

Western Volunteer Army on 25 October

Bermond-Avalov's army before the battles with the Latvians. This covers western Latvia and northern Lithuania.

GHQ Western Volunteer Army

Commander-in-Chief: Colonel Prince Avalov-Bermond. Chief of Staff: Colonel Chaikovski.

Staff Troops

Staff Company.
Escort Squadron.

Army Troops

1st and 2nd Reconnaissance Flights (*Flieger Abt*) and Air Park (Kofl).
Aa Flotilla.

“Mauritius” Construction Battalion (*Abt*).
Telephone HQ, Radio HQ and Detachment – 1 heavy radio. Communications Construction Detachment.
Secret Field Police.
Motor Transport Column, Supply Column, Traffic Detachment.
Depots and Workshops, Laundry, Post, Legal, Bakery, Supply Detachment, Sanitation.

Mitau government (Colonel Schneidemann).

1st Western Corps aka Keller Corps

Commander: Colonel Polocki. Chief of Staff: Colonel Bolecki.

1st Plastun Regiment (Major-General Billnecki):

1st Battalion (Chubarov) – 7 HMGS, 12 LMGS, 4 light mortars, signals platoon (*Russians*);
2nd Battalion (Tershin) – 12 LMGS, 4 light mortars, signals platoon (*Russians*);
3rd Battalion (Lütgenhaus) – 7 HMGS, 12 LMGS, 4 light mortars, signals platoon (*Germans*);
“Kraft” MG Battalion (*Abt*) – 7 HMGS.

2nd Plastun Regiment (Katshanov):

1st Battalion – 7 HMGS, 12 LMGS, 4 light mortars, signals platoon.

Ersatz Formation (Colonel Belewitz):

1st *Ersatz* Battalion – 7 HMGS, 12 LMGS, 4 mortars, pioneer company, signals platoon;
2nd *Ersatz* Battalion – 7 HMGS, 12 LMGS, 4 light mortars, signals platoon;
Cavalry Squadron. *It would seem that this is a dismounted (Schützen) unit.*

Artillery Regiment (Colonel Kolman):

1st Field Artillery Battalion (*Divizion*) (Barishnikov):

Signals platoon;
1st Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers, 2 HMGS;
2nd Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS;
3rd Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS.

2nd Field Artillery Battalion (*Divizion*) (Gamrat-Kureck)

Signals platoon;
4th Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS;
5th Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS;
6th Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers, 2 HMGS.
MG Battalion (*Abt*) – 5 HMGS.

Heavy artillery – 6 x 150mm howitzers;

1st Cavalry Regiment – 1st Squadron. [*Artillery from above may have been attached to this unit as well.*]

Pioneer Company – 4 HMGS.

Armoured Car Battalion (*Abt*). *In transit.*

Talssen Area Command ((Naval) Lieutenant-Commander Wendt) – Economic Company.

Radio section – heavy and light radios, Communications Construction Half-Platoon.

Supply Column, Traffic Detachment

2 Field Hospitals, Supply Detachment, Depots, Construction Detachment.



2nd Western Corps aka Virgolich Corps

Commander: Colonel Virgolich.

Signals Platoon

1st Officers MG Company – ? HMG

1st Rifle Regiment:

1st Battalion – 16 HMGS (in 2 companies), 16 light mortars;

2nd Battalion (von Petersdorff) – 12 HMGS (in 2 companies), 16 light mortars, bicycle platoon.

1st Cavalry Regiment

1st Squadron – 4 HMGS;

2nd Squadron;

3rd Squadron;

Cavalry Platoon “von Petersdorff”.

1st Artillery Regiment:

1st Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers;

2nd Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers;

Battery attached to Infantry Group “von Petersdorff” – 2 x 105mm howitzers.

2nd Pioneer Company.

Reconnaissance Flight (*Flieger Abt*) – 6 planes.

Mounted Police Squadron.

Motor Transport, 3 Supply Columns.

Economic Company, Field Hospital.

Iron Division

Commander-in-Chief: Major Bischoff. Chief of Staff: Captain Biese.

1st Infantry Regiment (Major von Lossow) – 2 HMGS (*Germans*):

1st Battalion (Krüger) – 13 HMGS, 13 LMGS, signals platoon;

2nd Battalion (von der Groeben) – 15 HMGS, 14 LMGS, 6 light mortars;

3rd Battalion (von Stülpnagel) – 15 HMGS, 12 LMGS, 4 light mortars.

2nd Infantry Regiment (Major von Bomhard) – 2 HMGS (*Austrians*):

1st Battalion (von Lieberman) – 8 HMGS, 30 LMGS, signals platoon;

2nd Battalion (Balla) – 9 HMGS, 15 LMGS, 6 light mortars;

3rd Battalion (Berthold) – 14 HMGS, 3 LMGS;

4th Battalion (Captain) – 6 HMGS.

3rd Infantry Regiment (Captain Kiewitz) – ? HMGS (*3 Germans and 1 Bavarians*):

1st Battalion (Meerwein) – 8 HMGS, 30 LMGS, signals platoon;

2nd Battalion (Wolten) – 9 HMGS, 15 LMGS, 6 light mortars;

3rd Battalion (Rieckhoff) – 12 HMGS, 3 LMGS;

MG Battalion – 3 companies each of 6 HMGS.

Jäger Battalion (Lieutenant Büchner) – 8 HMGS, 13 LMGS, 2 light mortars, 4 field guns.

MG Marksman Battalion (*Abt*) – four companies of 6 HMGS each.

Cavalry Regiment (Major Count Kanitz) – ? HMGS, ? LMGS:

1st Squadron (Doin) – 1 HMG, 1 LMG;

2nd Squadron (von Ramin);

3rd Squadron (von Rheden);

4th Squadron (Meyer);

5th Squadron (von Homeyer).

Artillery HQ (Major Sixt von Arnim).

Field Artillery Regiment – 1 LMG + 2 HMGS with transport:

1st Battalion (Auerbach) – 1 LMG:

1st Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS;

2nd Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers, 2 HMGS.

2nd Battalion (von Hake) – 2 LMGS:

4th Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS;



5th Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers, 2 HMGS.
 3rd Battalion (Schenk):
 7th Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS;
 9th Battery – 4 x 77mm guns, 2 HMGS.
 Munitions Column.
 Heavy Artillery Battalion:
 “Baden” Battery – 1 x 105mm gun, 2 x 150mm howitzers, 1 HMG;
 “Feuerherd” Platoon – 2 x 105mm guns.

Pioneers (Captain Damitz):
 1st Company – 2 HMGS, 4 LMGS;
 2nd Company – 2 HMGS, 4 LMGS;
 Bridge building Battalion (*Abt*) – 1 LMG;
 Pontoon train – 2 HMGS.
 429th Reconnaissance Flight (*Flieger Abt*).
 Armoured Car Battalion (*Abt*) – 4 cars, 10 HMGS, 6 LMGS, 1 x 76.2mm gun (Russ), 2 x 105mm howitzers.
 River Flotilla.

Rear Echelon HQ (Cavalry Captain von der Lancken)
 Police Battalion (Fuhrmann) – 2 HMGS, 8 LMGS.
 Iron Div. Gendarme Troop.
 Railway Protection Company Mitau – 4 HMGS, 4 LMGS.
 9 Town Kommandanturen.
 Ersatz Depot Unit – 1 HMG, 4 LMGS.
 Radio and Telegraph – 1 heavy radio, 1 light radio, telegraph.
 Motor Transport, 2 Supply Columns (4 LMGS), Traffic Company.
 Economic Company, 2 x Field Hospitals, Ambulance Unit, Bakery, Butchery, Vet.

German Legion

Commander: Ship’s Captain Sievert. Chief of Staff: Captain Wagener.

Staff Company.
 Volunteer Cavalry Platoon.
 “Worter” Signals Company + Signals Platoon.

Infantry HQ (Major Götze)
 Baden Assault Battalion – 1 HMG, ? LMGS, signals platoon;
 Baltenland Regiment – 5 companies, 8+ HMGS, 6 light mortars, signals platoon;
 “von Weickhmann” Detachment – 2 battalions, 2 LMGS, 18 HMGS, signals platoon;
 “Damm” MG Marksman Battalion (*Abt*);
 “von Jena” Battalion (*Abt*) – 2 battalions, 3 HMGS, signals platoon;
 “von Brandis” Detachment – 2 battalions, 4+ HMGS, signals platoon.
 “von Medem” MG Battalion (*Abt*) – 2 companies, 18 HMGS, signals platoon;
 “Stever” MG Detachment – 2 companies, 14 HMGS, signals platoon.

Cavalry
 “von Brandis” Squadron.
 “Baltenland” Squadron.
 “von Weickhmann” Squadron.

Artillery (Major Mielentz)
 “von Medem” Group:
 Battery – 4 x 77mm guns;
 Battery – 2 x 77mm guns.
 “von Brandis” Group:
 1st Battery – 2 x 77mm guns;
 2nd Battery – 1 x 105mm howitzer;
 3rd Battery – 2 x 77mm guns.
 “Stever” Group:
 1st Battery – 4 x 77mm guns;
 2nd Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers;
 3rd Battery – 4 x 105mm howitzers.
 “von Weickhmann” Group:



1st Battery – 2 x 105mm howitzers;
2nd Battery – 4 x 77mm guns;
3rd Battery – 4 x 77mm guns.
“von Jena” Group:
Battery – 4 x 77mm guns;
Battery – 4 x 77mm guns;
Battery – 2 x 37mm guns.
“Schröder” Battery – ? 150mm howitzers.

2nd Air Division (*Flieger Division*).
Armoured Train “Siewert”.

Gendarme Battalion (*Abt*).
Motor Transport, 2 Supply Columns.
Supply Detachment, Legal, Bakery, Post.

Plehwe Group

Commander: Captain von Plehwe

2nd Guard Reserve Regiment:
1st Battalion (Tschocke) – 8 HMGS, 16 LMGS;
2nd Battalion (von Malortie) – 8 HMGS, 16 LMGS, 8 light mortars;
3rd Battalion (Linder) – 8 HMGS, 16 LMGS.
Goldingen Volunteer Jäger-Korps (Captain Berding) – 1 battalion, 3 HMGS, 2 LMGS.

Goldingen Volunteer Jäger-Korps Cavalry Squadron.
“von Plehwe” Cavalry Platoon – 2 HMGS.

Kurland Battalion (*Abt*) of the 1st Guard Reserve Field Artillery Regiment
4th Battery – 2 x 77mm guns;
7th Battery – 4 x 77mm guns;
Munitions Column.
2nd Guard Reserve Foot Artillery Regiment – 4 x 150mm howitzers.

Armoured Train #5.
Reserve artillery – 8 HMGS:
Battery – 2 x 76.2mm guns (Russian);
Battery – 2 x 37mm guns.

Mounted Secret Field Police.
Police Company.
Supply Column.
Supply Detachment, Depot Company.

Rosbach Detachment *Arrived much later than October and shouldn't really be in the orbat at all...*

Infantry Battalion.
MG detachment.
Pioneer Platoon.
Cavalry Squadron.
3 x 77mm guns, 1 x 150mm howitzer.
Armoured Car.
Searchlight Platoon.



Notes:

The source is the charts at the back of *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps*.








It should be noted that this structure is the *administrative* one, not the combat form. In battle the various Corps formed formed into independent columns of mixed troops, as at Cēsis, although obviously all the companies of the rifle battalions tended to be kept together.

It appears that all the infantry battalions had three rifle companies except: (a) those of Stülpnagel (Iron Division) and Brandis #1 (German Legion) which had four, (b) the Plehwe Group whose battalions all are shown with four (but this might be an error), and (c) the Baltenland Regiment which had five in total, presumably two battalions of 3 and 2 companies. Most battalions would also appear to have had a further MG company if sufficient machine-guns were available, generally of 6 pieces.

Some of the symbols are not easy to determine. I have translated them as follows:

- ↑ Heavy Machine Gun (HMG), which I take to be the MG08 and perhaps some ex-Russian Maxims.
- ↗ Light Machine Gun (LMG), being the MG08/15 and perhaps some Madsens, Lewis Guns and the like.
- ↑ Heavy Machine Gun. This symbol is found only in Marksman (*Scharfschützen*) units, and indicates the heavy trench tripod and optical sights on the MG08.

I have not distinguished between different models of the same calibre artillery gun:

-  77mm gun.
-  90mm field gun.
-  105mm field gun.
-  37mm gun.
-  76.2mm ex-Russian field guns, the right one probably indicating the cut-down infantry support version.
-  105mm howitzer.
-  150mm howitzer.

The symbol for bicycle units does not appear to distinguish between platoons and companies, which made identification difficult if the unit name did not specify the size. The armoured cars all appear to be machine-gun armed. Gendarmes are mounted Police.

The German place names for the units is kept – it is the “Libau Battalion” not the “Liepaja Battalion” – since that is how they will appear in the original German (and almost all other sources). Translation of unit terms, ranks and weapons is mostly following the *German Army Handbook April 1918*, and generally I have attempted to render all terms in English where an appropriate word exists. *Abteilung* is normally given as “Battalion” since it implies a unit that size but indicated by (*Abt*) in order to distinguish it from a unit actually termed *Bataillon*.

- Stosstrupp → Stormtroop (although “shock troops” is a closer translation).
- Sturm → Assault.
- Freiwilligen → Volunteer. (Few of the Latvian units actually used the word “*Freikorps*” in their name).
- Betr(iebs) → Traffic, and specifically railway traffic.
- Wirtsch(aftskomagnie) → Economics Company (which may be a euphemism for requisitioning unit) based on the *German Army Handbook April 1918*, but they may have been solely administration units.
- Ersatz* → means “supplementary” or “reinforcement”, but may imply depot or training in this case.



Numbers

A couple of sources quote numbers relating to the above Orbat. Colonel du Parquet lists the order of battle for the late period in some detail. His arrangement differs, but this indicates that the freikorps continued to fight as combined arms units rather different from their administrative structure of *Darstellungen*. The units he gives numbers for are:

Stevert Independent Corps – 300 men, 8 canons
“von Jena” Group – 500 men, 4 canons
Rieckoff Independent Corps – 500 men, 100 horses, 2 canons
Medem Independent Corps – 400 men, 6 canons
Wieckhmann Independent Corps – 500 men, 60 horses, 10 canons
“von Brandis” Corps – 500 men, 100 sabres, 4 canons, 20 machine-guns

Henry de Chambon gives some numbers for the battle for Riga, although unfortunately with no reference to where he got them from, and they are somewhat differently arranged again from both du Parquet and *Darstellungen*:

	Men	Bayonets	Sabres	Canons	MGs
1 st Western Corps	9,000	1,500	104	12	34
2 nd Western Corps	4,000	1,300	79	8	–
Iron Division in Kurzeme	14,000	4,920	300	58	156
Iron Division in Lithuania	4,000	2,300	310	–	110
2 nd Infantry Brigade	5,000	3,550	200	30	59
Von Plehwe	7,000	2,700	80	33	65
Mitau Group	7,000				

(The Mitau Group is police plus a command under von der Goltz.) The total given is 16,970 bayonets, 1,037 sabres, 154 canons and 339 machine-guns.

I find it hard to take these numbers entirely seriously – the error in adding the cavalry does not inspire confidence – but he presumably did not pluck such precise numbers out of thin air.

It is interesting to note that his “men” to “bayonet” ratios vary wildly which makes very little sense. I strongly suspect that this is because the “men” figures are derived from a different source from his other figures. The 50,000 men total aligns suspiciously with the usual numbers quoted.

For example, *Latvijas Brīvības Cīņas*, p.78, gives Bermondts a total of 40,000 to 45,000 effectives, out of 52,000 odd men total; to which it adds 100 canon, 600 MGs, 50 mortars, 120 airplanes, 3 armoured trains, 10 armoured cars and technical support. This is broken up:

Keller Corps – 10,000 men, being 7,000 battle strength
Virgolitch Corps – 5,000 men, being 3,500 battle strength
German Legion – 12,000 men, being 9,000 battle strength
Iron Division – 18,000 men, being 15,000 battle strength
Dibica Freikorps (Lithuania) – 3,000 men
Plehwe Group – 3,000 men

It is clear that the numbers for technical arms can be disregarded entirely – even if they did not disagree so wildly with *Darstellungen* there is absolutely no way the Freikorps had all that equipment (120 planes!). This leaves me with little confidence in the other figures, especially since if one tries to fit all the “battle strengths” into the *Darstellungen* structures then units are a lot larger than full WWI quotas.

I wonder if the 50,000 men comes from taking at face value German figures from after the disaster at Riga. At that point the Freikorps command were desperately trying to make it look as if the withdrawal of the Freikorps from Latvia would take a long time and require a large amount of money. Their aim was to stop the Latvian and Lithuanian armies from attacking (and destroying) them and to allow the Freikorps to retire with their booty – so they had every reason to overstate their strength.

For example, in *L'Évacuation des Pays Baltique* General Niessel records (p 72) that he was told that there were 40,000 Germans, 10,000 Russians, 10,000 allied Latvians and Lithuanians, 150 field canon, 50–60 heavy canon and 50 aeroplanes to evacuate. He notes that the German number is exaggerated, the “Russians” included large numbers of Germans but was close and that there were basically no Latvians or Lithuanians to evacuate. Later he quotes the numbers presented to the commission for 24 November (p123) as only 5,000 Russians, 10,000 Iron Division, 4,000 German Legion and 1,500 in the Chavli garrison. This is admittedly after further disasters and excludes any troops that had already fled back to Germany but is considerably less (and the Germans would still have found it in their interests to overstate their numbers).

Finally the 50,000+ total is basically implausible. It is asking us to believe that the Germans in the Baltic could double their size after their comprehensive defeat at Cēsis and the loss of the Baltic Landeswehr, despite the Allied blockade. If



the *Brīvības* numbers are taken at face value we also have to explain how 20,000 Latvian soldiers could beat 40,000 Freikorps veterans. A total of approximately 20,000, Freikorps and Russian effectives, perhaps 30,000 with hangers-on, seems a much more plausible size.

Conclusion on Numbers

I believe that the standard 50,000+ men quoted for the Freikorps in this period can be safely ignored as far too high.

The Chambon and du Parquet numbers of “bayonets” would suggest that an average infantry battalion numbered 200–400 effectives (i.e. a company being about 100 men) and a cavalry squadron some 60–100 effectives (with a cavalry platoon some 30–40 sabres).

These numbers are very similar to those I calculated for Cēsis and make sense in terms of German WWI unit sizes and the course of the campaign. I am inclined to think therefore that the Chambon figures, in particular, are based on quite a reliable source (– if only he had told us what it was!).

