers were involved in the right-wing extremism in the early 1930s, most notably Major General Kurt Martti Wallenius, who was involved in the 1930 kidnapping of President Ståhlberg. Wallenius and his colleagues saw the far-right Lapua movement as a necessary battle against socialist influence, and thus as a continuation of the task which had been left unfinished in the Civil War.<sup>55</sup> Piłsudski's *coup*, in contrast, was based on the support of organized labour and socialist support, but otherwise the goal was the same: the restoration of strong government in the name of "national health".

The reasons why Finland avoided a similar political development which took place in Poland and retained her inter-war democracy are complicated. In spite of the legacy of Civil War, the country had a long tradition of constitutional rule. The authority of President Svinhufvud, a staunch legitimist, as well as the actions of Aarne Sihvo and other Jäger officers who were adamantly loyal to the government were decisive during the Mäntsälä revolt of 1932. Whereas men such as Wallenius saw the *coup* attempt as a continuation of their battle for "White Finland", Sihvo and many others found it unthinkable to condone a mutiny against the legitimate government which they had defended in the Civil War. Even in Poland, the high-ranking veterans of the Legions were split in their loyalties, and distinguished staff officers such as Władysław Sikorski and Stanisław Szeptycki opposed the May *Coup* and the subsequent authoritarian rule. Nonetheless, the authority of

Piłsudski and the personality cult which surrounded him proved a strong unifying force, which rallied the majority of former Legionaries and POW activists behind the *coup* and his regime.

On the margins of the Legionary and Jäger movements, there were people who once again ended up as political fugitives, and became involved with the Soviet Union. Some of those Finnish Jägers who had been left behind in Germany in 1918 opted to collaborate with the communists, and were able to recruit a few rank-and-file Jägers who regretted their service in the White forces. Twenty-two of these “Red Jägers” defected to the USSR; some returned, but most eventually perished in Stalin’s purges.<sup>56</sup> A few of the Polish Legionaries also became Soviet accomplices. A high-ranking example was General Michał Rola-Żymierski, an old veteran of the Legions and the Polish-Soviet war, who opposed Piłsudski’s *coup* and was subsequently charged with embezzlement and discharged from the army. Żymierski was promptly recruited by the NKVD and became a secret member of the Polish Communist Party.<sup>57</sup>

Politics and power struggles remained distant matters to the great majority of the rank-and-file volunteers who tried to carry on with their ordinary civilian lives in the inter-war era. Some of the more unfortunate veterans carried the memory of their wartime service for the rest of their lives, suffering from physical injuries or mental disorders caused by the war. Some were simply unable to make their ends meet in times of peace, and veterans’ organizations in both Poland and Finland sought to alleviate the condition of these more hapless old soldiers in the name of solidarity and camaraderie. The Jäger League (*Jääkäriliitto*) commenced its social activism in the early 1930s, at the same time when the extreme right-wing activism was defeated in the Mäntsälä rebellion. The protracted campaign on behalf of veteran assistance culminated in 1937, when the Finnish government made an affirmative decision on pensions for the veterans of the Jäger Battalion.<sup>58</sup>

The Polish World War I veterans, who had a very diverse background, were involved in social activism and international pacifist movement in the early 1920s, but after Piłsudski’s *coup*, these trends were gradually reversed. The Union of Polish Legionaries (*Związek Legionistów Polskich*) and the pro-Piłsudski “Polish Federation of the Defenders of Fatherland” (*Federacja Polskich Związków Obrońców Ojczyzny*), also dominated by former Legionaries, began to shape the veteran activism according to the goals and the ideology of the radicalized freedom fighters. By the end of the 1930s, peaceful social work had become secondary to aggressive nationalistic rhetoric, which

began to move to the forefront even in the journals of war invalids.<sup>59</sup> Thus, whereas in Finland, the failure of political radicalism contributed to conciliatory social radicalism among the volunteers, the process in Poland was more or less the opposite.

#### CHANGING FORTUNES: THE LEGACY OF THE OLD VOLUNTEERS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE WORLD WARS

When World War II broke out, the former veteran volunteers of World War I still had a solid foothold in the officer corps both in Finland and Poland. Although younger Finnish cadet officers had begun to rise to the highest positions of command, well over seven hundred Jäger officers still served in the Winter War against the USSR in 1939–1940. At the outbreak of the Continuation War in 1941, all but two Finnish division commanders were Jäger officers. The legacy of the Jägers was deliberately invoked during the Finnish alliance with Germany during 1941–1944, and the wartime recruitment to the Waffen-SS in particular was presented as a continuation of the Jäger movement.<sup>60</sup>

With the occupation of Poland by the USSR and the Third Reich in 1939, the Polish officers once again had to resort to underground resistance similar to what the POW had practised during World War I. The first two leaders of the resistance movement, Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski and Stefan Grot-Rowecki, as well as the first successful partisan commander Henryk “Hubal” Dobrzański, had all served in the Legions. Veterans of the Legions also exercised political leadership, as Władysław Sikorski assumed control over the government-in-exile, while Kazimierz Sosnkowski was entrusted with the coordination of the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*). Several old Legionaries fought and died in the Warsaw Rising against the German occupation in 1944. The last commander of the Home Army was General Lupold Okulicki, who had begun his military career in the Polish Legions at the age of fifteen. Arrested by the Soviets after the war, Okulicki was murdered by the NKVD after a show trial.<sup>61</sup>

Most of the high-ranking former Legionaries who had survived the war, such as Sosnkowski and Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski, spent the remainder of their lives in exile. A few Legionaries had careers still under the communist regime. Zygmunt Berling, another former Legionary who had ended up as a Soviet prisoner-of-war and became the commander of the Polish army in the USSR, held various official posts in the People’s Republic of Poland until 1970. General Rola-Żymierski, who had cooperated with the Soviets already in the inter-war era, was nominated Marshal of Poland by order of Stalin, and organized repres-

sion and arrests of former resistance fighters. Żymierski died in 1989, in the same year when the communist rule in Poland finally came to an end with the victory of the Solidarity movement. A number of Legionaries who had remained in Poland were active in the democratic opposition. Antoni Pajdak, a veteran of the Legions and the wartime resistance, was among the signatories of the “Letter of 59” demanding Polish adherence to the constitutional rule and human rights enshrined in the Helsinki accords of the CSCE.<sup>62</sup>

For Finland, World War II ended in defeat, but the country was able to retain her sovereignty and democratic form of government. Although a few Jäger officers were arrested in the investigations of the so-called “weapons cache case” – the unsanctioned post-war hiding of army weapons and munitions in preparation for Soviet occupation – most were able to continue their life with minimal harassment. Emigration was minimal, and most Jägers remained in their homeland.<sup>63</sup> With the post-war demobilization and downsizing of the army, many high-ranking Jäger officers were singled out for an early retirement. Even still, Jäger generals served as commanders of the Finnish defence forces until 1959. Aarne Sihvo, who held the position once again in the post-war years, was active in the pre-emptive mobilization of the Finnish army when the government was anticipating a communist *coup* in 1948. The last Jäger commander in active service was General Armas-Eino Martola, who served as the military advisor of the United Nations Secretary General and commanded the UN peacekeeping forces on Cyprus in 1966–1969.<sup>64</sup>

The fates of Polish Legionaries and Finnish Jägers mirrored the different fates of the two countries in the new post-war European order. Already before that, the inter-war era had revealed obvious differences in these otherwise very similar groups of old volunteer soldiers. Both the Jägers and the Legionaries had begun as political radicals, for whom military service was means to an end, and both formed the new military elite in their respective homelands after the independence. The majority of the Finnish Jägers, however, had to find their place in a constitutional political tradition which had enjoyed a continuous existence in spite of the temporary Russian suppression, and which was able to retain its stability in spite of the inter-war upheavals. Thus, in spite of their revolutionary past, the Jägers became wardens of legitimacy and order.

The newly-independent Poland, however, had to create her own political institutions from scratch. As a result, the inter-war politics became much more volatile, setting the stage for authoritarian military rule. Another difference was in the leadership. Due to their greater subservience to the German command, none of the Finnish Jägers was

able to emerge as a recognized independent military strongman, and their eventual wartime Finnish commander-in-chief, Marshal Mannerheim, had a completely different background as a conservative aristocrat who had served in the Russian army. In contrast, the Legions were, from the very beginning, dominated by the charismatic figure of Józef Piłsudski, a dedicated revolutionary, who considered the movement and its veterans as his political base, and used it as such. It is noteworthy that men such as Sikorski, who emerged as leaders of opposition, also had their background in the Legions. However, it was not until the death of Piłsudski and the beginning of World War II when these men were able to realize their full role as the leaders of truly democratic Poland, once again as resistance fighters and underground activists.

The fates of the Finnish Jägers and Polish Legionaries are characteristic of the rich panorama of World War I, and their personalities are concrete portrayals of the lasting effect which the war had on Europe, particularly on those nations which gained their independence as a result of the conflict. The volunteers were political radicals, freedom fighters, traitors, opportunists, terrorists, poets, champions of democracy, military elite, collaborators, activists for social reform, statesmen, and ordinary people. The men who served in the Finnish Jäger Battalion and the Polish Legions came in all sorts, and they ended up in many places.

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NO BRĪVPRĀTĪGAJIEM KAREIVJIEM LĪDZ  
MILITĀRAJAI ELITEI.  
SOMU JĒGERI UN POĻU LEĢIONĀRI PIRMĀ  
PASAULES KARA LAIKĀ UN PĒC TĀ

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Zinātniskās intereses: pašreiz strādā pie pēcdoktorantūras studiju projekta par somu baltgvardu brīvprātīgo dalību poļu-padomju karā 1919.–1921. gadā.

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Pirmais pasaules karš pavēra iespēju dažādām separātistu kustībām tīties pēc nacionālās neatkarības, uzsākot sadarbību ar jebkuru no karojošajām lielvarām. Poļu un somu neatkarības aktivisti bija gatavi militārajai sadarbībai ar centrālajām lielvalstīm cīņā pret Krievijas impēriju un šajā nolūkā nelegāli mobilizēja brīvprātīgo spēkus. Mobilizācijas rezultātā Somijā tika izveidots 27. Ķeizariskais Prūsijas jēgeru bataljons, bet Jozefa Pilsudska vadītie poļu aktivisti tajā pašā laikā nokomplektēja brīvprātīgo bataljonu Austroungārijas armijai. Abi formējumi bija saistīti ar pretošanās kustības aktivitātēm, un tiem bija raksturīgs politiskais radikālisms. Pēc Pirmā pasaules kara jēgeri un leģionāri kļuva par nacionālo bruņoto spēku pamatu savās jaunajās, neatkarību ieguvušajās valstīs.

*Atslēgas vārdi:* Pirmais pasaules karš, separātisms, brīvprātīgo kustības, poļu leģioni, 27. Ķeizariskais Prūsijas jēgeru bataljons.

### Kopsavilkums

Jauno laiku vēsturē brīvprātīgo iesaistīšanās karā savu augstāko punktu sasniedza Pirmā pasaules kara gados. Turklāt globālā konflikta dēļ brīvprātīgo pieteikšanās arvien vairāk pārsniedza valstu robežas. Pēdējās atlikušās daudznacionālās dinastiju impērijas iesauca armijā visus karaklausībai pakļauto iedzīvotāju resursus, un arī dažādas separātistu kustības uzskatīja karu par iespēju tīties pēc nacionālās neatkarības. Gan Somijā, gan Polijā vietējie politiskie aktivisti, kuri vēlējās iegūt neatkarību no Krievijas impērijas, bija gatavi sadarbībai militārajā jomā ar centrālajām lielvalstīm un šajā nolūkā sāka nelegāli veidot brīvprātīgo vienības.

Somu neatkarības aktivistu uzsāktās nelegālās kareivju vervēšanas rezultātā tika izveidots 27. Ķeizariskais Prūsijas jēgeru bataljons, somu brīvprātīgo vienība vācu bruņoto spēku sastāvā. Poļu neatkarības aktivisti Jozefa Pilsudska vadībā nokomplektēja brīvprātīgo leģionus, kuri iekļāvās Austroungārijas armijas sastāvā. Šiem brīvprātīgajiem formējumiem arī bija raksturīgs politiskais radikālisms, un, atrazdamies frontes priekšējās

līnijās, tie vienlaikus veica arī sabotāžas aktus un darbojās pagrīdes pretošanās kustībā.

Karam turpinoties, nesaskaņas somu un poļu attiecībās ar Vāciju kļuva acīmredzamas. Pēc tā dēvētās zvēresta krīzes poļu leģionāri sekoja Pilsudska paraugam un atteicās pakļauties sava bijušā labdara ietekmei. Lai gan protesti 27. Keizariskajā Prūsijas jēgeru bataljonā nebija nekas jauns, visā visumā somu jēgeru vadība atzina par labāku uzspiest saviem padotajiem vācu varu. Somu jēgeru atgriešanās dzimtenē ievirzīja neatkarību nule ieguvušo Somiju vācu ietekmes sfērā, turpretī Polijā bijušie leģionāri un pagrīdes poļu militārā organizācija (POW) atklāti pretojās vācu okupācijai.

Pirmā pasaules kara beigu posmā gan jēgeri, gan leģionāri tika iesaistīti militārās operācijās, kuras tie nebija paredzējuši un kuras nebija tieši saistītas ar viņu sākotnējo nacionālās neatkarības iegūšanas mērķi. Somijā jēgeriem bija jāapspiež vietējo sociālistu revolūcija, bet Polijā leģionāriem vajadzēja cīnīties pret ukraiņu nacionālajiem centieniem, jo arī ukraiņi bija cerējuši iegūt neatkarību, izveidojot brīvprātīgo strēlnieku vienības Austroungārijai. Politiskie un etniskie konflikti izcēlās ar nežēlību un zvērisku vardarbību.

Starpkaru periodā jēgeri un leģionāri kļuva par nacionālo bruņoto spēku pamatu savās jaunajās, neatkarību ieguvušajās valstīs, un viņu stāsti pārtapa nacionālajā mitoloģijā. Gan Polijā, gan Somijā bijušos brīvprātīgos varēja sastapt ekstrēmistiskās, autoritatīvās kustībās, bet tiklab arī demokrātiskās opozīcijas spēku sastāvā. Bijušie leģionāri galu galā kļuva par atbalsta bāzi Pilsudska valsts apvērsumam 1926. gadā, kas iezīmēja autoritārās varas sākumu Polijā. Turpretī Somija palika demokrātiska valsts, galvenokārt tāpēc, ka lielākā daļa jēgeru augstāko virsnieku starpkaru apvērsumu laikā atbalstīja likumīgo valdību. Jēgeru un leģionāru karjera bija ilga un atsevišķi veterāni turpināja darboties politikā arī laikposmā pēc Otrā pasaules kara.

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